

Mental Health in 15 Steps

- 1) Depression: Results from too much time spent thinking about the past. The past is out of our control and for many is a hopeless place.
- 2) Anxiety: Results from too much time spent thinking about the future. Anxiety comes from speculating too much about things that we don't have any immediate control over.
- 3) The Present: In the present we can be our optimal selves. We feel in control because, indeed, we have control over our lives in the present. Living in the present also produces less anxiety because issues are addressed as they occur vs. speculating about what things may occur and being able to do little about it but worry for those things to possibly happen...maybe...
- 4) How do we learn to live more of our lives in the present? The best way is to practice self-care daily. Self-care can be; meditation, a personal hobby, playing board games, playing sports, yoga, karate, all forms of exercise, hiking, canoeing, reading, any activity that keeps your focus on what is going on in front of you.
- 5) Talking about our feelings is more helpful than you know. Connecting a physical feeling with a word helps our brain process and adjusts to what is being experienced. In a sense, we get unstuck because by describing a feeling we are turning on more of our brain to deal with the feeling. The more brain we have working on any issue the better the outcome... counseling works!
- 6) Exercise is the easiest way any individual can have a significant impact on his or her own mental health. Exercising 3 or 4 times a week for just 25 minutes a shot has been shown by multiple research sources as the most efficient and effective way anyone can support their own sense of well-being.
- 7) Volunteer work is the second easiest way to promote our own mental health stability. Research shows that volunteering time to support a worthy cause produces a sense of well-being that grounds our self-identity and promotes our community identity. In addition, it helps us with being grateful, which also is a vital ingredient for mental health.
- 8) Become aware of how much time you are giving to those people who usually take your emotional and physical energy and how much time you are giving to those people who usually return your investment of energy. You want to invest time in people who can give back to you and not just take from you. This awareness allows you to maintain your sense of self in any relationship. Warning: People who are exhausting to deal with contribute to our own loss of a healthy and resilient self-identity, in a sense they are self-esteem killers.
- 9) Listening is an act of love! It builds relationships. Listen without judgment and you will make friends. Neediness is an act of desperation! Neediness pushes people away. If you need too much from others you definitely have to start examining ways to fulfill that missing need on your own. Remember if you don't love yourself when you enter a relationship the other person will learn to treat you the way you treat yourself in good time.
- 10) The desire to commit suicide is always a sign of mental illness. All illness can be treated and resolved with help from professionals. You owe it to your normal fun loving self to take all

actions to return to good health. Remember suicidal thoughts will pass in time and you will again get to the point where you feel normal again. It's scary that a temporary condition can have such permanent results.

- 11) Act on your own behalf- Learning to turn thoughts into actions takes practice and maybe even a lesson or two from a counselor in problem solving skills. The results of taking action on a thought are absolutely worth the risks of putting yourself out there, so be proactive!
- 12) Mistakes are great to make when you remember to take the time to learn from them. Trying to be perfect is a lesson in futility and stifles personal growth.
- 13) Choice!!!! As long as you are not in jail, you have a choice in your life. You have a choice in what you choose to think about and you have a choice to make changes in your life. Honor this power and use it!
- 14) Drugs and Alcohol, don't make them the most important thing in you life. If you do you are boring. People who are addicted stay the same emotional age as the day they got hooked. Met any 40-year-olds who still act as if they are 18...Yep.
- 15) Simple living saves lives! Work to uncomplicate your existence. Hints- finish one thought or action before you start another one.

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