

Berkshire Health Group

WELLNESS CONNECTION

NEWSLETTER

May is Mental Health Awareness Month

Solving the personal puzzle of Mental Health requires resilience, and you have it.

Written by Alex Sabo, M.D.

We have been over a year into the first global pandemic of this scale in 100 years. Some of us have suffered hugely—losing a job, a business or a loved one to either the infection or the social and economic upheaval caused by COVID-19. Many of us have suffered less severely. Though every one of us has experienced moments of fear, doubt and even helplessness, for the most part we have been able, individually and collectively, to tap into our remarkable reserves of human resilience and to begin to solve this perplexing puzzle.

It certainly hasn't been easy, yet understanding and appreciating the power of our own instinctive resilience is step one in getting through this maze.

Think of this pandemic as a puzzle you can solve.

Given the many inevitable fears about health (Am I going to become infected or infect someone else?) and economics (Is this pandemic going to seriously harm or even ruin me financially?), it's understandable we may experience a sense of helplessness, a feeling that this is a catastrophe beyond our control. Instead of surrendering to that fate, we can use our survival instincts to reframe that personal narrative, to change that mindset.



TAKE A PEEK AT WHAT'S INSIDE

- Mental Health Awareness Month, Cont'd
- Foods and Recipes to help with Stress and Sleep
- Quick Guide to Mindfulness
- Upcoming Wellness Initiatives and Your Wellness Benefits

Think of it as a puzzle that you're perfectly capable of solving – not easily or quickly, but ultimately one you will piece together.

Know you don't need to solve the puzzle alone. As lonesome as this journey may seem at times, it's important to remember that many of us on this planet are experiencing similar challenges and emotions. Reach out to others, family, friends, neighbors; ask them what they're doing to cope day-to-day, and share what is working for you. Talk to your doctor, a behavioral health counselor, a member of the clergy, a financial planner or anyone else you know can help you navigate this storm. There are plenty of online resources, including the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) website, which has an entire section on coping with stress during the pandemic.

Focus on the pieces of the puzzle within your control. You can't do it all. There are pieces of the puzzle that are simply out of your control. Pray about them, and let them go. Focus on the pieces of the puzzle that are within your control. Work on those systematically, day in and day out. Once you concentrate on the things you can do to make a positive difference in your own life, you begin to mobilize a positive energy that is reliable and builds to a healthy daily rhythm. Some good examples to improve your Mental Health:

- **Strengthen your immune system.** There's no better way to safeguard yourself against infection than to keep your body strong – by following a healthy diet, staying hydrated, getting adequate sleep and relaxation, exercising regularly, spending time with loved ones and tending your emotional health.
- **Limit your exposure to news overload.** It's good to stay informed about what's happening in the world, but it's just as important to know when to turn it off.

Constantly following the news can be an unhealthy habit that makes us worry endlessly, instead of easing our stress.

- **Continue to socialize** – at a safe distance. Social distancing doesn't mean no socializing. Unlike the last major global pandemic 100 years ago, we're fortunate to have technologies that still allow us to meet face-to-face without actually being face-to-face. Take advantage of those tools to stay connected and cope collectively. Outdoor activities are a great option, and when fully vaccinated, keep alert to the CDC guidelines allowing more extensive safe indoor socializing.
- **Ask for Help.** Realize when you need to reach out to a professional for support. If you are thinking you might need to speak with a professional, you most likely do! Our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is free and confidential for all staff at (413) 447-2655.
- **Help someone less fortunate than you.** Consider assisting someone who has had economic or health problems related to the Pandemic, such as donating time or money to a food pantry, volunteering in a vaccination clinic, offering emotional support to a family member, friend, neighbor or colleague by checking in to see how they are doing or asking if they need something, and so on.

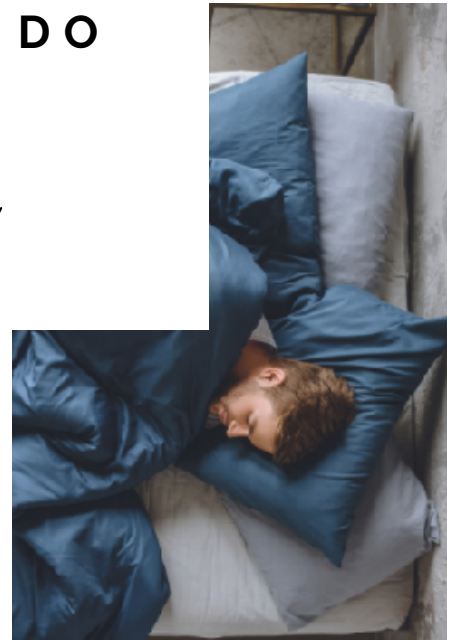
Solving the personal puzzle of Mental Health requires great resilience, and the most important lesson here is that there are deep wells of resilience within each of us.

Alex Sabo, M.D., is Director of Medical Education and Program Director of Adult Psychiatry Residency Training at Berkshire Medical Center

WHAT CAN FOOD DO

For You

Chronic stress and lack of quality sleep can have a huge impact on the health of our mind and body, including our immune system. When we are exposed to constant stress, whether physical or mental it can deplete our body of necessary nutrients and in turn impact our performance. Here are some foods and tips that can help to calm the nerves, help fight harmful effects of stress, and promote restful sleep.



Food and *SLEEP*

- Try not to eat at least 2 hours before bedtime
- Limit caffeine and alcohol (at least 6 hours before bedtime)
- Top foods that may promote restful sleep:
- Tart cherries, kiwi fruit, goji berries
- Nuts (walnuts, almonds), eggs, fatty fish (salmon),
- Chamomile tea, lavender tea, Spiced golden milk hot cocoa
- Turmeric (curcumin), dark chocolate (70% or darker, 2oz serving)

Food and *STRESS*

- Matcha/Green tea, chamomile tea, lemon balm tea, cacao powder
- Garlic, parsley, lemon balm, turmeric (curcumin)
- Green leafy vegetables, broccoli, artichokes, sweet potato
- Nuts and seeds— Walnuts, Brazil nuts, sesame and sunflower seeds, dark chocolate (70% or higher)
- Eggs, fatty fish, chickpeas,
- Blueberries, banana, oranges (citrus fruits)



WHAT CAN FOOD DO

For You



Spiced Nuts

Serves 8

Ingredients

- 2 large egg whites
- 2 cups of mixed nuts or seeds of your choice (almonds, walnuts, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds) goji berries optional
- 1 tsp fresh grated ginger (1/3 tsp dried)
- 1/2 tsp sea salt
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- Olive oil spray/parchment paper

Instructions

- Preheat oven to 250F
- Whip egg whites until frothy. Add grated ginger, fine sea salt, and cinnamon. Keep whipping until mixture is well combined
- Add mix nuts and seeds of choice to the egg white mixture, stir to coat
- Spray parchment paper lightly with oil or spread small amount of oil on paper
- Spread nuts evenly on parchment baking sheet
- Bake at 250F for 40 minutes until fragrant. Rotate the tray at half point
- Take out tray and let cool and harden before breaking into pieces and storing in airtight container.



Spiced Golden Milk

Hot Cocoa

1 serving

Ingredients

- 16 ounces coconut milk unsweetened (or dairy milk or favorite nut milk)
- 1 T + 1 tsp Cacao powder or cocoa powder (dark chocolate unsweetened)
- 3/4 tsp ground turmeric
- 1/4 tsp ground ginger
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- Tiny pinch of black pepper and ground nutmeg
- 2 tsp real maple syrup (or honey or monkfruit if preferred)
- 2-3 tsp coconut oil

Instructions

- In a medium saucepan, warm up the milk of choice, careful not to boil
- Add cacao (or cocoa), turmeric, ginger, cinnamon, pepper, maple syrup, and coconut oil
- Whisk to combine
- Pour into mug and sprinkle some cacao or grated dark chocolate or cinnamon or nutmeg on top to taste



Tart Cherries naturally contain a high amount of anthocyanins which are powerful antioxidants found in the color pigment of the cherry. These compounds can help improve circulation, improve nerve function, decrease free radical damage as well as serve as a wonderful natural sleep aid.

INGREDIENTS:

Servings: 3

1 cup tart cherry juice or 1 Tbsp cherry juice concentrate

1 medium banana (frozen if available)

½ cup milk of choice (if using cherry juice concentrate – add 1 more cup milk)

½ cup frozen blueberries

1-2 Tbsp Local honey or maple syrup

Add all ingredients to a blender and blend until smooth!

QUICK GUIDE TO MINDFULNESS

PRACTICING MINDFULNESS DOESN'T HAVE TO BE A FORMAL SEATED POSITION. YOU CAN PRACTICE ANY TIME OF DAY JUST ABOUT DOING ANYTHING! HERE ARE SOME QUICK TIPS TO GET YOU STARTED.

BREATH

FOCUS ON YOUR BREATH FOR 30 SECONDS. TAKE TIME TO PAUSE THROUGHOUT YOUR DAY. GIVING YOURSELF TIME TO HIT THE RESET BUTTON REDUCES YOUR STRESS RESPONSES.



REACH IN

LEAN INTO YOUR FAITH, WHATEVER IT IS YOU HAVE FAITH IN. FAITH IS A PILLAR FOR HOPE.



MINDFUL EATING

BY EATING MINDFULLY, YOU RESTORE YOUR ATTENTION AND SLOW DOWN, MAKING EATING AN INTENTIONAL ACT INSTEAD OF AN AUTOMATIC ONE.

LAUGH

THINK ABOUT THE THINGS THAT RELIABLY MAKE LAUGHTER BUBBLE UP INSIDE YOU. LAUGHING KEEPS OUR BRAIN CREATIVE AND RESETS OUR NERVOUS SYSTEM.

MINDFUL MOVEMENT

MINDFUL MOVEMENT IS WHEN WE PLACE ALL OF OUR ATTENTION ON MOVEMENT AND THE BODY AND WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE BODY AS YOU MOVE. THIS IS THE REASON WHY YOGA IS USED HAND IN HAND WITH MEDITATION. COORDINATING YOUR INHALES AND EXHALES TO PHYSICAL MOVEMENT HAS MEASURABLE EFFECTS ON YOUR MENTAL FOCUS.



CONTACT NICOLE CARTER AT NCARTER2@BHS1.ORG FOR MORE INFORMATION ON MINDFULNESS

 **Wellness at Work**
BERKSHIRE HEALTH SYSTEMS

WALKING MEDITATION

BRING AWARENESS TO WALKING, WHEREVER YOU FIND YOURSELF. SLOW IT DOWN A BIT. CENTER YOURSELF IN YOUR BODY AND THE PRESENT MOMENT.



MUSIC

YOUR IDEAL MUSIC CAN BE ANYTHING YOU ASSOCIATE WITH TRANQUILITY AND FOCUS.

HOUSEWORK

USE ORDINARY, REPETITIVE OCCASIONS IN YOUR HOUSE TO PRACTICE MINDFULNESS.

STUDY THE MOUNTAINS

MOUNTAIN IMAGES CAN HELP US BECOME MORE STABLE AND GROUNDED TAKING IN EACH MOMENT.



Berkshire Health Group

SPRING WELLNESS INITIATIVES

FodMap: Unlocking the Key to Good GI Health

May 4th @ 12-1pm

Nutrition Awareness Webinar



In this Nutrition Webinar you will learn about...

- The secret formula to optimal GI health
- The FODMAP diet, an eating pattern that has helped many cope with poor GI health
- Safe exercises to help tighten your midsection

CLICK HERE TO REGISTER:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_PvOIcojsRAi_dv8lpp4wzw

Teams of Two Challenge

May 3rd- June 7th

Even the most motivated people still need a little nudge in the right direction every now and then. Having a partner travel the road to healthy living can make success easier...and much more fun! Studies have shown that social interactions have an overwhelmingly positive effect on physical and emotional well-being and behaviors are influenced by the people surrounding an individual, which is why it's so important to associate with people whose values and habits support a healthy lifestyle. Since healthy habits can be contagious, this challenge has participants use the power of partnership to take their health to the next level and compete against other teams of two.



BHS Wellness YouTube Channel

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCoJBlasumvFu4RE_bFNtoKQ/playlists?view_as=subscriber

Our BHS Wellness YouTube Channel provides credible health education, and insight into tools, strategies and resources to maintain positive mental and physical wellbeing.

Our vision is a connected community empowered with confidence and resilience, supporting each other on their journey to a foundation of positive mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing.

BHS Wellness Content:

Presentations and Workshops, Nutrition, Physical Activity, Disease Prevention, Stress Management, Mindfulness, Workshops, Presentations, Tutorials, Instructional Videos



Wellness at Work
BERKSHIRE HEALTH SYSTEMS