

BETter Living ...

Bernadette Trieb

Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent

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4Mind4Body

Did you know 1 in 5 adults will experience a mental illness in a given year? May is Mental Health Month. Mental health is essential to everyone's overall health and well-being, and mental illnesses are common and treatable. A healthy lifestyle can help to prevent the onset or worsening of mental health conditions, as well as chronic conditions like heart disease and diabetes, and obesity. It can also help people recover from these conditions.

There are five areas to focus on when thinking about your mental health: Animal Companionship, Spirituality & Religion, Humor, Work-Life Balance, and Social Connections & Recreation.

Animal Companionship

Animals can have a profound effect on a person's life and their ability to recover from an illness. People with pets believe their pets bring them happiness and emotional support, reduce anxiety, and depression, and relieves stress. Pet friendly workplaces are good for business. They attract more job candidates, retain their employees longer, have better employee health and increased productivity among workers.

When looking at scientific research, including pets in a person's life improves their cardiovascular health, decreases stress and lowers blood pressure, reduces loneliness which decreases the risk of developing chronic health conditions. For cancer patients, including animal interventions help reduce anxiety and depression during treatment.

Spirituality & Religion

Caring for your soul is a very important part of taking care of yourself that can improve physical and mental health along the way. Spiritual practices like meditation are linked to increased levels of feel-good chemicals like serotonin, dopamine, and endorphins and reduces stress.

People who attended religious services monthly had a 22% lower risk of depression. Faith communities can provide social connections and support to individuals living with chronic illnesses and their caregivers. Having a sense of purpose or connection to something larger than oneself is associated with positive mental health outcomes in people receiving cancer treatments.

Humor

What happens to our bodies when we laugh?

- Stress hormone levels decrease
- Increased activity in parts of the brain's reward system
- Heart, lungs and muscles are stimulated
- The body's pain blockers are released: endorphins

People who incorporate humor into their daily life have the following benefits:

- Stronger immune system
- Better interactions with others
- Improved mood and anxiety relief
- Less burnout on the job

- Reduction of developing chronic health conditions

Work-Life Balance

The mental and physical health impacts of workplace burnout and stress are estimated to cost as much as \$190 billion per year. Poor work-life balance increases your risk for health conditions like sleep problems, digestive disorders, and mental health problems. Especially men who work overtime have an increase of symptoms of depression.

More than 75% of people are afraid of getting punished for taking a day off to attend to their mental health. Many people choose unhealthy things such as drinking, drugs, and lashing out at others to cope with workplace stress. It is very important to balance all aspects of your life.

Social Connections & Recreation

Everyone has a need to feel included. Loneliness is associated with a higher risk of blood pressure in older adults. Poor social supports make it harder to recover from mental illness. Someone who is lonely can cause the same amount of damage to their body as smoking 15 cigarettes daily.

People with strong social connections are 50% more likely to live longer. Nature provides a stronger sense of emotional well-being for many. Vacations allow you to take a break from your everyday life and helps reduce stress. Teens who participate in sports have a reduction of depression and suicidal thoughts as sports increases self-esteem and social support. Adult day care and other respite programs can help reduce the demands on caregivers which may improve morale and allow more time for social and recreational activities.

It is important that everyone takes time for themselves. Please remember that taking time for you improves the health of your body and can be achieved by making small changes and building on those successes.

For more information you can visit: www.mentalhealthamerica.net or the Wabaunsee County Extension Office at 785-765-3821 or email Bernadette Trieb, btrieb@ksu.edu.