

Five Ways to Achieve Lifestyle Balance

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Comparing emotional wellness to physical wellness is like comparing a flower to its stem. Each part is essential to the health of the entire bloom.

Emotional wellness *feeds* physical wellness.

How we think, and the emotions that govern our actions, affects our bodies in profound ways. Emotional distress can lead to any of the following physical problems:

headaches/migraines, digestive disorders/upset (irritable bowel syndrome, gassiness/cramping/bloating, constipation/diarrhea), vision problems, hair loss (due to prolonged emotional distress), impaired immune system (increased susceptibility to colds/flu), respiratory distress/shortness of breath, heart palpitations/chest pain, and/or body pain.

These symptoms are possible physical reactions to thoughts, worries, concerns, emotions, and stress. Stress stretches our resources to their maximum. Reducing stress, therefore, is a great way to begin a “seeking emotional wellness journey.” Reducing stress can help you find lifestyle *balance*.

Can you identify what makes you feel stressed? What activities and expectations leave you feeling overwhelmed and out of control? Finding ways to balance your lifestyle helps to manage stress. Here are a few suggestions you may wish to explore:

1) Friends/relationships: Sharing worries with others helps to relieve anxiety and stress. It reminds us that the world is a bigger place than our own concerns.

2) Nutrition: Foods feed moods. That sounds complicated, but the bottom line is that what we eat greatly affects how we feel. Food sensitivities/allergies can impact our emotions, among other health concerns. To feel your best, consume whole foods rather than processed foods and include plenty of green, leafy vegetables. Learn more about nutrition and take part in building a healthier you. To better understand the relationship between foods and emotions, you may wish to check out this fascinating article from SixWise.com. It details the results of a study about the affects of diet on school children and prison inmates. <http://www.sixwise.com/newsletters/05/09/07/how-a-healthy-diet-can-reduce-violence-and-rudeness-and-increase-your-childs-iq.htm?source=nl>

(If unable to follow this link, find this article on SixWise.com using their comprehensive search feature. Enter key words for the article you're looking for, making sure you're searching within their site and not the entire Web.)

3) Movement: Taking time each day to move the body, helps to clear the mind. Go for a walk, ride a bike, swim, enjoy your garden, or go dancing. Attend local yoga or tai chi

classes or come up with your own ideas. Whatever physical fitness activity you enjoy doing, do it regularly.

4) Self-education: Just as you are what you eat, you are what you read and see. Keep positive and helpful books within reach. If you listen to podcasts, watch TV or movies, seek ones that are motivating, uplifting, and beneficial to your life.

5) Prioritizing: Keep outside activities to a minimum and schedule time for relaxation into your daily routine. Know your personal limitations and say *no* to non-necessary activities. Learn to discern which activities take more than they give.

Emotional issues are varied and complex; there's no quick fix. Solutions take time, so work at your own pace. It's not likely to wake one day feeling "balanced." It happens little by little. Slowly, you'll note a decrease in anxiety, frustration, and feeling overwhelmed.

Seeking solutions is always a positive step toward the goal of wellness. Have patience with your progress and above all, be kind to yourself.