

:: May is Mental Health Awareness Month ::

Mental Health and Your Well Being

■ by Kathy Krentkowski, MA, LCPC, LMHC



Welcome to May, Mental Health Awareness Month.

What is mental health? It may help to first understand the definition of the word “mental”. The word “mental” refers to the total emotional and intellectual response we have to the world around us. This includes our feelings, mood and thoughts about the world as we experience it. Most of us are biased in how we perceive our reality. Our past and present circumstances dictate how we view the world, which may be clouded with troubling situations. The good news is that when we make the decision to place our faith in Christ, we find a new way to view the world around us! The importance of caring for our mental health remains the same but includes attending to the condition of our heart and spirit as well. Mental health is a state of wellbeing, not the absence of problems. Jesus told us that in this life we will have trouble, but he offers his peace. Attending to our mental health allows us to care for ourselves emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually, even in the midst of troubles.

Anyone can make changes that will impact their mental health and wellbeing. Here are a few practical ways that will help you take care of yourself:

- **Talk about your feelings.** Opening up to another about how you feel builds connection with others and will help you deal with your emotions.
- **Maintain and build relationships.** Friendships and family create a sense of belonging which may foster your sense of identity and security.
- **Ask for help.** Reaching out for help can assist you in learning to cope with difficulties.
- **Rest.** In this busy and hectic world, rest helps manage stress and can renew energy needed to face the day. Even Jesus rested! If Jesus needed rest, how much more must we need it?
- **Eat well.** There is a link between what you eat and how you feel. Eating well not only addresses physical health but also how you feel throughout the day.
- **Exercise.** Active movement boosts chemicals in the brain which help you feel better and think clearer.
- **Drink sensibly.** Be mindful as you drink. Alcohol can affect your mood.
- **Build on your assets.** Assets are the positive aspects of who you are. Acknowledging them can increase your self esteem and sense of worth and value. God made you unique! There is no one in this world quite like you!
- **Serve others.** Getting out of yourself and helping another person creates positive feelings toward yourself, others, and the world you live in.

Change takes time and practice. Pick one area of your life that needs the most attention and implement one simple change. Our journey towards wellness begins with a single step. You are worth it. ■



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