

Find Your Balance – Mental Wellness

Nutrition, Exercise, & Sleep – Why You Need All 3!

Coach's Corner

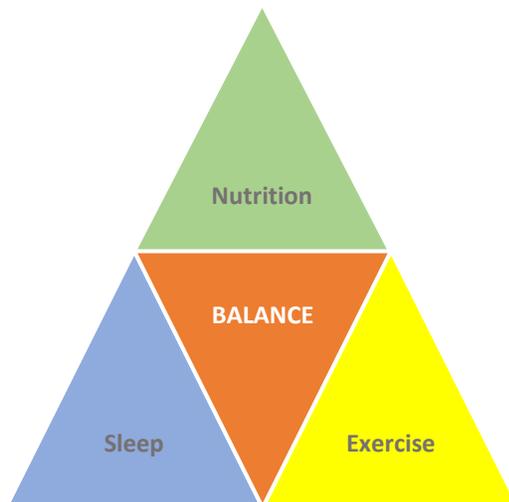


Q) Most days I feel like I am riding an emotional roller coaster! The “high” of a new job to the low of a troubled relationship. How can I find balance when I can’t change my circumstances?

A) The foundation to mental wellness requires a balance of supportive nutrition, regular exercise, and good sleep hygiene practices. Understand their importance and execute a simple plan for optimal physical and mental well-being.

Nutrition

Few people are aware of the connection between nutrition and mental health. However, the nutrients that our food provides are the building blocks to the brain, and help to produce our neurotransmitters. Nutritional factors are intertwined with cognition, behavior, and our emotions. In fact, people suffering from mild to more severe mental health concerns have been found to be deficient in many essential nutrients. Your dietary choices may be affecting your ability to adapt to stress, balance your mood, and regulate your emotions.



Exercise

Difficulties in life can affect mood and motivation resulting in a more sedentary lifestyle. Aerobic exercise has been proven to lower anxiety, boost mood, and reduce depression. Exercise increases blood circulation in the brain and promotes all kinds of changes in the brain, including neural growth, reduced inflammation, and new activity patterns that promote feelings of calm and well-being. Taking a 15-30 minute break to exercise gives you the chance to move out of a negative pattern of thinking and replace it with a mood-boosting activity.

Sleep

Sleep is vital to maintaining good physical and mental health. It restores our brains and our bodies. Without sleep we can not function efficiently in any area of our life. Up to one third of the population may suffer from a lack of sleep or poor quality sleep which affects mood, energy, focus, our relationships, and general functioning. Sleep was once seen as a symptom in mental health disorders but is now being viewed as a risk factor that contributes to the development of mental health concerns.

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The Big 3!

NUTRITION: Eat a healthy balanced diet.



- 1) Protein supplies amino acids essential to the production of neurotransmitters and happy brain chemicals.
- 2) Essential fats are the building blocks to the brain. Supply your diet with plenty of omega 3 fats like salmon, raw nuts and seeds, and healthy oils such as flaxseed oil, coconut oil, and avocado oil.
- 3) Complex carbohydrates aid in the production of serotonin which is a natural mood stabilizer naturally found in the gut and the brain. Oats, barley, carrots, beans, lentils, pumpkin, and squash could be included in your daily diet.

EXERCISE: Aim for a total of at least 30 minutes a day incorporating both aerobic and muscle strengthening exercises.



- 1) Sign up for an app that encourages quick easy workouts that you can perform in a minimal amount of time while at the office, at home, or on the road.
- 2) Go for a brisk walk with the dog using some ankle weights for resistance.
- 3) Sign up for a class and try something new and fun! You will stay more committed.

SLEEP: Practice good sleep hygiene habits and aim for at least 7 hours of uninterrupted sleep per night.



- 1) Reduce any light in your room and keep it as dark as possible for sufficient melatonin production.
- 2) If your partner snores, sleep in a separate room until you develop a good sleep routine.
- 3) Go to bed at the same time each night and wake up at the same time each morning.

Sources:

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