Opinion: Promoting positive mental health

By Betsy Glass

According to California’s Mental Health Movement and the Centers for Disease Control, half of us will experience a mental health concern in our lifetime.

It is important to learn how to cope with these challenges. Wellness can be achieved when we implement activities to improve our mental and physical health. When we intentionally plant wellness seeds and nurture them with ingredients outlined below, our wellness and quality of life blossom.



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Mood boosting strategies every person should try:

· Practice relaxation skills. Try progressive muscle relaxation, focused breathing, guided imagery, or meditation. Take a break each day from activities and people, and focus on yourself and what makes you happy.

· Socialize. Call a friend or family member, join a group or organization, volunteer, or offer a random act of kindness.

· Strive for growth. Follow your heart, and try activities or choose occupations which use your strengths and express your passions.

· Develop a balanced diet of foods which balance brain chemicals responsible for mood regulation, such as foods high in omega-3, vitamin B12, magnesium, vitamin D, and folic acid, including proteins, vegetables, fruits, and whole grains.

· Try something new and creative. Pick up a hobby, take a class, or explore a new area. Studies show changing your routine can boost your mood.

· Exercise regularly, particularly with others. Join a gym, community center, or gather friends and family for aerobics, walks, yoga, biking, or other activities.

· Practice gratitude. Identify something you're grateful for each day. Demonstrate appreciation towards yourself, others, and for what you have. This improves physical and mental wellness.

· Aim for at least seven to eight hours of sleep. Develop an evening routine an hour before laying down. Reduce caffeine intake throughout the day, go to bed and wake up the same time each day, and avoid television or other visual electronics.

· Recognize when you evaluate yourself and others. Remember everything is as it should be and everything is as it is.

· Do one thing at a time with your undivided attention. Practice letting go of distraction, whether they are thoughts, feelings, or actions. Recognize the distraction without judging it and return to the task at hand.

· Surround yourself with nature. Place plants or flowers in your home or office, garden, hike, sightsee, or find a quiet place to sit outdoors while soaking in the sun.

Wellness screenings are effective for prevention and intervention. If you are concerned about your wellness for

more than a few weeks and find it difficult to complete everyday tasks, consult your primary care provider to discuss treatment options.

If you or someone you know has thoughts of harming themselves or another person or has a sudden and unexplained change in mood or behavior, immediately call a national or local crisis hotline at 800.273.8255 or 800.929.1955, visit Barton Hospital’s Emergency Department, or call 911 and request a “welfare check.”

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