

## Member's Quarterly

Summer 2022 Edition

### Perspective

# Looking Out for Number One Boosts Productivity and Performance

*The importance of mental health self-care*

**S**ometimes it feels like things have never been more stressful in all aspects of our lives. We feel mentally drained and exhausted. Often enough before we even know it, we find ourselves struggling and overwhelmed. First of all, it's okay to not be okay. Give yourself that permission. Secondly, don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it. At certain times in our lives, we ALL need it.

Managing your own mental health is an element of self-care that you should not avoid. Here are some suggestions from the experts to help you get there.

#### **Stay active and exercise**

Participating in activities that you enjoy outside of working hours can greatly benefit your mental health. This is especially true of things that involve other people like playing golf, going to a yoga class or going to the gym. Our mood is directly affected by chemicals in the body and even mild forms of exercise can release dopamines that help us look and feel better. Walking is a great exercise that is most beneficial for both mind and body. Exercise reduces stress and helps us sleep better, both vital elements of maintaining good mental health.

#### **Sleep**

Having a good and restful sleep pattern helps us stay sane and healthy. So does having good sleep etiquette. This involves maintaining regular sleep hours that work for you and your body as well as being careful about what you eat, drink and watch before you go to bed. Use the time before you go to bed to relax and unwind. You could read or have a long, soothing bath. Try not to take TV or your electronics to bed with you. They may entertain you, but they will also stimulate your brain when you are trying to get it to slow down. Our bodies heal and recover when we sleep and so do our minds.

#### **Eat and drink in moderation**

Nutrition and mental health experts alike agree that eating plenty of fruits and vegetables is good for your overall mental health. Foods rich in fatty acids like salmon, nuts, seeds, beans and lentils are considered great brain foods. Refined sugar products (like those we crave when we are feeling low) will not cure depression. These refined sugar products will increase stress levels. Focus on eating good foods in moderation to maintain your body's natural balance. Do the same with alcohol. One drink to unwind or a glass of wine with dinner may be acceptable, but be careful not to use alcohol or marijuana as coping mechanisms. It's a short-term fix that may cause longer term problems.

#### **Don't isolate**

The pandemic certainly taught us that while we needed to physically isolate to prevent disease transmission, it was more important than ever to not socially isolate. We found inventive ways to participate with other people through online book clubs and exercise classes, even group Zoom games and just old-fashioned chats on the telephone with family and friends. Now that we can do more in person, we should reap the benefits of social interaction for our mental health and well-being. We can finally do more outdoors in warmer weather with less fear of disease transmission, so get out, be active and have fun while you can.



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### **Perspective** continued

#### ***Ask for help and accept it***

If you feel you need more support, ask for it. All of us have times where we've experienced loss, grief or just troubling times in life where we have to talk to someone who will just listen. If your close friends offer to help by taking you to dinner or a movie, accept the offer and go. It may just get you out of your funk. So many of us have sought professional advice as well. Psychologists, psychiatrists and counsellors have a lot to offer and may be able to guide you back to a better place. Sometimes a doctor may even prescribe medication. If you are struggling, you should consider this option instead of sinking deeper.

#### ***Take a Mental Health Day***

Give yourself permission to take a mental health day when you need it. Yes, you can be assured that we all need one from time to time. Don't plan to do anything other than resting and recuperating. Give your mind a rest that day. Watch corny comedies or action flicks. Book yourself a massage or a reiki session- whatever helps you ease the stress and strain you are feeling. Often enough, one day off can make all the difference and may actually prevent you from taking off more time in the future.

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