

10 TIPS TO MENTAL FITNESS

By Pamela Szalay

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While stress feels unpleasant, it is also unhealthy. This is because our bodies are involved as well as our minds, responding to stress by moving into a state of readiness, a heightened, stress induced state. The consequences include an increased risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, cancer, depression and anxiety. Stress is also related to lowering immune defenses and brain function.

Research supports making certain lifestyle changes to improve health, adding both quality and quantity of years.

As May is Mental Health Month, here are 10 tips from the Live Your Life Well program of Mental Health America.

1. Turn to family and friends. To feel supported, valued and connected, allow yourself to accept help or a word of advice and encouragement.
2. Stay positive. Studies have shown that optimists have a lower risk of dying.
3. Get physical active. While experts do not know exactly how this happens, exercise can boost mood!
4. Help Others. Forget your troubles by helping someone else with theirs.
5. Get enough sleep. Stress is often the culprit in preventing a good night's sleep, yet sleep is so important to helping us cope.
6. Create joy and satisfaction. Give yourself permission to participate in fun, relaxing activities on a regular basis.
7. Eat well. Nutritious food boosts your brain power as well as your mood while helping to fight disease.
8. Take care of your spirit. There have been correlations to longer life among those who regularly attend religious services while meditation has shown to increase activity in the feel-good part of the brain.
9. Deal better with hard times. A healthy way to deal with a difficult life challenge is to talk through an issue with a friend or advisor to explore options and choose a course of action.
10. Get professional help if you need it. If you are not able to feel better on your own, don't be afraid or ashamed to seek professional help. Call the Mental Health Association in Niagara County at (716) 433-3780. If you feel you have reached a point of crisis please call the Niagara County Crisis Services Hotline at (716) 285-3515. I hope you will consider making healthier choices starting today!

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