

Stone Soup – One Way of Looking at the OHHP – Taking Action for Healthy Living  
*Adapted from a French Folktale*

Once upon a time, there was a village situated in a kingdom in a land far away. The peasants of the village were very weary. They had struggled for years to survive disease, war, and famine. People had let their gardens overgrow and their homes were in disrepair.

The villagers jealously hoarded whatever food they could find, hiding it even from their friends and neighbours. One day a peddler drove his wagon into the village, sold a few of his wares, and began asking questions as if he planned to stay for the night.

“There’s not a bite to eat in the whole province,” he was told. “Better keep moving on.”

“Oh, I have everything I need,” replied the peddler. In fact, I was thinking of making some stone soup to share with all of you. You all look like you could do with a good meal.” He pulled an iron cauldron from his wagon, filled it with water, and built a fire under it. Then, with great ceremony, he drew an ordinary-looking stone from a velvet bag and dropped it into the water.

By now, hearing the rumour of food, most of the villagers had come to the square or watched from their windows. As the peddler sniffed the “broth” and licked his lips in anticipation, hunger began to overcome their scepticism. “Ahhhh,” the peddler said to himself rather loudly. “I do like a tasty stone soup. Of course, stone soup with cabbage -- - that’s hard to beat.”

Soon a villager approached hesitantly, holding a cabbage he had retrieved from its hiding place, and added it to the pot. “Capital!” exclaimed the peddler. “You know, I once had a stone soup with cabbage and a few carrots as well, and it was fit for a king.”

A few moments later, an old woman handed the peddler a couple of carrots. Soon everyone in the village came forward to add a bit of something from the back of their cupboards or their root cellars. That night the whole village ate together in the town square. It was a feast like no other.

The next morning the villagers rose early to greet the new day and what a day it was! People were out digging in their gardens and clearing away old rubbish. Neighbours were helping each other mend fences and repair windows. Singing and joy were everywhere.

The peddler packed up his things and headed his wagon out of town. But there on the table in the middle of the town square was the velvet bag with the ordinary, or perhaps not so ordinary, stone. In his wisdom he knew that without the stone, the despair and despondency would return. With the stone, the community would continue to work together, share its assets and gifts, and prosper.