MENTAL HEALTH MINUTE

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Practicing Gratitude

In today's fast-paced world, it's easy to get caught up in stress and negativity. However, practicing gratitude can be a powerful tool to improve mental health. Gratitude involves recognizing and appreciating life's positive aspects, which can reduce stress, anxiety and depression. By focusing on what you have rather than what you lack, gratitude helps shift your mindset to a more positive and resilient state.

Gratitude encourages you to savor the present moment and acknowledge the good in your life, no matter how small. This positive focus can lead to a more optimistic outlook, better coping skills and stronger relationships. Consider the following gratitude tips:

- **Keep a gratitude journal.** Each day, write down three things you're grateful for and reflect on why they're meaningful to you.
- **Express thanks.** Send a quick text or write a note to someone you appreciate.
- **Embrace mindful moments.** Pause to appreciate the beauty or the good around you, such as a sunny day or a kind gesture. It can be as simple as taking a few deep breaths and focusing on what you're thankful for in that moment.
- **Try meditation.** Focus on the things you're grateful for and visualize the positive aspects of your life.
- **Take a walk.** Go for a walk and consciously notice things you're grateful for in your surroundings. Then, reflect on these observations and how they enhance your life.

Lastly, be mindful that gratitude isn't meant to increase feelings of guilt or minimize painful experiences. For example, you can be anxious about upcoming transitions and still be grateful for the support from your loved ones. Gratitude shouldn't negate how you feel.

By incorporating simple practices into your daily routine, you can harness the power of gratitude to improve your mental health and overall well-being. Remember, gratitude is a journey; every small step can lead to a more positive and fulfilling life.

Prioritizing Your Emotional Well-being During the Holidays

While the holiday season and end-of-year parties can be full of festive fun, they can also be stressful and take a toll on your emotional well-being. Putting your emotional wellness on the backburner may cause mood changes and feelings of irritability, hopelessness and isolation. Consider the following tips to prioritize your emotional well-being as holiday celebrations pick up:

- **Practice healthy habits.** Maintaining a consistent sleep schedule and eating a balanced diet will help ensure you have enough physical and mental energy to tackle responsibilities and challenges.
- **Stick to a routine.** It's important to keep a daily schedule for work and personal time. Checking items off your to-do list can also help you feel accomplished on a daily basis.
- **Decrease caffeine and alcohol use.** Although alcohol and caffeine often appear at celebrations, these substances can provoke feelings of depression, anxiety and other mental health challenges.
- **Maintain your boundaries.** Your calendar may quickly fill up with work, personal and social events. Get comfortable saying "no" and reducing extra activities or tasks so you aren't overloaded.
- **Incorporate positive activities.** Get into the habit of caring for yourself and doing activities that make you happy. During a fast-paced month, it's vital to slow down and prioritize self-care.
- **Recognize your holiday stress triggers and relievers.** Financial pressures and personal demands are common triggers. Stress may cause you to lean on harmful stress relievers and fall into unhealthy habits like smoking or drinking.

Staying in tune with your feelings and caring for yourself is essential. If you have concerns about your emotional well-being, contact a mental health professional.

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