

# Mental Health Challenge

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October is National Depression and Education Awareness month, and I think I can speak for everyone when I say that we ALL need to have a mental health reset done. Life is crazy, and the world is even crazier; this can make it very hard to forget ourselves in the chaos and lose focus of maintaining our own sanity and protecting our hearts and our minds. So, let's take the month of October to spend focusing on centering ourselves and walking the path of self-discovery together as we all take a big breath and practice mental health awareness.

## WEEK ONE:

### Day 1: SLEEP

Make a commitment to good sleep hygiene. Our mental health is heavily impacted by our sleep.

- Commit to a regular bedtime
- No caffeine before bed
- Turn off technology an hour before bedtime
- Talk to your medical provider if you need more guidance

### Day 2: DIET

We are what we eat, and what we eat impact our mental health.

- Add more fruits and vegetables
- Reduce sugar and processed foods
- Try cooking something new and share a meal with loved ones

### Day 3: EXERCISE

Movement has been proven to lead to better mental health.

- Make time for a short walk every day
- Look for ways to add a few steps by taking the stairs, parking further away, dancing, or taking a fitness class at the Y!
- High five yourself for small steps
- Consider a workout buddy to hold you accountable and keep you motivated!

### Day 4: COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

Did you know that your brain processes more than 70,000 thoughts a day? Make sure those thoughts are POSITIVE not negative.

- Your thoughts impact your mood. Learn to correct your thinking habits.
- Talk to yourself like you would someone you care about
- Surround yourself with positive people and positive conversation.

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## Day 5: JOURNALING

Writing down your thoughts and ideas can have a positive impact on your mental health.

- Try a mind dump at the end of the day to help with sleep
- Write without stopping for 5 minutes or until you fill a whole page. You may be surprised with the results, and it can help you gain a deeper insight into your internal or subconscious emotions.
- Write a list of good things. This will train your brain to see more positive things around you.

## Day 6: STORY BOARDING

Expressing yourself in an artistic way can be an outlet to help improve your mood, set an intention, and move forward.

- Choose an area of life and set an intention: health, career, fun, family.
- Cut out pictures and words that reflect what you want and place and glue them to a poster board. Stick that poster somewhere you will see it every day so you can be reminded of what you want for yourself.
- You can use anything you enjoy as a creative outlet, so find what works for you and get crafty!

## Day 7: LIGHT A SCENTED CANDLE/ OIL DIFFUSE

Studies show that the olfactory sense is directly linked to the limbic system of the brain, which is also connected to emotional regulation.

- Choose a scent you find relaxing. Lavender and frankincense are great options for calming yourself.
- Make this a little ritual your day with morning tea or coffee, OR at the end of the day to unwind.
- Practice slow breathing to calm your whole body

## Week Two:

### Day 8: STOP

Sometimes we just need to STOP to help reduce the fight or flight response. Even one minute of this can help.

- Stop, take a breath
- Observe
- Proceed

### Day 9: BUDDY SYSTEM

Having a buddy can help keep you on track with your good intentions and has been shown to increase success.

- Ask a friend to be a walking buddy or gym partner
- Join an online support group or any kind of support group
- Write yourself a letter of support and be your own buddy.
- You can use this letter to go back and look on when you are having moments of discouragement.

## Day 10: LET IT R.A.I.N.

The benefit of RAIN will help you take care of yourself, body, mind and soul.

- R: Recognize what is happening right now
- A: Allow it to be what it is for the moment
- I: Investigate what is going on (Are you hungry, thirsty, angry or sad? Sit in the emotion and allow yourself to feel what it is to help process it. Address your needs.)
- N: Nurture yourself by asking what would help right now.

## Day 11: GRATITUDE

Studies show that practicing gratitude is good for your mental health and mood.

- Write down 5 things daily that you are grateful for
- Express your gratitude to someone in your life
- Say a grateful prayer before eating a meal

## Day 12: SELF COMPASSION BREAKS

If you are going through a rough patch, offer yourself a compassion break. Acknowledge the difficulty instead of avoiding how you feel.

- Notice: Where do you feel it in your body? (Head, neck, shoulders, heart, gut?)
- Ask: What would help right now? (Rest, a snack, conversation, compassion?)
- Action: Take a small step to support yourself in this moment of difficulty.

## Day 13: SOUND BATH

Loud sounds can be overstimulating and stressful on the body and the nervous system. Try a sound bath to soothe the mind.

- Find a quiet place to lie down
- Use headphones to keep the sound equalized, or place a speaker above your head
- Breathe slowly as you allow the sounds of gongs, singing bowls, tuning forks, or rhythmic drumming to bathe over your body and mind. You can also listen to brown noise or green noise as well; YouTube has MANY videos you can use for this practice; search "sound bath music" and you'll be amazed by the results.

## Day 14: MENTAL CLEANSING

When the mind gets cluttered with too many worries it may be time for a mental cleanse.

- Write down your worries
- Take slow deep breaths and picture wiping your cluttered mind clean
- Picture a fresh clean slate inside to start the next part of your day and throw away your worry list

## **Week Three:**

### **Day 15: PROPER MEDICATION:**

This pertains to people who are currently on prescription medications or taking supplements to help support their bodies and minds. With the chaos of life, it can be easy to fall off the wagon and forget to take our medications or vitamins that help keep our health on track.

- If you take medication or supplements for your mental or physical health, please remember to take them today!
- Keep a journal to track your moods, symptoms or reactions.
- If you do not take any supplements or medications use this day to make sure you are getting sufficient water intake!

### **Day 16: EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**

Emotional intelligence can be developed, it can also be helpful to your relationships and mental health.

- Increase your EQ by getting to know yourself. Having a coach or counselor can also help greatly with this.
- Know your triggers and write down situations that get you upset. This is the beginning of taking control.
- Stay motivated to keep growing. Read inspiration stories and know your WHY.

### **Day 17: REFLECTION TIME**

Looking back can be a way of gaining perspective, learning lessons, and moving forward.

- Choose a time in your life to reflect on. Maybe you had a hard time, some amazing accomplishments, or a hard loss.
- Use pictures, journaling, or sharing stories with a loved one to help you reflect and learn from your experiences.

### **Day 18: SMART GOALS**

Being SMART about your goals will help you accomplish the things that are important to you.

- **Specific:** Get clear about what you want
- **Measurable:** Make sure you can measure your progress
- **Achievable:** Be honest and realistic about your goals
- **Relevant:** Make sure it matters to you
- **Timely:** Set a limit for your goals

### **Day 19: YOGA**

Yoga is an ancient practice of physical, mental, and spiritual awareness designed to help reduce stress levels.

- Reduce stress and learn about yourself with the mental and spiritual practice of yoga.
- Try a chair yoga class for an easy introduction or take a yoga class at the Y!
- Listen to your body and check with doctors if necessary to make sure yoga is a good fit for you.

### **Day 20: MOOD MUSIC**

Studies show that music can have a positive impact on mood, blood pressure, and heart rate.

- Explore classical music and see how it improves your mood!
- If you are feeling down or fatigued, try listening to happy upbeat music to boost your mood and energy
- Jazz can be used to reduce stress and improve your focus
- Experiment with new and different music to see how your mood responds.

## Day 21: BOX BREATHING

Tracing an image of a box in your mind, along with breath can help sooth your mood and lower stress levels

- Picture a box in your mind and repeat the following 4 times then see how you feel:
- Beathe out along the bottom of the box
- Hold the breath for 4 seconds as you picture going up the right side of the box
- Breathe in as you picture going along the top of the box
- Hold for 4 seconds as you picture going down the left side of the box