

## Mental Health and Wellness

There is more to mental health than being free of mental illness. Real mental health is being whole, healthy and thriving emotionally, psychologically and spiritually. The good news is that with practice and perhaps some coaching from a professional, real mental health is within reach for most people. The following article provides some strategies for beginning the journey toward real mental health.

**Think optimistically.** It's a skill that can be learned just like you learned to ride a bicycle. Recent research is establishing a basic truth – being happy is healthier than being unhappy! Happy people live longer and suffer disease less than their unhappy counterparts. It is achievable with practice and some coaching from a professional counsellor.

**Establish balance.** Make some time to review how you spend your time over a week. Is there time for play? Relationships? Your spiritual health? Your mental stimulation? If some, don't procrastinate. Make a change.

**Listen to what your body is telling you.** Your body is your ally. It is often the first place warning information can be noticed – if one is paying attention. Headaches, muscle tension, insomnia, impotence, gastro-intestinal upset, and many other physical symptoms may be your body telling you its time to make some lifestyle changes. If you learn to be kind to your body, it will be kind to you!

**Get adequate rest.** If you are well-rested, you can deal more effectively with life's stressors and prosper. What's adequate rest? Everyone is different, but likely at least seven to eight hours each night.

**Be physically active 30+ minutes each day.** Physical activity releases tension and normalizes stress hormones. It will also help you get a good night's sleep. (Introducing an exercise regime should only be done under your physician's consultation)

**Eat well.** Enjoy three nutritious meals each day. Make one a warm, sit-down meal. Turn this meal into a ritual where you slow down and savor the food and the company. Avoid skipping meals which can make your blood sugar level dip, causing irritability and stress.

**Build meaningful, supportive relationships with other people.** Renew your commitment to friends and loved ones already in your life. Meet new people by joining a club, taking up a hobby with others, attend church, or by volunteering in your community

**Invest time in daily relaxation.** Take frequent breaks throughout the day: stretch, get a drink, take a brief walk, practice deep breathing, take a one-minute vacation to a serene location (closing your eyes, using visual imagery), enjoy a hot bath.

**Be kind to yourself.** Don't be over-critical of yourself or put yourself down. Recognize that everyone makes mistakes.

**Be kind to others.** All religious traditions place value on giving to others. Truly giving yourself to others is healthy for yourself. Helping people in need can give you a fresh perspective. Volunteer at a literacy center, soup kitchen, or other charitable organization. Spend some time with a friend or neighbor who needs support or encouragement.

**Indulge your passion.** Do something you enjoy each day (work a crossword puzzle, garden, write in your journal, read a book or magazine, try a new recipe, make something with your hands, or work on a project).

**Seek assistance.** If you feel stuck or have problems or conflicts you cannot resolve on your own, seek help. Think of it as a sign of wisdom, not weakness that you are asking for help. Consult with a counselor, pastor, or health professional who can offer you guidance and understanding.

## **Mental Health and Wellness**

Ready to talk? Russell Counselling can help you move ahead with your goals for growth and healing. Call us toll free at 1 866 433 5666 for a free brief consultation or [counsellor@russellcounselling.com](mailto:counsellor@russellcounselling.com) .

*The resources on this site are provided for informational purposes only, and should not be used to replace the specialized training and professional judgment of a health care or mental health care professional.*

*Russell Counselling cannot be held responsible for the use of the information provided. Please always consult a trained mental health professional before making any decision regarding treatment of yourself or others.*

*Self-help information and information from the Internet is useful, but it is not a substitute for professional assistance. Please seek professional help:*

- *if you have thoughts of killing (or otherwise harming) yourself or others;*
- *if you are gravely disabled (unable to care for yourself);*
- *if you are abusing substances;*
- *or if you or someone else is in any danger of harm.*

*If you are in need of help, please contact a Crisis Clinic or a qualified mental health care provider.*