

BLUE ZONES

“It’s bizarre that the produce manager is more important to my children’s health than the pediatrician.” – Meryl Streep

October is Emotional Wellness Month: 5 tips to safeguard your emotional well-being



Life can throw many challenges and struggles our way, so it’s important to continually take stock of our emotional wellness. SUBMITTED

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It is no surprise that emotional wellness has taken a hit this year. A recent poll conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago shows that people in the U.S. are more unhappy today than they’ve been in nearly 50 years.

Life can throw many challenges and struggles our way, so it’s important to continually take stock of our emotional wellness as it is critical to our overall health.

Stress and anxiety can be linked to various illnesses that include hypertension, heart disease, depression, and can even suppress the immune system. Even the way we think directly impacts our health. In fact, a new study from the department of mental health at University College London found that repetitive negative thinking in later life was linked to cognitive decline and greater deposits of two harmful proteins responsible for Alzheimer’s disease.

The good news is, there are things we can do to improve our emotional wellness. As the weather changes outside this month, this is the perfect time to take control of your life on the inside as well. This includes:

Get moving: Go outside for a walk, ride your bike, dance, or if you have garden, start planting your favorite flowers or vegetables. The temperature outside this time of year is perfect! You can also look for virtual fitness activities to fol-

low along in your own living room. There are numerous online resources available.

Downshift: This Blue Zones Power 9 principle shared by the longest-lived people in the world is a powerful way to beat chronic stress. Try meditation, Tai Chi, and Yoga. Instead of scrolling through social media, find a quiet spot in your house to read a good book. Just 10 minutes each day can improve your outlook and lower stress.

Connect: Our social connections can have powerful effects on our health—both emotionally and physically. Reach out to family members, friends, or neighbors and spend time together whether it is in person or virtually.

Eat Plant Slant: What you eat is closely tied to how you feel. Plants are high in fiber which feeds your microbiota -- the trillions of microorganisms in the gut which perform important functions in the immune system and can help regulate brain function through something called the “gut-brain axis”. Evidence continues to suggest that a healthy gut may help relieve the symptoms of anxiety.

Seek Support: It’s okay to not be okay! Use this time as an opportunity to recognize that we should never be afraid to ask for help. There are many resources in our community to help those suffering from mental illness. The David Lawrence Centers for Behavioral Health offers a variety of mental health programs and support, and can even be accessed 24 hours a day through their Emergency Services Assessment

Center. For more information, visit DavidLawrencecenter.org/get-help-now.

Free Blue Zones Project online activities are available to help you get moving, downshift, and connect. Visit BlueZonesProjectSWFL.eventbrite.com

Brought to Southwest Florida by NCH Healthcare System, in collaboration with Sharecare, Inc. and Blue Zones, LLC, Blue Zones Project is a vital part of Southwest Florida’s well-being improvement initiative that encourages changes in the community that lead to healthier options. For more information about Blue Zones Project Southwest Florida, visit southwestflorida.bluezonesproject.com.

Online Power Nine activity of the week

Now, more than ever, we need to take time to restore balance and prevent emotional burnout.

This week we want to take charge of your emotional wellness and find the soothing activities that work for you. It could be something as simple as going outside for a walk, taking a hot bath, or even getting into the kitchen to bake your favorite fall dessert.

Share your experience with us by commenting or by tagging us on Facebook @Blue Zones Project – Southwest Florida, or you can email us at bluezonesprojectswfl@sharecare.com to be entered in our prize drawing for a gift card from one of our Blue Zones Project Approved Restaurants.