Topic: Top 5 Essential Mental Health Tips

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The world today is more complex and confusing than ever before. It seems as though there are curveballs constantly being thrown our way. Many of us struggle to keep up with this fast paced, continuously evolving world, and our **mental health** often pays the price. In order to help us improve our mental bandwidths, here are the Top 5 Essential Mental Health Tips, to help us **stay emotionally healthy** and live our lives to the fullest!

- 1. Say it Out Loud: Many times, we get overwhelmed with the changes happening around us and we may feel like we are the only ones. That can make us feel isolated and increase chances of depression and anxiety. That's why we must remember to break the silence and speak about them out loud to a trusted confidant. This validates our feelings and acknowledges that there's something wrong. Often, we find that we are not alone, and this feeling of companionship and kinship with others, gets us through our periods of mental fatigue and exhaustion. We need to give our mental health the care and attention it deserves, in order to heal and move on.
- 2. <u>Support Network:</u> It is always better to vent about our feelings instead of bottling them up, even though sometimes we want to push away and ignore our helplessness and fear. It is important to find for ourselves, a support network, of family, friends, or even a therapist, who can give a listening ear or a shoulder to lean on, during our weak moments.
 - We can also learn stress strategies or find our own coping mechanisms to help us calm down during anxious moments. For example, muscle tensing and releasing exercises, focused deep breathing techniques, journaling etc. These have shown remarkable effects in building a healthy mind, as well as centering and stabilizing emotions during turbulent, unsettling times.
 - Nowadays there are many great resources available online, and the boom of telemedicine makes it easier and more convenient to get access to great professional help and support.
- 3. <u>Step Forward:</u> with a positive outlook towards the future. Generally, when we focus on the good, the good gets better. We can try to envision what we want our lives to look like and set a roadmap of goals to achieve that vision. However, we must be mindful to set goals that are SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound, so that we don't get frustrated and disappointed, with aims that are difficult to achieve. The smallest steps deserve celebration and that is how we build self-confidence and push ourselves to persevere.

- 4. <u>Self-Care for Mental Health:</u> We should remember to check in on our vitals! It is a tried and true method, one of the oldest mental health tips and tricks, but one that has proven very effective over the years. Healthy habits lead to healthy choices in our daily lives and as busy as we are, we can only look after our families, our jobs and our responsibilities if we look after ourselves, both physically and mentally.
- a. Stable sleeping schedules: As sleep and mental peace are directly related to each other, a lack of sleep causes emotional vulnerability and anxiety which in turn causes more loss of sleep. A vicious cycle sets in, which becomes difficult to break down the road.

To help set a pattern we could:

- Aim to go to bed at around the same time every night.
- Try to eat a light meal for dinner, at least 2 hours before bedtime, to give the body time to digest food.
- Squeeze in a light stroll around the neighborhood, not an intensive workout, that
 would help with digestion but also serves to give us a mental break, where we can
 organize our thoughts, have a quiet minute to ourselves, or catch up with a partner
 or a friend.
- Walk away from the screen before bedtime. This is the toughest adjustment, especially in the addictive social media age. We could avoid having a TV or computer in the bedroom as well.
- Have a nighttime schedule: It may a simple ten-minute meditation, a favorite soothing, low tempo song, a skin care routine or reading to the kids and spending quality time with them. These are all cues that tell the body that it's time to relax and gets it ready to wind down for the night.
- b. Food: Moderating and being mindful of our food intake has so many benefits. High sugar laden diets have shown a direct correlation to restlessness, lack of concentration, fatigue and lethargy, that may also be seen in depression. We can try to transit to simple home cooked, wholesome meals and adequate hydration, but of course, remember to indulge our cravings every once in a while. The key is moderation, instead of fad diets that are impossible to keep up with and result in binge eating and rebounding back to old habits.
- c. Exercise: Endorphins or the "happy hormone" released during exercise have been proven to alleviate feelings of anxiety and depression. For some it may work to fulfill a goal to lose weight or improve muscle tone and stamina. It acts as a motivator, getting you to accomplish each milestone and gives you a feeling of satisfaction after crushing a great work out! For others it may double up as their quiet time, their break away from a mundane schedule and gives them space to think and assimilate the day.
- 5. Savor and Service: In our busy lives we may often forgo the chance to do the things that energize and motivate us. During times when we feel overwhelmed and stressed, it may help for us to take a pause from our repetitive, daily schedules and go back to our roots. This introspection can lead to discovering new hobbies or rekindling past interests and gives us an outlet or an escape, from where we can rebuild our mental peace. Many have found solace in creative and artistic expressions, like painting, writing or acting. For most, these are hobbies that are

often very different from what is done in routine life, so it really gives us a chance to **savor** our break from the mundane.

While looking at hobbies, many find activities where one can serve the community, through volunteer work. This has the dual benefit of making us feel accomplished by helping others, through **service**, while also engaging with members of the community, stepping out of our comfort zones as we do so.

Our mental health is as important as our physical well-being and it is time that we take measures to preserve and nurture it. Through the 5 "S" Tips detailed above we hope your journey to good mental and emotional health, is easier and more enjoyable.

