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By: Matthew Stedman

BALANCING MENTAL WELLNESS AND A PRODUCTIVE WORK LIFE

Mental Health, as defined by the World Health Organization, is "a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community," and is categorized as a basic human right that is "crucial to personal, community and socio-economic development." In other words, the importance of mental health and wellness cannot be understated.

It is well established that mental health and wellness is critical for a successful work-life. One of the best ways to maintain mental wellness is to develop and maintain a healthy lifestyle, involving prioritizing sleep, eating a healthy diet, and regular exercise. It is only appropriate that January, a month where so many undertake a renewed commitment to a healthy lifestyle, is Mental Wellness Awareness Month. In honor of this month, the following is information with tips on how best to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

ACHIEVING OPTIMAL SLEEP

First and foremost, it is important to get sufficient sleep. The CDC recommends that adults get 7 or more hours of sleep per night. If not getting enough sleep is a regular part of your routine, studies indicate an increased risk for a number of ailments, including but not limited to obesity, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, and stroke. To improve your sleep, it is important to be consistent with the time you go to bed and the time you wake up, to create a relaxing, electronic free sleeping environment, and to avoid large meals, caffeine, tobacco, and alcohol before bedtime. Also, it will often be easier to fall asleep if you are physically active during the day.

FINDING TIME FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Speaking of physical activity, the CDC recommends that adults get 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity per week. It is often suggested to split up the recommended exercise schedule into 30 minutes, 5 days a week. Aerobic exercises, strength training, and yoga are all examples of very accessible forms of exercise with immense mental wellness properties. Physical activity can make you feel better, function better, and as already mentioned, sleep better. To maintain a regular exercise schedule, it is important to choose an activity you enjoy and one that is accessible, and it is also important to set realistic goals. Setting unrealistic goals can leave you feeling discouraged and frustrated. Further, it is important to exercise at a time that is least objectionable to you and that will minimize the chance of conflicts. It can be helpful to identify available exercise time slots throughout your week and stick to that schedule. It can also be helpful to invite others to exercise with you or to join an exercise group/class as a means of social support.

DEVELOPING A HEALTHY DIET

It is stating the obvious that a good exercise regimen along with optimal sleep and a healthy diet, will lead to good weight management. According to the CDC, healthy eating emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, dairy, and protein, and most people need to adjust their eating patterns to increase intake of fiber, calcium, vitamin D, and potassium while consuming less added sugar, saturated fat, and sodium. Some tips for making these dietary changes can be found on the CDC's website at the following link: https://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/features/healthy-eating-tips/index.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fnccdphp%2Fdnpao%2Ffeatures%2Fnational-nutrition-month%2Findex.html.

By developing a good exercise regimen along with a healthy diet and getting optimal sleep, one can be in prime position for achieving good mental health and wellness and a productive work life. It can often times be difficult to balance the two, especially for those with a sedentary job, but with enough patience, a focused mind, and proper motivation, such a balance is achievable for anyone.