Mental Health Tip of the Day Part III

1. **Increase your water intake.**Being hydrated has a major effect on energy levels and brain function. Your brain is strongly influenced by hydration status. Multiple research studies have revealed that mild dehydration can impair mood, concentration, memory and brain performance. Some physicians recommend trying to drink a half ounce of water for each pound of weight. For example, if you weigh 150lbs, you would aim for 75 ounces of water.
2. **Try gardening.**
When life feels like it’s getting overwhelming, spending time in a quiet garden can really help you create inner balance and perspective. Gardening forces you to slow down and be present. It’s not something that you can rush, thus it gives you the chance to be mindful.

Spending a little time gardening each week can help reduce stress and promote positive mental health. Plus, it’s a great activity for any age or to do as a family!

1. **Make time to talk.**

Social connection with others is extremely important. Make time each day to have meaningful conversations with friends or family. Research shows that talk with a loved one has a positive impact on mental health.

1. **Get your heart pumping.**
Aim for 30 minutes a day of moderate exercise that increases your heart rate. Medical research shows that daily exercise improves physical health and also helps with depression and anxiety. Try activities such as taking a brisk walk, cycling, jumping rope, or swimming. When your body feels good, your mind feels good too!
2. **Stop and smell the roses.**
Or any scent you enjoy! Our sense of smell is one of our strongest senses. A familiar or pleasant scent has the ability to illicit happy emotions. Some doctors and psychologists say that “smelling is feeling”. This is because our olfactory receptors (the part of us responsible for smell) have strong input into the amygdala, which is the emotional center of our brain. Try lighting a candle or using essential oils. Some scents that are documented to have positive effects on mental health are:
* Bergamot, lemon and other citruses
* Jasmine
* Pine
* Fresh-cut grass
* Lavendar
1. **Try to watch how much sugar you eat.**
Let’s face it, eating sugar is delicious and gives you a quick burst of energy. However, when that energy is gone, you’re left feeling more tired. This can lower your mood and make you feel irritable. Try to limit sweet treats. If your sweet tooth kicks in, try going for a fresh piece of fruit instead.
2. **Challenge your negative thoughts.**Positive mental health does not mean that we only ever have happy thoughts. Upsetting things are a normal and unavoidable part of life. However, it can be easy to get stuck in a negative thought and turning it into something it is not. Having good mental health means looking at the situation for what it really is. Try challenging negative thoughts by asking yourself the following questions.
* Is there any proof to back up this thought?
* Have I thought about all sides of the situation? Is there anything I missed?
* Have I been in this position before? What happened then?
* If my friend was in the same situation, what would I say?
* Will this matter a year from now? 5 years from now?
* Am I being hard on myself?
1. **Slow down and get organized.**
Sometimes there’s a lot going on – especially right now. You can’t expect yourself to function flawlessly and remember everything. Take some time to organize all you have to do. Invest in a planner and write out due dates and important activities. Prioritize things you must do (you can’t do it all at once!) Try making lists of your to-do items and crossing things out as they’re completed. Being able to visualize your progress is motivating.
2. **Remember your strengths.**It’s easy to get frustrated and overwhelmed; in difficult times we often aren’t the kindest to ourselves. Remember that you are doing the best you can and right now that is more than enough. Take time each day to note 3 of your strengths and positive attributes. If you’re in a rut and having difficulties coming up with things, reach out to a friend or family member to ask them to identify the good about you.
3. **Give yourself breaks.**

When things are overwhelming or too stressful, step away and do anything except for whatever was stressing you out. Your brain doesn’t function well under high stress and needs breaks in order to revisit the task. Try simple deep breathing techniques: close your eyes and take 10 deep breaths. Breath in through your nose, hold for four seconds and then breath out through your mouth and hold for four seconds.