

Mindfulness, Self Care and Stress Management

Learn how practicing these skills can help you lead life to the fullest. This is for all members of your team from service provider to recipients of care to family members, friends and community supports.

A. What is Mindfulness?

According to Marsha Linehan, "Mindfulness is the act of consciously focusing the mind in the present moment without judgement and without attachment to the moment. When mindful, we are aware in and of the present moment." Mindfulness consists of what and how skills including observing, describing, participating in a manner that is nonjudgmental, one-mindfully and effective.

Mindfulness is paying attention on purpose to the present without judgment. It is observing your life as it is happening, accepting your current situation without struggle or judgement, allowing your feelings to exist without letting them drive your actions, noticing thoughts as they arise without the need to by into them and taking action based on what you feel in your heart rather than old habits or short term convenience according to www.naomigoodlet.com.

Mindfulness is being aware of what is happening right now without wishing it were different. Enjoying the pleasant without holding on when it changes (which it will). Being with the unpleasant without fearing it will always be this way (which it won't) according to James Baraz.

Activity: Simply Mindfulness

B. What is Self Care?

According to Brianna Wiest, "True self-care is not salt baths and chocolate cake, it is making the choice to build a life you don't need to regularly escape from. It often means looking at your failures and disappointments square in the eye and re-strategizing. It is not satiating your immediate desires. It is letting go. It is choosing new. It is disappointing some people. It is making sacrifices for others. It is deciding how much of your anxiety comes from not actualizing your latent potential, and how much comes from the way you were being trained to think before you even knew what was happening. It is learning how to stop trying to "fix yourself" and start trying to take care of yourself..... And maybe finding that taking care lovingly attends to a lot of the problems you were trying to fix in the first place."

When we strive to live life in a mindful manner, we are often able to prioritize our need for self care. When we prioritize our self care, we are able to live our lives in a manner that allows us to take care of others and ourselves in a kind, open and curious manner. It allows us to focus on living in the present in order to build a life worth living rather than relying old habits and autopilot to get through the moment.

5 Dimensions of self-care: physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social. According to article 90 Ways to Practice Self-Care and Feel More Energized, Self-care is the actions and practices in which we engage with to enhance and protect our health and well-being. Self-care is about finding something which you can carry out on a regular basis to reduce stress and help you relax and unwind from the daily pressures of life.

Activitr: How are you taking care of yourself today through these 5 dimensions?

C. What is Stress Management?

Let's start with a definition for stress... Stress is a term people often use to describe a feeling of pressure, strain or tension resulting from dealing with change, difficult situations or losses as described in the Wellness Self-Management Personal Workbook authored by The New York State Office of Mental Health (NYSOMH) and The Urban Institute for Behavioral Health (UIBH) in 2008.

Stress is a part of life for everyone. Stress can be viewed as positive and negative. Stress and our response to stress influences our perceptions of how satisfying and meaningful life is. How we deal with stress often influences our pursuit of goals, our lifestyles, how we interact with others and how well we are overall.

In the book Mind-Body Health and Healing by Andrew Goliszek, PhD, "the mind-body concept is defined as the interaction that take place among our thoughts, our body, and our external world. A new science that studies this link is called psychoneuroimmunology (PNI). PNI describes ways in which our emotions and attitudes, both positive and negative, can affect our health and also the outcome of medical treatment."

In the Mind-Body Perspective, the mind is not synonymous with the brain. The mind consists of mental states that include thoughts, emotions, beliefs, attitudes and images while the brain is the hardware that allows us to experience those mental states. Research has shown that "mind over matter" is not just a simple catchphrase. Research has shown "that the brain, given the right set of directions, the right environment, and the proper stimuli, will always choose healing over disease." If a person is not able to change his or her response to stress, he or she may end up "stuck" in fight-or-flight mode, which could lead to serious health consequences.

How we perceive daily events, the way we view the world around us, the manner in which we respond to stress and how we interact with others all affect our mind-body connection. "The reason it is called the mind-body connection is because the mind is working in sync with the body to process a multitude of reactions that control every organ system. We think and then we respond. And how we respond is basically a matter of mind over body." (Goliszek, 2014)

Goliszek suggests 11 ways to support perceiving life events in a new way: View change as rewarding and challenging, Visualize positive results, Take control over situations, Don't be a perfectionist, Discover your peak energy levels, Take time out, Stress-proof your surroundings as much as possible, Don't dwell on the past, Begin an exercise program, Express your feelings and Learn to say no.

Suggestions for coping:

1. Develop Social Support Systems—spend time with family and friends, get involved in groups such as church community activities, participate in social gatherings, civic organizations, volunteering, self help support groups.
2. Train yourself to think positively
3. Exercise, Eat a well-balanced, low fat diet. Stay hydrated.
4. Enhance communication skills – don't dwell on the negative, express yourself, learn to listen, stay present
5. Manage your time
6. Get enough sleep
7. Be aware of drug interactions and schedule regular health check ups
8. Meditation and Deep Breathing
9. Guided Imagery and Self Healing
10. Progressive Muscle Relaxation and Yoga
11. Mindfulness utilizing your senses

Activities: Quick Breath with Passive Progressive Muscle Relaxation
Mindful Eating using your senses (raisin activity)
Chair Yoga
Deep Breathing and Meditation

References:

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