

BALANCE MY CHOICE

Wellness Pointers

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The ability to be in the present moment is a major component of mental wellness.

~ Abraham Maslow



EMPLOYEE WELLNESS
Southern Adventist University

MENTAL

Emotional | Environmental | Financial | Mental | Occupational | Physical | Social | Spiritual

ALONG THE ROAD TO SHUR

For Sarai, the only thing worse than a barren land was a barren womb. So, turning to her culture's custom, she told her husband, Abram, to give her children through her Egyptian maid, Hagar. But when Hagar conceived, Sarai became resentful and mistreated Hagar, who then fled.

The Bible says that the Lord found Hagar "by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur" (Gen. 16:7). The location reveals that Hagar intended to head back home -- to Egypt. But God told her to return to Sarai and to name the child Ishmael (meaning, "God hears"), "for the LORD has heard of your misery" (v. 11, NIV). Hagar did so, and she called the Lord El Roi, "the God who sees me." The well by which she sat received the name Beer Lahai Roi, meaning, "the well of the Living One who sees me" (see vv. 13-14).

The meaning of the names "God hears" and "God sees" would remain constant reminders to Abram and his family. Earlier, Abram had run to Egypt to escape the famine in the land (see Gen. 12). Sarai had turned to an Egyptian to escape barrenness. Hagar had run to Egypt to escape misery. But each effort, apart from God, found them at the same place of having to trust Him all over again.

The Lord wants us to learn to turn to Him rather than run to Egypt during what seems inescapable despair. As we wait on the Lord, we have His promise that He waits with us, for God hears our prayers and God sees our needs.

O Lord, how often have I traveled the road to Shur toward some Egyptian decoy, running from a chance to trust You. In situations today when I feel like running, may You find me instead on my knees -- before a God who hears and a God who sees.

If God told you on the front end how long you would wait... you'd lose heart.... But he doesn't. He just says, "Wait. I keep my word.... In the process of time I'm developing you to be ready." - F. B. Meyer

RISK FACTORS FOR MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS

Your mental and emotional health has been and will continue to be shaped by your experiences. Early childhood experiences are especially significant. Genetic and biological factors can also play a role, but these too can be changed by experience.

Risk factors that can compromise mental and emotional health:

Poor connection or attachment to your primary caretaker early in life. Feeling lonely, isolated, unsafe, confused, or abused as an infant or young child.

Traumas or serious losses, especially early in life. Death of a parent or other traumatic experiences such as war or hospitalization.

Learned helplessness. Negative experiences that lead to a belief that you're helpless and that you have little control over the situations in your life.



Illness, especially when it's chronic, disabling, or isolates you from others.

Side effects of medications, especially in older people who may be taking a variety of medications.

Substance abuse. Alcohol and drug abuse can both cause mental health problems and make preexisting mental or emotional problems worse.

Whatever internal or external factors have shaped your mental and emotional health, it's never too late to make changes that will improve your psychological well-being. Risk factors can be counteracted with protective factors, like strong relationships, a healthy lifestyle, and coping strategies for managing stress and negative emotions.

adapted from http://helpguide.org/mental/mental_emotional_health.htm

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image from <http://www.pumpkinsoup.org>

Autumn Pumpkin Soup

1 cup pumpkin (canned or fresh)

1 quart fat-free milk

2 Tbsp grated yellow onion

1/2 tsp powdered ginger

2 Tbsp butter

2 Tbsp flour

Salt

Mix pumpkin, milk, onion, and ginger in a pot and cook over moderate heat 10 minutes.

Melt the butter in a small pan, stir in flour, and cook until smooth and thick.

Pour a little soup into the butter-flour mixture, stirring until blended.

Slowly pour into the soup.

Add salt to taste.

Continue to cook, stirring frequently, until hot.

Serves 4. Per serving: 149 calories, 3.5 g fat, 12.7 mg cholesterol, 20.4 g carbohydrate, 9.6 g protein

Supportive relationships: The foundation of emotional health

No matter how much time you devote to improving your mental and emotional health, you will still need the company of others to feel and be your best. Humans are social creatures with emotional needs for relationships and positive connections to others. We're not meant to survive, let alone thrive, in isolation. Our social brains crave companionship—even when experience has made us shy and distrustful of others.

Social interaction—specifically talking to someone else about your problems—can also help to reduce stress. The key is to find a supportive relationship with someone who is a “good listener”—someone you can talk to regularly, preferably face-to-face, who will listen to you without a pre-existing agenda for how you should think or feel. A good listener will listen to the feelings behind your words, and won't interrupt or judge or criticize you. The best way to find a good listener? Be a good listener yourself. Develop a friendship with someone you can talk to regularly, and then listen and support each other.

Tips and strategies for connecting to others:

Get out from behind your TV or computer screen. Screens have their place but they will never have the same effect as an expression of interest or a reassuring touch. Communication is a largely nonverbal experience that requires you to be in direct contact with other people, so don't neglect your real-world relationships in favor of virtual interaction.

Spend time daily, face-to-face, with people you like. Make spending time with people you enjoy a priority. Choose friends, neighbors, colleagues, and family members who are upbeat, positive, and interested in you. Take time to inquire about people you meet during the day that you like.

Volunteer. Doing something that helps others has a beneficial effect on how you feel about yourself. The meaning and purpose you find in helping others will enrich and expand your life. There is no limit to the individual and group volunteer opportunities you can explore. Schools, churches, nonprofits, and charitable organization of all sorts depend on volunteers for their survival.

Be a joiner. Join networking, social action, conservation, and special interest groups that meet on a regular basis. These groups offer wonderful opportunities for finding people with common interests – people you like being with who are potential friends