GOOD MENTAL HEALTH PRACTICES

Mental health is as important as physical health in overall health in every stage of life. Just as the risk of mental illnesses can be increased by chronic conditions, mental illness such as depression also increases the risk of physical health problems like stroke, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease.[1] Mental health is thus important because it can help you be physically healthy, cope with the stresses of life, have good relationships, work productively, realize your full potential, and make meaningful contributions to your community.[2]

Here are some practices that can improve your mental health:

Be physically active

Exercising can improve your mood because it decreases stress, depression, and anxiety.[2,3]

Get enough sleep

It is important to ensure a regular sleep schedule and sufficient quality sleep every night since a lack of quality sleep may predispose you to become depressed. In fact, researchers believe that lack of sleep plays a role in the high rate of depression among college students.[2,3]

Eat healthy

A well-balanced diet can help you get sufficient nutrients.[2,3] Good nutrition is important because it can help you feel better, improving your mood and decreasing anxiety and stress. A lack of certain nutrients may also contribute to some mental illnesses.[2]

Take breaks

Even just a few minutes of break can be enough to destress. Take a deep breath, relax, and try yoga, meditation, or prayer. Meditation may help you feel calm, whereas relaxation exercises and prayer can improve your mental state and outlook in life.[3,4]

Practice gratitude

It is important to allow yourself to enjoy positive experiences. Being thankful for the good things in your life, whether small or big things, is helpful and can help you see life differently.[2]

Don't forget to value yourself

Avoid self-criticism and be kind to yourself. Make time for the hobbies and activities that you love doing in order to help you overcome stress. These activities can help you forget your concerns for a while and change your mood.[3,4]

Practice good coping skills

Developing healthy coping mechanisms when dealing with stressful situations may be helpful in facing problems since stress is simply a part of life.[2,3] Activities such as tai chi, exercise, nature walks, playing with a pet, or journal writing can help reduce stress.[3]

Connect with others

Having strong, healthy relationships and good social support is important. People who have a good support system are generally healthier as it may help protect against harm brought about by stress.[2,3]

Seek help when needed

Reaching out to get help is not a sign of weakness but is actually a sign of strength. Treatments such as talk therapy and medications are effective in treating mental disorders and can help people recover and live full, rewarding lives.[2,3]

References:
1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Learn About Mental Health. https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm Accessed 23 June 2021.
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