MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

Mental Health Awareness Month is a time to prioritize our well-being, but self-care shouldn't be confined to a single month. It is an ongoing practice essential for everyone and what works for one person might not work for another. Self-care is about consciously nurturing your physical, mental, and emotional needs to build a fulfilling livelihood.

15 Ways Take Care of Your Mental Health

By Wafa Qureshi, Diversity Unit Intern

1. **Engage in regular physical activity**: Just 30 minutes of walking most days of the week can boost your mood and improve your health and it helps the mind release endorphins that combat stress and anxiety. Find some activities you enjoy whether it be dancing, yoga, or bike riding.
2. **Eat healthy and regular meals**: Prioritize a balanced diet with whole foods, fruits, vegetables, and lean proteins such as eggs, turkey, or lentils. Eating on time can also improve your mood, well-being, and physical health.
3. **Prioritize quality sleep**: Aim to get 7 to 8 hours of continuous, quality sleep each night. Try to avoid screens and devices before you're about to go to bed, establish a sleep schedule even on weekends, and avoid caffeine and alcohol before bed.
4. **Try a relaxing activity**: Dedicate a small amount of time to activities that promote relaxation. Meditation, deep breathing exercises, or the use of wellness apps are great ways for managing stress and anxiety.
5. **Learn to understand and manage your feelings**: It often helps to give our feelings our attention without judging them, try to name what you are feeling and map out what led to those kinds of emotions. Some people find comfort in writing down their feelings in a journal or on their phone.
6. **Challenge negative thoughts**: Try to identify negative thought patterns and challenge them with more realistic and positive alternatives. It is important to create positive self-affirmations in order to effectively change harmful thought patterns.
7. **Take a break from social media and devices**: Schedule regular breaks from technology or set time limits on social media apps. Constant stimulation from social media, emails, and news can be mentally draining. Try to plan specific time throughout the day to check your phone and emails.
8. **Try to get outside more**: Especially with the upcoming nice weather, try to spend time outside as nature has calming effect on the mind and body. Going for a walk, hiking, or just simply sitting outside is beneficial for your mental health.

9. **Engage in hobbies**: Make time for activities you enjoy outside of work and other obligations. Hobbies provide a sense of accomplishment, relaxation, and enjoyment.
10. **Volunteer for a meaningful cause**: Volunteering your time to help others is a great way to connect with your community and feel good about yourself. Volunteering for something you are passionate in can provide your life with purpose and meaning.
11. **Strengthen social connections**: Social connection is vital for mental health. Set aside time to meet with your friends, call your family, or possibly meet new people.
12. **Set boundaries**: Learn to say no and prioritize your well-being. Don't be afraid to politely decline requests that would lead you to becoming overwhelmed.
13. **Set goals and priorities**: Establish small and attainable goals that can fulfill a sense of achievement when reached. Try to appreciate what you have accomplished at the end of the day.
14. **Plan things to look forward to**: Making plans for things you enjoy can increase a sense of hope which is important for mental health. Things to look forward to such as fun activities can help you cope with difficult situations.
15. **If needed, seek professional help**: If you are struggling to manage your mental health on your own, don't hesitate to seek professional help from a therapist or counselor.