

## **Healthy Mind = Healthy Heart**

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It may sound cliché but a healthy mind equals a healthy heart and a healthy lifestyle. The trials and tribulations of daily life often enhance the stress, anxiety and depression in our life. Research has indicated that psychological risk factors such as stress, anxiety, depression, exhaustion and anger have an impact on the immune system, which in turn can have an impact on an individuals' physical health and lifestyle.

Stressful events occur in life daily. As we travel through life we have established different coping skills and strategies for managing the stress in our lives. Some of us have become experts at this while others of us struggle daily. Managing stress can be done in a variety of ways. Developing a family or community of support is essential. Communicating with people you trust and love and developing a strong social support system can be extremely effective. Listening to what others share provides feedback for you to help manage your stress. Keep track of how often you experience symptoms of stress, such as irritability, fatigue, restless, sweaty palms, etc. so that you can become aware of the signals your body sends you and you can begin to know how to respond to these triggers. Notice what your medical check-ups reveal. Physical symptoms of stress are often revealed through medical exams. Following a healthy diet and exercising a minimum of 30 minutes a day provide the body a balance of food and exercise needed to maintain a healthy state of balance nutritionally and aerobically. And always have a good laugh each and every day. Through laughter and exercise the body naturally releases pleasure-enhancing feelings and sensations. Although it is impossible to eliminate all stress from daily life, it is possible to control the effect that stress has on the mind and body.

Anxiety often stems from the stressors in our life and can be activated during various events and stimulated during stressful situations. Individuals suffering from symptoms of anxiety can benefit from joining self-help groups, which allow them to share their problems, struggles and achievements with others. Talking with trusted friends, family members, religious/spiritual leaders can be helpful and decrease the feeling of isolation. Meditation and relaxation exercises also assist in helping calm yourself.

Symptoms of depression often make us feel exhausted, worthless, helpless and hopeless. These types of thoughts and feeling can make some feel like giving up. However, there are things you can do to help yourself if you are feeling depressed. Setting realistic goals and assuming a reasonable amount of responsibility can help in assisting negative thinking to fade. Breaking larger tasks into smaller ones and setting priorities can also be effective for removing negative thinking from ones life. Being with others and talking to someone is often better than being alone or secretive. Participate in activities you enjoy. Engage in exercise. Be positive. Positive thinking will replace negative thinking. People rarely "snap out of" a depression but rather they can feel better day-by-day through life changes and treatment.

Stress, anxiety and depression can affect our lives greatly and in an extremely negative way. The negative impact can affect how we interact with others, our enjoyment of life, professional goals and physical health. Managing and minimizing psychological risk factors can assist in preventing a weakened immune system and enhance ones physical health and physical being.