DIGITAL MENTAL HEALTH TOOLS FOR STUDENTS

Digitalization is no longer a new thing in this 21st century, even thou Nigeria may be lagging compared to other developing countries. Statistics have shown that as of January 2023, there are about 38% of the Nigerian population using the internet.

We are in a generation where we love things to be done easily and quickly. Many people made digitalization their lifestyle, they buy and sell, have fun, connect, get to read people's stories, learn, explore and a lot more things. So, why did you think having a balanced mental health won't be part of it? Of course, it is!

Therefore, what is the meaning of digital tools and mental health?

Digital tools are websites, software applications, and online platforms used by individuals or groups of people to carry out a quick and accurate task that will take a long time to achieve without them.

As a student, you do not necessarily need to get to a doctor one-on-one to stay healthy, digital tools have made it easy to attain a great healthy life.

Digital tools have made the learning process quick and easy. This is why we have soft skills you can learn in a few months and become an expert on them.

Now you know what digital tools mean, let's explore mental health!

Whenever people hear the word "mental health," what comes to their mind is insanity. It is not just about insanity, it is about your emotional, psychological and social well-being. It is a state of mental being that makes you cope with the stress of life, realize your abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to your community effectively.

If you are not mentally healthy as a student, you will find it hard to learn well and if you do not learn well, you will find it difficult to write examinations successfully. Not only that, you will find it difficult to express your gifts, skills and talents. Definitely, mental health disorders affect how we think, feel and behave.

There are many causes of mental illness among students, but I will be naming the common ones. These are;

Lack of proper nutrition, lack of support system from family and friends, having an imbalance sleep, being stressed all the time, having a history of abuse, and struggling with a belief system.

A few days back, I was so sick that I could neither study nor engage in other activities effectively. So I went to my school clinic to complain, but getting to the clinic, the receptionist was rude to me. I was highly discouraged by her rude attitude. But the doctor who attended to me said:

"I have been stressing myself lately, with no proper sleep and nutrition."

He gave me some drugs to appease my instinct, however he emphasized I eat and rest regularly. Besides come to think of it, what if I had a software application to check my mental health daily, I would have discovered that I have not been eating and resting properly.

Digital tools will not just help to discover, but also avoid the stress of going through any form of embarrassment in the clinic. I hope you can now see that digital tools can not be overemphasized to maintain good mental health in this 21st century.

Here are three major digital tools to leverage as a student to keep good mental health.

1. **LEVERAGE SOFTWARE APPLICATION REGULARLY**

There are diverse software applications to help you improve your sleep, meditation and relaxation to keep you mentally healthy. Examples of these software applications are:

I. *Calm* – Calm provides you with resources that help you to achieve a sound sleep. It is a common application with a free and paid version.

You access the following features as a free version user:

- ✓ Timed meditation
- ✓ Sleep scenes
- ✓ One bedtime story
- ✓ One breath exercise

Upgrading to the premium version provides you with:

- ✓ Bedtime stories
- ✓ Exclusive soothing music tracks
- ✓ Soundscapes to aid you into a sleeping world

It has a student plan for its paid version and can be used by Android and iOS users.

II. *Worry Watch* – This software application helps you to track your anxiety over time by providing you with positive affirmations, guided mood check-ins, guided anxiety journals and guided coping techniques.

III. *Headspace* – This software application aids your mindfulness, meditation and self-care. It enables you to fit meditation into your busy day by providing a 3-minute 'mental resets,' daily themed meditation and mindfulness exercise.

Other software applications include:

IV. *BetterHelp* for Talk therapy

V. *Talkspace* to aid depression

VI. *Sanvello* for stress relief

VII. *I am sober* for addiction

VIII. *Happify* for positive thinking

2. LEVERAGE SOCIAL MEDIA

Germany Kent says:

"*If you are on social media, and you are not learning, not laughing, not being inspired or networking, then you are using it wrong.*"

Social media is a means of communicating your thoughts and ideas with a virtual audience. Many students abuse social media, but If it is used right, it comes with a maximum benefit. Technology has made the world a global village where life activities can be carried out successfully without facial contact.

There are diverse social media platforms of which the common ones for students are:

i. Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter now known as 'X' and Threads which expose you to value through written and infographic content

ii. Instagram and Snapchat, which provide you with value through image-based content.

iii. Instagram Reels, Tik-Tok and YouTube, offer you value through short-form and long-form content in video format.

iv. Podcast, express value through audio content

You can leverage these social media platforms to improve your mental health by joining reliable medical communities and connecting one-on-one with verified and trusted doctors who share tips and updates to keep up your mental health as a student.

I know sometimes, it can be overwhelming to do this, but remember that health is wealth and that is why there are different formats of getting these values through social media. If you easily get tired listening to podcasts, reading should not be a challenge to you as a student, but there are times when reading bores a student, switch to videos.

3. LEVERAGE RELATIONSHIPS IN THE ONLINE SPACE

You will never know the value of a relationship until you lose one. A right relationship builds you while a wrong one breaks you. As a student, you must learn to connect with those who value you because it affects your emotional stability.

Everyone wants to feel loved and cared for and that is the reason why you see many students rush into the wrong relationship and end up heartbroken.

You should know that not everybody will talk about their real life in the online space. Many people hype their lifestyle online to impress and oppress. As a result of this, some student who feels less of themselves due to what they have been oppressed with in the online space begin to see life as a competition and end up causing damage to their emotions and personality.

Statistics has shown that negative social interactions and relations increase the risk of depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts.

Hence, you must learn to build relationships in the online space by putting more focus on those who resonate with you, value you and equip you with value to stay mentally healthy.

To wrap up, having great mental health is possible as a student with the facilitation of digital tools by making use of software applications to checkmate your health daily, connecting with medical professionals or joining medical groups on social media to get updates or tips to keep you mentally healthy and leveraging relationships in the online space that brings you value and happiness.