

# September Development Guide

## SUBJECT: MENTAL & EMOTIONAL HEALTH



### SEVEN KEYS THAT LEAD TO GREATER MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH:

#### 1. Get good sleep

Quality sleep improves your mood, heart health, blood sugar levels, memory, cognitive function, immune system, muscle recovery, and helps to maintain healthy weight.

Here are some tips for good sleep: Wake up at the same time every day. Go to bed when you are sleepy, not when you are tired. If you can't fall asleep within the first 20 minutes or so, get up and do something calming and boring, and return to bed when you are sleepy again. Schedule relaxing quiet time an hour before bed. If you are a clock watcher at night, hide the clock or turn it away from the bed. Eating a good amount of protein during the day and taking magnesium at night can also be helpful for restful and restorative sleep.

#### 2. Healthy breathing practices

For many people, when they start paying attention to their breathing, their breathing slows down. This activates the parasympathetic nervous system, which is the part of the body that helps you to relax. A helpful exercise is to practice deep breathing for 5-10 minutes daily. When you take a deep breath, you want to take a nice abdominal breath, not just in your chest. Your abdomen should inflate and deflate. Practicing this daily can keep your mind from drifting away from the present moment, and you're strengthening the part of the brain that is involved with self-directed attention. Doing this helps to relax your body and mind and can help decrease depression, anxiety, and stress according to research.

#### 3. Life giving activities

These are activities that cost energy but give back so much more. It is different for each person. For a period of a week or month, write down the things that bring joy to you. Rate them from 1-10, 1 being no joy and 10 being full of joy. Then focus on doing the things that are a 7 or higher.

#### 4. Process your emotions

Follow the RULER method: Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing and Regulating emotions. Recognize that you are feeling something; don't suppress, avoid, or ignore it. Seek to understand why you are feeling what you're feeling. Then label what you're feeling with an emotion word, such as overwhelmed, annoyed, irritated, or flustered. Express those feelings to someone. Lastly regulate those feelings. An example of regulating a feeling would be to spend a moment reflecting on what you are grateful for.

#### 5. Exercise

Research studies show that exercise can be just as effective as medication or therapy for some people with depression. Studies show it can also help with anxiety and ADHD symptoms. Exercise most certainly improves your mental emotional health and has many other health benefits. Exercise literally changes your brain's function, physiology, and anatomy, helping create new brain cells, which can help cognitive functioning and memory.

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### Three tips for sticking to an exercise routine.

1. Pick something you enjoy.
2. Find an exercise buddy.
3. Chart your progress (this is motivating for most people but know yourself.)

### 6. Eating well

When you eat whole foods and healthy meals you will feel good, energized, and your mood will be better. The brain is physical and needs physical things like healthy food to function at its best. Protein is a key macro nutrient. Ideally, every meal should contain protein. You don't need to focus on being perfect with your diet. Start by making small changes. Focus on what to eat, and then you will naturally be eating less of what you shouldn't be eating.

### 7. Having a Godly thought life

This one has the power to enable you to do all the other keys. Our thoughts lead to how we feel, and how we feel leads to how we behave. God's Word tells us that we are to renew our minds daily. The Word also says that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. We can't change our past, but we can change the way we see the past, which then will change the present and the future. Here are 3 ways to get started on thinking and speaking Godly thoughts to yourself out loud.

1. Make Godly confessions regularly. Read it everyday out loud.
2. Listen to sermons regularly. Listen in your car, on a walk, or doing a chore.
3. Talk to yourself as God would talk to you.

You will know how God talks to you because you have been making Godly confessions, listening to sermons, and from reading your Bible.

### Discussion Questions:

1. How are you doing currently with your mental and emotional health?
2. What were your biggest takeaway from the message(s) this month?
3. What key points from the message do you need to start applying, and why?