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MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

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SELF-CARE TIPS

Stressful times call for more purposeful focus on self-care. You may want to implement these tips to try to alleviate some of your stress.

(Please Note: This is for informational purposes only, and is not intended to treat any conditions. These tips are not meant to be substitutes for mental or physical health counseling.)

Make Connections

This will take time to develop. Create and maintain contact with a small group of people you can call on for emotional support or for distraction. Take turns talking and listening. You don't have to disclose too much about yourself, if you're not comfortable at first. Isolating yourself can make things worse.

Create Joy and Satisfaction and LAUGH

Especially at yourself. Spend time with those who make you laugh. Watch a comedy or read a funny book. There is evidence that smiling changes your emotions to pleasant and your thoughts to optimism. Do something you loved to do as a kid, e.g. walk barefoot through mud puddles.

Nurture a Positive View of Self

Catch yourself when you start to think negatively or are putting yourself down. Actively replace these negative thoughts with a positive view. Create a list of affirmations for yourself (e.g., I grow and change; I am open-minded, etc.). Even if you aren't convinced, fake it until you make it!

Find Activities that Sooth and Relax You

Relaxation improves the mind and helps the body recover from stress. Even 10 minutes a day would be helpful! Use deep breathing techniques--take a deep breath slowly and all the way down to your stomach, hold your breath for a few seconds, and slowly breath out by emptying your stomach of your breath. Tell yourself to "let go of any tension" as you breath out. Do this for at least 5 or 6 times in each sitting. Practice yoga, listen to some relaxation tapes, etc.

Smile

There is recent research that found that just the act of smiling, even if you don't feel like it, could be enough to change your mood. It has to do with how the different facial muscles communicate with your brain. Again, even if you're not convinced, smile away!

Do Some Kind of Physical Activity

Do some kind of physical activity, even if you only have 10 minutes. Find a routine that creates a sweat and that fits your style (e.g., walk, skip, dance, swim, tennis). This will help with your stress, anxiety, and depression symptoms.

Help Others

Those who consistently help other people experience less depression, greater calm, fewer pains and better health. They may even live longer. Doesn't have to require a great deal of time -- you can call a friend to see how she's doing, serve your partner breakfast in bed, let a car in before you on the highway, smile at a stranger in the street, hold the elevator door for your co-worker.

Pay Attention to Your Body

Nourish your body with nutritious food. Skipping meals robs you of the energy to cope. Sleep and rest when you are tired.

Nurture Your Mind and Spirit

Pray, meditate, practice whatever feeds you spiritually. Keep a journal - write down your thoughts and feelings in various situations. Note any patterns or questions you'd like to discuss with people in your support circle.