

Mental Well-Being— The Four Pillars of Wellness

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It has long been accepted that physical wellness is a necessity—hence the abundance of gyms, fitness magazines, and diet books. But now we know that mental wellness is just as essential, not only for providing us with a sense of well-being, but also for maintaining our physical health. Research suggests there are four key elements to achieving mental wellness:

Stress Reduction

Although many stressors are unavoidable, we can choose how to respond. Having a positive attitude goes a long way! Laughter, playfulness, and a sense of humor all decrease stress, as do yoga and tai chi. Listening to calming music, visualizing pleasant images, and slow, deep breathing are soothing, while massage and meditation are effective, too.

Our relationships with other people also have an important impact on our emotional well-being. Being engaged with others provides support, reduces negative feelings, and creates feelings of identity, purpose, and self-worth. Spend as much time as you can with friends, family, and neighbors. Become a volunteer or join a book club, religious organization, or community group.

If at any time stress becomes overwhelming, seek professional support.

Diet and Nutrition

The adage that “you are what you eat” is really true. Eating a healthy, well-balanced diet helps your body manage stress, keeps your heart and brain healthy, and improves both sleep and physical fitness—all essential to mental well-being. Consuming a variety of brightly colored fruits and vegetables everyday ensures you're getting the full range of vitamins and minerals. Pick the most colorful produce when shopping. Reduce the amount of processed and sugary foods in your diet. Eat lean meats and low-fat dairy products, nuts (especially almonds and walnuts), olive oil, and fish such as mackerel, salmon, tuna, and sardines, which are high in omega-3 fats.

Physical Activity

Our society has become increasingly sedentary, and we are paying the unfortunate health consequences. Physical activity can reduce stress, decrease inflammation, and minimize the likelihood of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and other illnesses. As little as 30 minutes of activity a day is beneficial. The more physically active you are, the better you'll sleep, which is also important for brain regeneration. If you're having trouble

sleeping, talk to a doctor about natural ways to manage this problem.

Mental Stimulation

Our brains are capable of strengthening and growth at all ages.

Challenge your brain! Learning something new increases self-awareness and adaptability and enriches your life. Attend lectures and plays, take classes, or learn a new language. If you can combine physical and mental exercises, the benefits are even greater. ⚙️



As Cognitive Enhancement program coordinator, Ellie is involved in the continued development and evolution of the Brain Builders program, an eight-week program that engages participants in mental and physical exercises to stimulate the brain for strengthened and increased cognitive function. For more information, contact 412.422.0400 or visit www.jfcspgb.org.

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