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Health Promotion and Illness Prevention

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HEALTH PROMOTION AND ILLNESS PREVENTION

By

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Project submitted is partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Bachelor of Integrated Studies Degree

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FIELD OF STUDY

PROJECT APPROVAL

I hereby recommend that the project prepared under my supervision by

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Abstract

Those with unhealthy lifestyle behaviors are likely to have a shorter life expectancy and experience an onset of disability sooner. An unhealthy lifestyle also increases the chance of heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. We can decrease our chances of all of those by taking care of our physical, mental, social, emotional, spiritual, and environmental health. Health promotion and illness prevention gives us the choice to better our own lives and the quality of our lives. This can be done by the actions we take daily that influence our health and prevent illness. Some of these actions include activities such as exercising 30 minutes a day, 3-5 days a week. For others it may be as simple as changing their consumption by making healthier food choices. There are other habits that if stopped will promote health and prevent illness such as not using tobacco.

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Introduction

Health is not only the absence of disease, but also the capability to bounce back from illness and other health problems including injuries. We are a society of inactivity, poor nutrition, obesity, substance abuse, mental health issues, and poor environmental quality, just to name a few. On top of sickness and disease are the poor quality of life, dependence on doctors and medicines, and the increase risk of early death. We are constantly bombarded with advertisements for improving our health. There are tons of products to purchase that claim they can help us lose weight, stay healthy, or reverse the signs of aging. Our society looks for ways to make ourselves healthier without us having to do the work ourselves. We tend to take the easy way out. We ask how we can get the best results with the smallest amount of work. We ask if there is something, we can buy that will do the work for us. Advertisements teach us that being young, happy, and healthy comes easy by taking a pill. Hardly do we look within to find out what basic changes we can make to better our own health. Many don't take the responsibility for their own health. We don't ask what we can do to make changes for ourselves, we don't ask what we can do to prevent going down the wrong path. We want health and happiness, but we want it to come easy.

Marmout's (2007) found the following:

Health is a universal human aspiration and a basic human need. The development of society, rich or poor, can be judged by the quality of its population's health, how fairly health is distributed across the social spectrum, and the degree of protection provided from disadvantage due to ill-health. (p. 1157)

Those with unhealthy lifestyle behaviors are likely to have a shorter life expectancy and experience an onset of disability and illness sooner. On top of all that the life they live might be

poor quality, filled with pain and trips in and out of doctors' offices. When they don't manage their health, they create a ripple effect and one health issue ends up affecting other conditions and other parts of their body. How often have you seen people with a medicine cabinet filled with pills for different ailments they are suffering from? On top of this our children learn from us, they see us going to the doctor for every little illness instead of searching for ways to prevent from getting sick. They see us buying pills for weight loss instead of eating healthy.

Bauer, Bowman, Briss, and Goodman, (2014) determined that:

In the USA, chronic diseases are the main causes of poor health, disability, and death, and account for most of health-care expenditures. The chronic disease burden in the USA largely results from a short list of risk factors-including tobacco use, poor diet and physical inactivity (both strongly associated with obesity), excessive alcohol consumption, uncontrolled high blood pressure, and hyperlipidemia. (p. 45)

We can decrease our chances of all of those by taking care of our physical, mental health, emotional health, environmental health, social health, and spiritual health. Health promotion and illness prevention gives us the choice to improve the quality of our health and our lives. This can be done by the actions we take daily that influence our health and prevent illness and injury.

Some of these actions include activities such as exercising 30 minutes a day, 3-5 days a week, or taking the stairs instead of the elevator.

Gibson, Heyward, and Wagner (2019) suggest the following:

For substantial health benefits, adults should engage in aerobic exercise at least 150 minutes a week at a moderate intensity or 75 minutes a week at a vigorous intensity or an equivalent combination thereof. In addition, adults of all ages should do muscle-strengthening activities at least two days per week. (p. 6)

Other actions to improve the quality of our lives are yoga, traveling, finding purpose in life, or finding a new hobby. For others it may be as simple as changing their consumption by making healthier food choices, taking vitamins, and drinking lots of water to stay hydrated. There are other habits that if stopped will promote health and prevent illness such as not using tobacco, alcohol, and recreational drugs. And better yet there are ways to improve our quality of sleep, relax, relive stress, and meditate to improve health. Our mind and emotions also are important to take care of, along with our environment. The Earth we live on does have effects on our health. As we age our need to focus on our health increases and we have to work harder to stay healthy. We will talk about these throughout the research and what we can do to make improvements to our health.

This research paper focuses on healthy lifestyle management. Addressed is how individuals can maintain and improve their health by managing their lifestyle and the decisions they make daily.

Sartorius (2006) defined health as:

Today, three types of definitions of health seem to be possible and are used. The first is that health is the absence of any disease or impairment. The second is that health is a state that allows the individual to adequately cope with all demands of daily life (implying also the absence of disease and impairment). The third definition states that health is a state of balance, and equilibrium that an individual has established within himself and between himself and his social and physical environment. (p. 662)

Physical health, mental health, emotional health, environmental health, social health, and spiritual health are all health categories. Many of these categories cross over into each other and affect one another. When one health category isn't maintained it affects the other categories over

time. One can't be maintained if all others are ignored. This does not mean that we have total control of our health and the different aspects of health. We can do our part to keep ourselves healthy, happy, and living a long life. We were given this body and we must do our best to take care of it. Relying on doctors and medicines isn't going to keep us disease and illness free. Health care is expensive and it's beneficial for us to do as much as we can to do preventive care. Brot-Goldberg, Chandra, Handel, and Kolstad offered "spending on health care services in the United States has grown rapidly over the past 50 years, increasing from 5.0% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 1960 to 17.5% in 2014" (p. 1262). If we don't promote our own health and attempt to prevent getting illnesses and diseases, we are going to be part of the reason for the rise in future health care costs. We can't prevent every illness, disease, or injury, but we can take responsibility for ourselves and our dependents to be the healthiest we are capable of being.

Initially the terms health care and health promotion must be defined so that they are not confused with each other. Cottrell, Girvan, and McKenzie reported "health care refers to the need to treat symptoms or conditions and providing services and insurance to help people access that care" (p. 2). This is a term we are familiar with in our society, unlike the term health promotion. Cottrell, Girvan, and McKenzie (2006) suggest "health promotion focuses on interventions that helps keep people healthy and improve their overall well-being. It's focused not just on individuals, but on the overall communities and environments in which people live" (p. 3). Health promotion gives us the responsibility for our own health. We can work to prevent ourselves from getting illnesses and diseases. We also have this responsibility for our dependents. Along with that the responsibility of our own health is the result of decreased health care costs, better quality of life, and a longer life span.

Physical Health

Our physical health is what the general population thinks of when we talk about health. One's physical health can be affected by physical activity/inactivity, nutrition, hydration, adequate/inadequate sleep, whether someone is overweight or obese, whether someone engages in tobacco, alcohol, or substance abuse. Being physically healthy is when our bodily functions are working at peak performance, due not only to a lack of disease, but also to regular exercise, balanced nutrition, and adequate sleep for physical recovery. Physical health involves pursuing a healthy lifestyle to decrease the risk of disease and sickness. Physical health also reduces the risk of an injury and health issues. Being physically healthy also leads us onto the road to recovery quicker than people who aren't as physically healthy. A person that is physical healthy is usually a normal weight for their height and can carry out daily activities in their lives without major issues and avoid many illnesses. Our genes also play a determining factor in our physical health, but we will not be discussing that aspect. We instead will focus on what we can do to improve and maintain our own physical health.

Maintaining physical fitness keeps our body healthy and allows it to perform daily functions. Being physically fit can include strength training, cardio conditioning, circuit training or a combination of the three. Those who are physically fit and have strong bodies tend to become sick less and they reduce the risk of getting injuries and diseases. According to the Mayo Clinic (2019) "regular exercise also prevents and manages stroke, metabolic syndrome, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, depression, anxiety, cancers, arthritis, and falls" (p. 1). Fitness gives our bodies the strength to function at its peak. Our body functions better and is less likely to end up with these ailments. We can all find ways to add more physical activity to our daily schedule; this includes skipping the elevator and taking the stairs or parking in the back of

a parking lot to increase our walking distance. Many people have begun counting their daily steps and make a point to reach their daily step goal. Physical fitness also leads to better balance. Having good balance is important as people age.

Boersma (2013) et al. wrote:

Falls in older persons are associated with fear of falling, lack of confidence, injuries, and hospitalizations and, in some cases, death. Fall prevention programs are a major burden to health care budgets worldwide. Older fallers suffering from balance problems constitute one of the most challenging types of patients in clinical practice. (p. 258)

Doing balance exercises, as simple as yoga, lunges, or standing on one foot, will reduce the risk of falls. If you're unsure if you're healthy enough to begin exercising, ask your doctor for guidance.

Being physically healthy doesn't only concern what we do with our body physically, but also what we put in our body internally. One example is our water intake. "Our body is primarily composed of water. Adults are 60% water, and our blood is 90% water" (Pal, 2013, p.24). Which means hydration through water is crucial for maintenance and for our body to function and performance its jobs. Water is essential for the kidneys and other bodily functions. Hydration helps prevent kidney stones. Many doctors must educate their patients with kidney stones to stop drinking carbonated drinks and replace them with water. Water and hydration also lubricate your joints. Chiropractors who manipulate patient's spines through adjustments encourage water hydration for healthy vertebrae discs. Pal (2013) noted "Our joints and disks of the spine are made up of cartilage which is 80% water" (p. 26). The easiest way to stay hydrated and lose weight is to drink lots of water and fewer sugary drinks. It flushes our system, keeps us hydrated, and is needed to keep us alive. Along with drinking water for hydration we should

avoid drinks that dehydrate us. Some drinks that dehydrate the body contain alcohol or caffeine. When we are working out in the gym or working outside on a hot day, we need to drink more fluids to stay hydrated since we are sweating. Also, sweating is a sign of efficient hydration. Sweating cools the body. Someone who is in the heat and appears to be overheated but is not sweating is in danger and is probably dehydrated.

Besides drinking water and staying hydrated, we should focus on nutrition. You are what you eat, meaning our diet plays a crucial role in our health. We eat for enjoyment when food should be used for nutrition and to fuel the body. “Barriers to healthy eating include a lack of time, not planning ahead, limited availability of healthy foods in schools, and a general lack of concern regarding following healthy eating recommendations” (Croll, Neumark-Sztainer, & Story, 2001, p. 195). Our input determines our output. It would benefit us if we ate more fruits and vegetables and less fast food. There’s a reason the old saying is eat an apple a day to keep the doctor away. Additionally, to eating more fruits and vegetables we should avoid sodium. The easiest way to lower our sodium is by using less salt and eating organic. Many processed foods can be bought that are labeled as having less sodium.

Being physically fit and watching what we consume also helps maintain weight. Keep a healthy weight for health benefits. Back and joint pain can be relieved with weight loss. This is because when we carry extra weight, it puts more pressure on our joints daily and causes them to have to work harder. “A new study shows that for each pound of body weight loss, there is a 4-pound reduction in knee joint stress among overweight and obese people with osteoarthritis of the knee” (Warner, 2019, p. 1). With weight loss we get an increase in energy levels along with welfare levels and self-esteem. There are several ways to maintain a healthy weight, including maintaining a healthy diet. This can be done by avoiding sugar, fats, and high calorie foods.

“The Western diet is increasingly high in added sugars, and this has definite links to obesity, even when the sugar occurs in beverages rather than food” (Strudwick, 2018, para. 14). Eating lots of fruits and vegetables and not overeating during mealtimes improve weight maintenance. Strudwick (2018) points out “take time to chew and savor food. This technique helps with weight loss, as it gives a person’s brain enough time to recognize the signals that they are full, which can help to prevent over-eating” (para. 10). Other choices to be made would be exercising at least three times per week, drinking lots of water, and getting enough sleep.

“Numerous studies have shown that getting less than 5-6 hours of sleep per night is associated with increased incidence of obesity” (Strudwick, 2018, para. 24). Another helpful way to keep a healthy weight is to limit alcohol consumption; alcohol is high in calories and doesn’t have any dietary health benefits. People who watch their calorie intake refer to drinking alcoholic drinks as “drinking your calories. “Alcohol drinks are often referred to as “empty” calories. This means that they provide your body with calories but contain very little nutrients” (Lockett, 2018, para. 2). Save caloric intake for foods that will fuel your body. Some people benefit by reducing their meal size while others count calories or macronutrients. A way to determine if you are overweight or even underweight is the Body Mass Index (BMI). The Body Mass Index takes your weight and your height to determine what category you’re in.

Sometimes eating a balanced, nutritious diet isn’t enough and we require additional supplements, vitamins, and minerals.

Bernadot (2018) declared:

It is clear that a multivitamin supplement has the ability to increase our wellness.

Calcium and Vitamin D are proven to aid in bone health, Folic Acid is proven to reduce birth defects, B Vitamins are proven to increase energy and aid in neurological functions,

Magnesium is proven to relax the body, antioxidants are proven to prevent certain cancers, and Vitamin C and Zinc are proven to increase immune function. (para. 2)

Taking a daily multivitamin is recommended in case you're not getting your daily vitamins and minerals with the food you eat. You can find multivitamins in tablet form or gummies.

Besides taking care of our physical fitness and our consumption, we also need to rest our bodies. Sleep is important to your physical health. During sleep your body is working to maintain your physical health.

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute's (2018) study discovered that:

Sleep is involved in healing and repair of your heart and blood vessels. Ongoing sleep deficiency is linked to an increased risk of heart disease, kidney disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and stroke. Sleep deficiency is known to increase the risk of obesity (p. 34).

When it comes to the recommended amount of sleep Albert et al. (2015) showed that "seven to nine hours is recommended for young adults and adults" (p. 240). Therefore, it's beneficial to wear a CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) and reduce the risk of sleep deprivation and deficiency in cases when you don't sleep well due to snoring or sleep apnea.

Along with sleep, another easy way to improve our health is by washing our hands. Hand washing rids our bodies of harmful germs and viruses that can make us sick. Washing our hands also prevents us from passing those germs and viruses through the community. Many people pass up hand washing for hand sanitizer, but nothing is as good as hand washing. Hand sanitizer is beneficial when hand washing isn't an option.

Check your posture and ergonomics. This can prevent back pain, neck pain, carpal tunnel syndrome, and other occupational injuries. As stated by Kroemer and Kroemer (2016),

“Office ergonomics helps us be comfortable and safe at work, which reduces the risk of injury, lowers stress, increases personal engagement, and raises overall work performance” (p. 14).

Having a healthy spine prevents pain and disabilities as we age. We can do this through correct lifting, by lifting with our legs and by not lifting too much weight. Using proper lifting form by not over-arching our backs is also important to having a healthy back. Other preventive measures is having a strong core, this includes your lower back and abdominal muscles. Core strengthening can be done through weight training and yoga.

Sometimes we need assistance in maintaining health. Go to your doctor for regular check-ups, get your immunizations, and get the flu shot. Immunizations have eliminated diseases that once killed thousands. One example is polio; polio was the most-feared disease in the 1950's. Beaubien (2012) stated “In 1952 alone, 60,000 children were infected with the virus; thousands were paralyzed, and more than 3,000 died. Hospitals set up special units with iron lung machines to keep polio victims alive” (para. 4). Today, with the help of the polio vaccine, the virus has been drastically reduced. The world's poorest communities and their children are still affected. Many other preventable diseases are being reduced with the help of vaccines, including measles, mumps, and whooping cough. These diseases are still a threat for babies who are too young for the vaccine and children with weakened immune systems or allergies to the vaccine. Vaccines are safe and effective. The U. S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) monitor vaccines for safety.

There's list of items to do to improve health, like getting vaccinated, but there's also things to not do. Staying away from harmful substances will help with aging and longevity. Avoid cigarettes, alcohol, and other types of substance abuse. If you are a smoker and choose to quit, your body will benefit. The benefits of quitting smoking begin after the last cigarette. The

sooner a smoker quits, the faster they will reduce the risk of cancer and heart and lung disease. Anderson et al. (2013) informed us “just one day after quitting smoking, the risk of heart attack begins to decrease” (p. 344). In a short amount of time after quitting the sense of smell and taste begins to return to normal. Anderson et al. (2013) disclosed “smoking damages the nerve endings responsible for the senses of smell and taste. In as little as 2 days after quitting, a person may notice a heightened sense of smell and more vivid tastes as these nerves heal” (p. 343). Lungs begin to improve over time. Lung capacity improves, people cough less, and notice less shortness of breath. Circulation continues to improve.

Anderson et al. (2013) added:

In as little as 1 month, a person’s lung function begins to improve. As the lungs heal and lung capacity improves, former smokers may notice less coughing and shortness of breath, athletic endurance increases and former smokers may notice a renewed ability for cardiovascular activities. (p. 343)

The previous smoker has also decreased their chance of lung, mouth, and throat cancer.

Eventually a previous smoker’s chance of developing coronary heart disease will become as likely as a non-smoker. Anderson et al. (2013) found “after 20 years, the risk of death from smoking-related causes, including both lung disease and cancer has reduced to that of someone who has never smoked” (p. 345).

Besides nicotine, alcohol is also a dangerous substance for our health. Alcohol can cause liver damage by not allowing it to work properly. Diabetic patients have a difficult time regulating their blood sugar when drinking alcohol. Intoxication can also be dangerous and lead to poor judgement, accidents, and death.

Avoid nicotine, limit alcohol consumption, and avoid the sun. Tans can be considered beautiful, but they harm our skin and our health. The UV rays from the sun and tanning beds damage our skin cells. Wear sunscreen to reduce the penetration of UV rays into the skin. Sunscreen reduces the risk of cancer, especially melanoma. Melanoma is an extremely aggressive and life-threatening skin cancer. Skin cancer is the abnormal growth of skin cells and is the most common form of cancer, but it is also the most preventable. “Recommendations to reduce the risks of melanoma deaths and recurrence include routine self-examination for suspicious lesions, sun avoidance, use of sunscreen, and protective clothing” (Boyas, Brodwell, Hutcheson, Jacks, & Nahar, 2016, p. 1). If left untreated, skin cancer can grow deep into the skin and spread through the rest of the body, causing serious complications. Factors that increase your risk of melanoma are unprotected or excessive ultraviolet exposure from the sun or tanning beds, previous sunburns, many moles, fair skin, skin cancer history, and genetics. Mayo Clinic (2019) added “factors that may increase your risk of melanoma include fair skin, a history of sunburn, living closer to the equator or at a higher elevation, having many moles or unusual moles, a family history of melanoma, and weakened immune system” (para. 18).

Mental Health

People who are mentally healthy are typically emotionally strong, have a love for living, and the ability to laugh and have fun. They deal with stress and bounce back from bad days with meaning and purpose in both activities and their relationships. Those that are mentally healthy are willing to learn new skills, are active in society, and adapt to change. They have a balance between work and play, rest and activity. Their relationships are strong and fulfilling. They have self-confidence and a high level of self-esteem. They recover quicker from hardships and stressors.

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health includes conditions and situations such as depression, anxiety, stress, Alzheimer's disease, and mood disorders.

Byrn, Kouba, Ferrans, and Penckofer (2010) found:

Depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide, affecting about 121 million people. In the United States, 14.8 million adults have depression. Depression is the leading cause of disability for Americans between the ages of 15 and 44 (p. 389).

There are lost workdays due to depression. It can be a debilitating illness that leaves people in bed for days. They're unable to participate in daily functions and duties and they lose the desire for life and living, and they feel lonely. Research by Gabriel and Harnois (2000) supports "it is clear that mental illness imposes a heavy burden in terms of human suffering, social exclusion, stigmatism of the mentally ill and their families and economic costs" (p. 1). Depression can lead to suicidal thoughts and actions. It is a debilitating disease.

For those who are suffering from mental health illness there are proactive moves they can take to improve their signs and symptoms. One of the things we can do is exercise. Exercise can contribute to better health outcomes in people's physical health but also treats depression.

Exercise is a powerful depression fighter. The Apostolopulos, Bosevski, Mikkelson, Polenakaovic, and Stojanovska (2017) study found the following "there is a growing body of literature that recognizes the positive effects of exercise on mood states such as anxiety, stress and depression, through physiological and biochemical mechanisms" (p. 48). Aerobic exercises, including jogging, swimming, cycling, walking, hiking, gardening, and dancing reduce mental health challenges. It is believed that exercise helps with mood improvements. Possibilities to

explain the benefits of physical activity on mental health include distraction from our worries and learning to focus on your activity. Exercise seems to relieve tension and stress and boost physical and mental energy.

Additional to exercise, relaxation can help with stress relief and depression. Research by Apostolopoulos, Bosevski, Mikkelsen, Polenakovic, and Stojanovska (2017) showed “techniques such as deep breathing, visualization, meditation, rhythmic exercise, Tai Chi, and yoga can help. Relaxation will slow your heart rate and decrease your blood pressure when done correctly” (p. 50). Meditation can help you focus on the good instead of concentrating on the negative; it also helps you quiet your mind and put yourself at peace. This relaxation gives you an opportunity to focus on yourself.

Many people with mental health problems believe that smoking relieves their symptoms and helps them relax. According to Babb et al. (2016) “in 2015, cigarette smoking prevalence was higher among persons who have serious psychological distress (40.6%) than among persons without serious psychological distress (14.0%)” (p. 1206). Nicotine dependence can make a person feel as though they need more nicotine in order to repeat this positive feeling. This would explain why someone goes from smoking a few cigarettes a day, to half a pack, to a full pack or more a day. The nicotine causes the person to not relax if they try to quit and it increases anxiety until you smoke again to relieve the symptoms. The results are what society calls a “chain smoker”.

Along with smoking to self-medicate to relieve depression, some also reach for alcohol or other drugs. “Alcohol use can cause or worsen symptoms of mood disorders” (Holland, 2019, para. 2). Although alcohol can have a temporary positive impact on our mood, in the long term it can cause big problems for our mental health. “A person with frequent episodes of severe

depression may turn to drinking to self-medicate. That can worsen alcohol misuse. People who frequently drink are more likely to experience episodes of depression, and they may drink more in an attempt to feel better” (Holland, 2019, para. 6). If you use alcohol to improve or mask your depression, you may be starting a vicious cycle. Instead of drinking alcohol try exercising, breathing techniques, or talking to someone.

Along with avoiding some toxins we put in our body to prevent mental health issues; we should focus on what we do want to consume. Diet might be as important to mental health as it is to one’s physical health. An unhealthy diet is a risk factor for depression and anxiety. Our brain is always working; this means it requires a constant supply of fuel. That fuel comes from the foods we eat and what’s in that fuel makes all the difference. Fueling our brain with healthy, nutritious foods is better for our mental health than foods with poor nutritious value. This can be done by eating plenty of fruits, vegetables, and foods with protein and avoiding sugary foods or foods that are high in fat. Bes-Rastrollo, Doreste, Henriquez, and Sanchez-Villagas argue that “the adherence to a Mediterranean Dietary Pattern ensures an adequate intake of B vitamins and w-3 fatty acids. A protective role on depression had been suggested for both nutrients” (p. 1104).

Eating nutritiously and drinking lots of water are both important to mental health. Dehydration influences moods increases fatigue, causes cramps, and affects the ability to think clearly. Butler, Field, Golightly, and Masento, (2014) found that “although it is well known that water is essential for human’s homeostasis and survival, only recently have we begun to understand its role in the maintenance of brain function” (p. 1842). Water is essential to good health yet needs vary by individual. Research by Gibson, Gunn, and Maughan (2012) supports “total water intake for adults is 2 liters a day for women and 2.5 liters a day for men” (p. 191).

No formula fits everyone. But knowing more about your body's need for fluids will help you estimate how much water to drink each day. You may need to modify your total intake of water based on several factors. These factors include exercise, environment, overall health, sweating, and pregnancy or breast feeding. It's a good idea to fill a bottle or a gallon jug in the morning and track the amount of water you drink throughout the day to make sure you're drinking enough.

Along with taking care of bodies to help mental health, sometimes something as easy as getting outside can help. Aguglia et al. (2017) discovered "excessive sunlight exposure may exert a fundamental role on psychopathological conditions" (p. 1421). The symptoms include difficulty concentrating, low energy or fatigue, loss of interest in daily activities, moodiness, and sleeping excessive amounts. People complain about their depression getting worse in the winter due to the fact that they are inside too much and not absorbing the sunlight their body needs to maintain a healthy mental state. Melrose (2015) study showed "seasonal affective disorder or SAD is a recurrent major depressive disorder with a seasonal pattern usually beginning in fall and continuing into winter months. A subsyndrome type of SAD, or S-SAD, is commonly known as the winter blues" (p. 2).

Besides going outside and absorbing the sun's rays we should get some sleep. Get plenty of rest to improve your mood. Sleep deprivation can affect your mental health and psychological state. And those with mental health problems are more likely to have insomnia or other sleep disorders. Arakawa et al. (2002) suggested "mental health improved with improving sleep quality" (234). Sometimes when we have a bad day or are mentally exhausted or stressed, we need a time out. That's when it's good to lay down and take a nap to recharge our brains and mental state.

Mental health is helped with rest and sleep, but we should also try to be positive in our daily lives. “People with low positive well-being were 7.16 times more likely to be depressed 10 years later” (Joseph & Wood, 2010, p. 215). Sometimes being positive lifts our mood and help our mental health. Think good thoughts about ourselves, promote our own self-worth, and value ourselves. We can do this through positive self-talk or keeping a journal. Some people keep journals and write in them daily about things they are grateful for. Being positive and thinking positive helps keep the focus on what’s good in our lives. Hopefully this will allow the positive to overpower the negative. Overtime we can let go of the negative emotions from the past and focus on our future. Also, writing thoughts will help you express your feelings.

Positivity helps boost moods and so does venting. Opening to someone and talking about feelings and our mental state is healthy for us emotionally. Heathcote (2014) wrote “the most serious drawback of not talking about things may be that unexpressed feelings and traumas can pile up and explode later” (para. 6). This allows us to get out our frustrations instead of keeping them bottled up.

Condrell (2011) expresses:

There are many experiences in life that at times leave us emotionally overwhelmed. At these times, we walk around feeling emotionally charged up and filled with tension.

Frequently, what has happened to us cannot be changed, such as when someone we love dies, a tragic accident occurs or we learned we have a terrible illness. When these experiences descend upon us, we feel emotionally frozen. We find ourselves stuck in a state of despair and pain. At these times, talking can help. (para. 2)

Talking to people increases our trust and self-worth. It is also beneficial when we surround ourselves with good people. Expressing our feelings is important in mental health.

Even though it's good to talk to someone about our emotions and feelings, sometimes that's not enough for our mental health and we need a professional to talk to. Get help when you need it. There are many professionals that can help with mental illness.

Heathcote (2014) adds "a huge benefit of talk therapy is that its effects are long-lasting. This is because you're not only working through stuff, but you're also developing the tools to help you deal with future stuff" (para. 4). Counselors and psychologists are trained to talk to people who are mentally struggling. They can help you solve your problems and meet your challenges.

Counselors are trained to help you deal with your past and present issues and emotions and teach you how to express your thoughts and feelings. There are also emergency numbers you can call that are staffed twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, especially if you are having suicidal thoughts. Heathcote (2014) noted "joining a support group for people grappling with similar issues as you can be very helpful" (para. 12). There are online websites and groups that meet in most towns for people who need support. According to the National Institute of Mental Health (2019) "suicide was the tenth leading cause of death overall in the United States, claiming the lives of over 47,000" (para. 8). Suicide can be prevented. There is help available.

Sometimes when we don't want to talk to someone about our mental state, we may just need to take a break and try to destress. Many people may feel they're on the verge of burn out; they may have too much on their plate. There's never anything wrong with saying no. Some people take on too many tasks, try to help everyone, and don't have time for their own self. It's ok to put ourselves first. Understand our limits and what we can and can't handle. Don't overextend ourselves and set unrealistic goals.

Maybe you are not overextending yourself and need to give some of your time. Giving of yourself and your strengths and skills can help with your mental state because it can help you

feel value in yourself. Volunteer your time. Use your skills for others who are less fortunate than you.

It's important to take care of our mental health for our physical health. Mental health doesn't only affect our brain, but poor mental health can have drastic effects on other body systems.

Horton (2017) suggested the following:

A recent study by King's College London showed the link between severe mental illnesses like schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and major depression and cardiovascular disease. The biggest study of its kind, researchers analyzed data from 3.2 million people living with severe mental illness, finding they were at a 53% higher risk for having cardiovascular disease than those who didn't have mental illness. The risk of dying from the disease was also 85% higher than people of a similar age in the general population.

(para. 6)

Therefore, it's important to take care of our body's as a whole and understand how each system affects another. Horton (2017) stated "if we lived in a world where mental illnesses were effectively treated, and one day even prevented, it could have a huge impact on not just our emotional, but also our physical, wellbeing" (para. 13).

Emotional Health

The terms mental health and emotional health are used interchangeably even though there is a distinct difference. According to Red Oak Recovery (2018) "mental health deals with behaviors that relate to the mind or brain. Emotional health deals with matters of the heart" (para. 2).

Emotional health is an important part of your life. Another word for emotional health is wellbeing.

According to Peterson:

Emotional health is a state of positive psychological functioning. It can be thought of as an extension of mental health; it's the optimal functioning end of the thoughts, feeling, and behaviors that make up both our inner and outer worlds. It includes an overall experience of wellness in what we think, feel, and do through both the highs and lows of life. (p. 1)

It is our thoughts, feelings, and our behaviors. Emotional health is having a positive self-worth. Many people who don't have strong emotional health may be dealing with depression and even suicide. They may struggle with day to day life. Examples are getting out of bed, going to work, or maintaining relationships. That doesn't mean that people who are emotionally healthy are happy all of the time. Everyone struggles, has bad days, and deals with some state of depression in their lives at some point. The difference is when someone is aware of their emotions and can deal with their problems and bounce back from setbacks, they have strong emotional health. They even feel good about themselves and have good and healthy relationships. When we are stressed, we don't have good emotional health which causes it to affect our body. Collingwood (2018) offered "the brain appears to have a direct effect on stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol, which have wide-ranging effects on the nervous and immune systems" (para. 3). Taking care of our emotional health can have a positive effect on the other body symptoms since all of the bodies systems are interlinked. It's possible to keep yourself from other illnesses and setbacks in life by keeping yourself mentally healthy. There are many ways to keep you mentally healthy. For example, having support through friends or access to mental health

professionals, learning to relax and meditate, having hobbies or goals to keep you busy, also getting enough rest and exercising. If an individual isn't acting age-appropriate or their actions and feelings aren't what someone in the same circumstance would act or feel, it's a clue they may be suffering from emotional problems.

People who are emotionally healthy are surrounded by a circle of friends that includes a strong support group. Without friends, people tend to isolate themselves and become lonely and depressed. They have no one to express their thoughts and feelings to. They have no one to give them a "pick-me-up". Friendships help us get out and socialize more and enjoy activities, life, and living. This circle of friends and support group doesn't have to be large; it can be a small support group. It's not about the quantity, but about the quality of the friends we keep. Having a quality group of friends, you can spend quality free time with and talk to and depend on is important to your emotional health.

National Institutes of Health (2018) found the following:

Social connections might help protect health and lengthen life. Scientists are finding that our links to others can have powerful effects on our health, both emotionally and physically. Whether with romantic partners, family, friends, neighbors, or social connections can influence our biology and well-being. (para. 6)

Stay in touch with friends, not necessarily daily, but on a regular basis, and you will reap the benefits when it comes to your health. Fuller (2017) revealed "studies have shown that older people with friends are more likely to live a healthier happier life than those who do not have many close friends" (para. 8) Also, friendships can help us get through rough times, it gives us someone to talk to on bad days and get us through life's traumatic events. Fuller (2017) suggests "if you are going through a rough patch in life, they are there to listen, give you advice and try to

get you out of that slump” (para. 3). Strong friendships may also keep us accountable for our feelings and actions.

Find ways to meet new people and make new friends, especially if you’ve moved to a new town. Some ways are taking a community class, join a running group, or get involved with volunteering.

Schmidt (2019) discovered that:

If you’re moving to a new community, one of the best ways to find new friends and get involved in neighborhood activities is to join local clubs and volunteer groups. There are several online tools to help you start building a local network with people who share our interests and hobbies. (para. 1)

Find people with similar interests is the best way to make new friends. With have things in common it allows you to have something to talk about to build a friendship.

But a good reminder is that there are also toxic friendships that can do the opposite of a true friendship and affect us negatively and bring us down. Toxic friendships can hurt our emotional health and do damage to us mentally. Degges-White and Van Tieghem (2015) wrote “toxic is a word frequently used to describe behaviors that poison or fracture relationships” (p. 4). This type of friendship is one you need to set limits and boundaries with. Find ways to let the friendship fade. Stick to friendships that are positive and healthy with people who share the same life goals as you.

Friends are great to talk to, but when you needed don’t be afraid to get professional help by people trained to deal with your specific issue. Different emotional help professionals are psychologist, psychiatrists, counsellors, and psychotherapists.

Pennebaker and Smyth (2016) found:

If secrets are so bad for us, would talking to others bring about benefits to our health? In the mid-1980s, psychotherapists began providing the first solid research evidence that therapy was good for both mental and physical health. In fact, there's been a couple of largely overlooked insurance studies showing that when insurance some companies started coverage for psychotherapy, the extent of and costs associated with physical health care dropped. (p. 15)

Mental health professionals can also prescribe medication or other therapies if that is necessary for your situation.

When not spending time to talk with someone it's good to have a hobby to focus on and spend free time on. A hobby helps develop creativity and puts your interests first. It gives you something to look forward to and enjoy. It gives you satisfaction, especially if you're seeing a project through. It's a different place or way to spend time. Hobbies can put you in touch with a new group of friends and it gives you a break from your daily routine. Some hobbies can help calm your nerves. They are things we enjoy doing, so when we do these activities it boosts our mood and allows us to destress. Baum et al. (2009) provided evidence that "enjoyable leisure activities, taken in the aggregate, are associated with psychosocial and physical measures relevant for health and well-being" (p. 729). Hobbies can give us fulfillment and purpose in life. They can also be a way of giving of yourself if you like to create things and make things to give to others. Hobbies can also be an additional source of income to help with financial hard times. Others who have retired take their newfound free time to keep themselves busy with their hobbies. Howell (2017) offered "there are many health benefits to having a hobby and it is also good for making friends, building confidence and cultivation other skills that you may not get to work on as much at work" (para. 2).

Hobbies give us something to focus on and so do goals. Set goals for yourself. This allows you not to become overwhelmed because goals with a schedule set a plan of action. Setting goals can make us happier because we feel good about ourselves and what we've accomplished. When working towards a goal it gives us self-esteem and increases our satisfaction. The first benefits of setting goals in life are that it will improve your self-confidence. Yes, goals setting improve your self-confidence because while you're setting goals it looks real and achievable. You start feeling positive about yourself" (Sharma, 2016, para. 4). Goals give us motivation and responsibility. This can be done with daily, weekly, and even yearly goals. We've all heard of the New Year's resolution, which is also a type of goal. You may set a goal to get up and shower today if that's been a challenge for you or maybe your goal is to run 10 miles. We can have small goals and big goals. Goals can also be set specifically to improve your emotional health, examples are thinking more positive, laughing more, and manage stress better. "We do efforts to achieve goals with enjoyment. We feel happy. Enjoy the process to achieve the goals. Goals setting allow us to be happy to achieve me" (Sharma, 2016, para. 8). It doesn't matter if it is a goal that is big or small, it's about the accomplishment.

Get a hobby and accomplish some goals, but also get some rest. Emotional health is improved with having energy. To maintain energy, you must get plenty of sleep. Not getting enough sleep and not maintaining energy isn't healthy for our bodies, minds, or emotions. "Lack of sleep can alter your mood significantly. It causes irritability and anger and may lessen your ability to cope with stress" (Peri, 2013, p. 3). Not getting enough quality sleep doesn't allow our bodies to rest, heal, and rejuvenate. We handle daily schedules and stress better if we've had plenty of rest. "Chronic sleepiness puts you at greater risk for depression. They are so closely

linked that sleep specialists aren't sure which came first in their patients" (Peri, 2013, p. 3).

When we're tired it's more difficult for us to handle stress and our emotions.

National Institute of Health (2018):

To fit in everything, we want to do in our day, we often sacrifice sleep. But sleep affects both mental and physical health. It's vital to your well-being. When you're tired you can't function at your best. Sleep helps you think more clearly, have quicker reflexes and focus better. Take steps to make sure you regularly get a good night's sleep. (para. 4)

To improve our sleep, we want to make sure we get to bed early enough to get plenty of hours of rest. We also want to make sure we have our bedroom set up for us to get good quality sleep.

Epstein (2007) discovered that:

A quiet, dark, and cool environment can help promote sound slumber. Why do you think bats congregate in caves for their daytime sleep? To achieve such an environment, lower the volume of outside noise with earplugs or a "white noise" appliance. Use heavy curtains, blackout shades. Or an eyes mask to block light, a powerful cue that tells the brain that it's time to wake up. Keep the temperature comfortably cool and the room well ventilated. And make sure your bedroom is equipped with a comfortable mattress and pillows.

On days we need the extra rest take a few minutes and catch a nap to rejuvenate you. Sometimes just a little rest can help you have the energy needed for the rest of the day.

Outside of sleep for energy we should also meditate or practice yoga to relieve stress for our social health. Meditation, working on breathing techniques, along with different types of yoga helps us relax and focus. According to Brown and Gerbarg (2009). It helps quiet our minds, rids it of negativity, and relieves stress. Brown and Gerbarg (2009) report "mind-body

and spiritual practices offer the sense of peace, joy, and relatedness that sweeten our lives and the lives of those closest to us” (p. 56).

Meditation relaxes our minds, but it’s also good to feed our minds. Learn more to lessen the fear of the unknown. When we have a fear of the unknown, we can’t move forward in life. This could prevent us from moving to a new town or applying for a new job or a promotion. Learning something new can also help us gain confidence, provide personal fulfillment, and empower us.

According to Paris (2017):

You learn to trust your path, actions, and decisions, instead of worrying about what will happen next. It’s widely known the more you worry the worse you become mentally, physically, and spiritually. However, choosing to trust that the outcome will benefit you in the long run produces the opposite. Eliminate worry and you allow harmony to remain in your mind, body, and spirit. Even better, the harmony that lies within you leads to confidence, which is necessary for success on any path. So instead of focusing on the unknown, focus on trusting that the unknown will unfold at the right time and when it does you’ll be prepared. (para. 3)

Sometimes we just need to do something for ourselves. Learning to write and express ourselves is important for emotional health. Adult learning can be done by hands on learning, seminars, internet, books, and audio books. Colleges provide classes for “untraditional” students that allow you to get a degree online. Some towns have community classes available in a variety of topics.

Take free time to learn, but also move for your mental health. Get moving to improve mood and lessen anxiety. Exercise causes our blood to flow.

Madaan, Petty, and Sharma (2006) added:

Aerobic exercises, including jogging, swimming, cycling, walking, gardening, and dancing, have been proved to reduce anxiety and depression. These improvements in mood are proposed to be caused by exercise-induced increase in blood circulation to the brain and by an influence on the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis with several regions of the brain, including the limbic system, which controls motivation and mood; the amygdala, which generates fear in response to stress; and the hippocampus, which plays an important part in memory formation as well as in mood and motivation. (p. 106)

We feel good when we exercise. Exercise helps us have a positive body image. It also gets us out and into a routine and allows us to meet new people. Types of exercise include yoga, walking, cycling, running, aerobics, and lifting weights.

Don't only exercise but watch your diet. Eat in moderation. Don't overeat for comfort. Food is sometimes used to deal with depression; some people eat to deal with emotions and stress and tend to overeat. This only causes more problems because it can lead to physical health problems and can poorly affect our emotional health. Andrews, Clair, and Lowe (2011) found "emotional eating has been identified as a factor that promotes the development and maintenance of obesity and hinders its treatment" (p. 211). Try increasing the amount of fruits and vegetables you eat and cut back on sweets. There are many apps you can get on your phone that can help you track your nutrition and help you be accountable. Keep healthy food and snacks constantly available to hinder yourself from making poor nutritious decisions.

While concentrating on what nutrients our body needs, pay attention to what it doesn't need. Alcohol affects our feelings and actions and can make us aggressive. "Alcohol is a depressant. It can slow vital functions, leading to slurred speech, slowed reaction time and impaired memory, while some people may drink to relax, the effects of alcohol can actually

include increased anxiety and stress” (Gonzales, 2018, para. 4). It’s a downer and can be harmful to people’s emotional health. The problem occurs when people use and abuse alcohol to deal with their depression and their emotions. Alcohol isn’t a substance to be abused. “Self-medication, the use of alcohol or drugs in an attempt to reduce anxiety has often been invoked as an explanatory mechanism for the high co-occurrence of anxiety and substance use disorders” (Bolton, Cox, Robinson, & Sareen, 2009, p. 38). Alcohol and recreational drugs can become addictive; people become dependent on them and have problems breaking free from the addiction. Becoming addicted will only cause more problems down the road.

Another depressant is debt. Staying out of debt is important for emotional health. “Some studies have even found the mental stress of debt closely mirrors the stages of grief” (Wilding, 2018, para. 5). Sometimes money is used to make people happy, they shop and purchase things they can’t afford, which in turn cause more problems. This is hard for our emotional health. People sometimes purchase things to make them happy, but then deal with the stress and debt down the road. “The greater the financial strain, the more likely you are to experience symptoms of depression, anxiety and overall ill-health that can leave you feeling distracted at work” (Wilding, 2018, para. 3).

Spiritual Health

Our spiritual health is probably the least thought of when it comes to health and the most ignored. Spirit isn’t part of our body or our mind, it’s within us. It’s our gut instinct, our beliefs and it’s how we decide from right or wrong.

Blatt, Butler, Kogan, and Puchalski (2014) defined:

Spirituality is an essential element of humanity. It encompasses individuals search for meaning and purpose; it includes connectedness to others, self, nature, and the significant

or sacred; and it embraces secular and philosophical, as well as religious and cultural, beliefs and practices. (p. 11)

Spiritual health doesn't cure you, but it is believed to be helpful when coping with pain and healing. Usually people think of religion and prayer when they hear the word spiritual. Spiritual health is bigger than religion and prayer and there are broader concepts such as, meditation, hope, purpose, meaning and peace. Spiritual health includes our self-awareness and our relationships with other people. Spirituality is different for everyone because we all have different needs and desires. People with a healthy spirit appear to have peace with their lives and they live with purpose. Healthy spirited people tend to have comfort and relief from anxiety. They can cope with illness, stress, and death. What we don't realize is that our spiritual health can be affecting other areas in our health, including our physical and emotional health. And just like other categories of health, spiritual health is something that needs can always be worked on and improved. We all have life challenges, but we rely on our spiritual health to make it through it.

Vader (2006) suggests:

By ignoring the spiritual dimension of health, for whatever reason, we may be depriving ourselves of the leverage we need to help empower ourselves, individuals, and populations to achieve improved physical, social, and mental health. Unless and until we do seriously address the question, substantial and sustainable improvements in physical, social, and mental health and reductions in the health gradient within and between societies. (p. 457)

Spirituality is an understanding that there is something bigger than us. Having good spiritual health does not mean you have to attend church, pray, and worship a god. There are other ways

you can explore and improve on your spiritual health. You can decide what you feel is your spiritual core and look for a deeper meaning in life. Others may prefer to do yoga and meditate and concentrate on their inner spirit. Traveling and seeing the world and nature as it was created can strengthen your spiritual health. On top of all that there are the most popular way people develop their spiritual health and that is worshipping their god at church and in prayer. Abedi, Ghasemi, Moeini, and Yousefi (2012) reported “humans obtain spiritual well-being by finding balance among values, goals, beliefs, and relationships with self and others” (p. 195). Spiritual health gives us a purposeful life with meaning and direction. It gives us peace and understanding.

Some people use nature and the outdoors to develop their spiritual core. Spending time outdoors with nature is probably the easiest way to work on your spiritual health. People find peace in nature and can relax. Things you can do in nature while exploring your spiritual core is hiking, going on a country drive with the windows down, walking on the beach, or sitting in your back yard while drinking a cup of coffee. Traveling is another way to see nature and what natural wonders there are in the world. Many people feel they are closer to God and his creation when they are outside in nature. Brady (2018) suggested “in nature you make direct contact with: stillness, serenity, and peace. Nature can be astoundingly tranquil. Although it contains unimaginable power and destructive energy, the essence of the natural world is calm, centered, and still” (para. 10). Nature brings many of us peace, and tend we escape to nature when we take a vacation, or we have a free weekend.

If you don't enjoy nature, maybe you would prefer to chase your dreams. We are all dreamers. Dreaming gives us a stronger sense of purpose. Picture what you want your future to look like. Once you have it envisioned, plan it out and go for it. Planning will put you on the

right track to making your dream become a reality. Write it down and read it daily will help you keep your focus on your dream. What's important is to not be a daydreamer who doesn't achieve their goals. Be a dreamer with the action to make it a reality. Before you know it you'll evolve from a dreamer to a doer. Our dreaming started back when people asked us what we wanted to be when we grew up. We all had fantasies of what we saw our adult life like and many of us are living that dream now.

Colon-Johnson (2019) wrote:

Dreaming is the formulation of a thought and living the dream is taking that thought and implementing it into actions that will produce the dream. If all the great dreamers in the world kept their dream in the formulation stage, we might not have things such as computers, phones, or cars. Think of the roles that those dreams play in all of our lives. (para. 10)

Everyone has dreams, but not everyone makes those dreams a reality. Not everyone has the confidence, drive, and willpower to see their dreams come true. If we shoot for the moon, we'll land among the stars. Dream big, strive big, and want the most for yourself and the people around you. By setting goals and achieving your dreams you are also encouraging others to do the same.

Chase your dreams, but also look for a deeper meaning in life while working on your spiritual health. Leider (2015) stated "most of us want to know there is a purpose to life, that our being here does mean something and that what we do matters. Most of us want our lives to matter, and we want to live intentionally" (p. 2). Searching for a purpose in life strengthens our spiritual health because it gives us a purpose to live. Searching for a purpose in life connects our

spiritual health with our heart. We also will want to make a difference in the world, improve our lives, and the lives of people to come.

Chasing dreams is spiritually looking into our future, but meditation concentrates on the here and now. Meditation allows concentrating internally and finds peace.

Kelly (2014) wrote “to meditate is to exercise the mind in contemplation or focus the mind on a subject in a concentrated, contemplative or religious manner. Meditation and contemplative practices play a substantive role in many spiritual, religious, and psychological traditions” (p. 3). Meditation quiets the mind, helps it relax, and allows you to take that time to focus on your inner spiritual health. Meditation helps us find peace and concentrate on what’s important in our lives and ignore the negative.

Many people who practice meditation on a regular basis also practice yoga because it has similar affects but involves your whole body. According to Woodyard (2011) “one of the main goals of yoga is to achieve tranquility of the mind and create a sense of well-being, feelings of relaxation, improved self-confidence, improved efficiency, increased attentiveness, lowered irritability, and an optimistic outlook on life” (para. 11). Doing yoga helps you strengthen your core, work on breathing techniques, and find peace with your body, mind, and spirituality. There are also the physical benefits of yoga we talked about earlier.

Outside of meditation or yoga people may decide to serve others. Volunteering, helping others, and giving of yourself can help you develop your spiritual health. Boidy (2019) suggested “donating your time allows you to connect with your community and make it a better place” (para. 6). Examples of ways to volunteer is helping at a local food bank, volunteer at a school, clean up a park or beach, teach someone or tutor, or offer help at a local animal shelter or retirement home. Giving doesn’t have to be a community service or time consuming. Giving

can be as simple as being kind to a stranger or helping a friend in need. Boidy (2019) suggested “pay attention to the people around you and what you can do to make their lives a little easier” (para. 5). Small things you can do hold the door open for someone, compliment others, use your manners, be kind to people you don’t like, and leave good tips.

Spirituality and religion are not always the same, but some people do find their spiritual health in religion. Religion is organized and community based. Besides working on your inner spiritual health many choose to work on their spiritual health publicly, go to church, pray, and worship their god. Some adults may choose to use prayer instead of therapy for their health.

Seppala (2016) found

While fewer Americans believe in God and millennials are the least religious generation in the last few decades, nine out of ten Americans have relied on prayer in times of duress. Research suggests prayer helps people find comfort by helping them deal with difficult emotions, encourages forgiveness, and leads to healthier relationships. (para. 1)

Church is what we mostly think of when we think of spiritual health. Sunday school followed my church hymns and prayers. Minnicks (2018) adds “worshipping God is not limited to only one act. There are several ways to worship and there is no wrong way as long as the person is worshipping Goad and not something or someone else” (para. 3). This can be a prayer with a group, or a silent prayer. Minnicks (2018) suggests “true worship is not confined to what we do in church. People can worship God in church with other believers, but they can also worship God when they go into His presence one-on-one” (para. 6). Many tend to look for signs from God to help steer their path through life. Reading is common with worshipping. Many religions have books to read and follow. Examples of books from different religions include the Bible, Quran, and the Torah. Hertenberg (2018) claimed “while the number of living religions is

staggering, nearly seventy-five percent of the population belongs to one of five religions: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Judaism” (para. 20). It’s up to us to find what we desire and what we are comfortable worshipping.

With all these ways to improve our spiritual health, how is our physical health affected? “Stress is the leading cause of many chronic illnesses” (Williams, 2019, para. 6). Does this mean that if our spiritual health helps us with stress, we can be physically healthier? Studies have shown that there is a link between spiritual and physical health.

Williams (2019) stated:

This body is an intelligent system and it knows how to heal itself. Any number of reasons, however, can block this flow of healing, creating an imbalance. Spiritual practices such as meditation or mindfulness have the potential to trigger the body’s healing ability by encouraging a state of balance, both in the body and mind. (para. 10)

We have all heard of stories where people have been “healed” through God or prayer. Maybe that is an extension of the spiritual health relieving stress and allowing the physical body to heal itself.

Along with beliefs that spirituality can help health the body, there are also beliefs that spirituality can help us emotionally. A strong belief system might be the element people need for combatting their depression.

Cornah (2006) found:

Depression can also lead a person to question everything they have previously found security in: Why am I here? What’s the point of living? In these situations, the things that once helped a person make sense of their life seem to disappear. (p. 10)

Spiritual health may be a factor in influencing our emotional health and well-being. It's possible that spirituality allows us to focus on the good outward, instead of focusing on the negative inside of us. With spirituality people look within and understand themselves. They also figure out how they fit into the rest of the world. It gives self-empowerment by giving them control and a connection to their personal growth. Through spirituality they learn to love and accept themselves and others.

Environmental Health

Environmental health is what occurs between people and the environment. What we do has effects on the environment and the environment has effects on us and our health. Humans are rapidly changing the planet. We all interact with our environment and some of these interactions have negative effects on us. Some of these negative effects are through overpopulation, pollution, global warming, ozone depletion, and deforestation. We know that many of these environmental changes affect our health, especially pollution. Chemicals, like pesticides, affect human health, animals, and plants. Ways that we can improve our environment are walking, biking, or carpooling instead of driving alone, and paying attention to how we discard of products and trash. We can also turn off lights and electronics when they're not being used, buy Energy Star appliances, and recycle. Environmental health is not only having effects on us, but it is also influencing health care due to factors that harm humans.

Gips (2016) states:

Almost every choice you make; what to eat, where to shop, what to buy, and how to travel affects the environment on some level. Some choices you make have a direct, specific impact, for example, turning off the light to save electricity. Others have an

indirect or distant effect, such as purchasing clothing produced in a factory that prioritizes safe working conditions for its employees. (para. 1)

We must limit what is taken from the earth, limit the use of toxic substances, respect and protect the earth, and meet human needs. These are a few of the ways we can sustain and protect our environment for the future.

The Earth needs protection from pollution. Pollution is everywhere. It's the trash lying alongside the road, the cigarette someone just threw down, and chemicals dumped in streams. Trash and garbage attract rats, mice and other animals that carry diseases. There is even pollution we can't see in the air we breathe. Van Hare (2019) supported this by adding "air pollution can worsen symptoms of asthma and may trigger asthma attacks" (para. 4). Air pollution is hard to escape. It is all around us.

Constible (2018) showed:

Most air pollution-related deaths and illnesses are caused by fine particle pollution, known more formally as "fine particulate matter" or PM_{2.5}. Fine particles can lodge deep in the lungs and get into the bloodstream. This form of pollution has been linked to a wide array of health defects, including premature deaths, asthma attacks, heart attacks, lung cancer, preterm births, autism, and dementia. (para. 4)

These are common examples of how pollution affects our health. Pollution is found on land, in air, and water. We can reduce the effects of pollution by walking or riding our bikes instead of walking, drive an electric car, stop burn trash, reuse, recycle, plant more trees, stop littering, and picking up other people's litter.

There are also pollutants that are categorized as toxic waste. Hazardous and toxic waste harms humans, animals, plants, and the environment. Van Hare (2019) found "chemicals used in

products are linked to cancer, immune dysfunction, weight gain, thyroid disease and other adverse health outcomes. This is partly due to the leaching of these chemicals into groundwater and ending up being consumed through drinking water” (para. 6). Examples of environmental toxins are pesticides, detergents, and BPA that’s found in some plastics.

Gips (2016) suggests:

Support sustainable agriculture by purchasing certified organic food and clothing. Buy used clothing and donate your clothing when you can’t use it anymore. Either make or purchase natural, non-toxic cleaning cleaners, dish soap, and laundry detergent. Use safe, natural pest control in your garden or yard, and only use “green” dry-cleaner. Drink from a reusable coffee cup or water bottle. Choose non-toxic, environmentally sound (formaldehyde-free and low VOC) toys, furniture, paints carpets, and renovation materials. (para. 8)

Just like other pollution hazardous waste ends up in the land, water, and air. In years past there were not regulations on disposing of hazardous waste. Toxins were buried in the ground, thrown in landfills, and poured into streams. Even after government regulations and laws were made, many companies would dump toxins because it was cheaper than going through safe disposal. Today many of these dumpsites are being cleaned up. One is local to western Kentucky at the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Site.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (n.d.) stated:

More than five decades of plant operations resulted in generation of hazardous wastes, radioactive wastes, mixed (hazardous and radioactive) wastes, and other wastes.

Releases of these wastes contaminated soil, groundwater, surface water and sediment at

the plant and beyond the plant boundary. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency listed the PGDP as a Superfund site on the Nation Priorities List (NPL) in 1994. (para. 3) Today the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Site has cleanup crews working to remediate the hazards. They have employees doing cleanup. This is not only good for the surrounding community's environment; it also increases the community's employment rate.

Pollution has gotten worse along with overpopulation. Overpopulation is when the number of people exceeds Earth's capacity. It's like a building or a room that has a maximum capacity sign posted. Anymore is too many and becomes dangerous. Overpopulation is caused by many medical advances that save lives which leads to a decline in the death rate and a rise in population. Pimentel (2012) found "the current rate of population increase is 1.2%, which means a doubling time of 58 years. Thus, the current world population of 7 billion is projected to double to 14 billion in less than 60 years" (p. 151). With overpopulation we run into problems with feeding ourselves and housing ourselves. We are putting ourselves at risk for food shortages and starvation. Another risk due to overpopulation is job availability. The unemployment rate is slowly rising yearly.

Medical improvements lead to over population and at the same time the Industrial Revolution was occurring. The Industrial Revolution was a transition of doing by hand to relying on machines to do the work.

McLamb (2011) wrote:

It was fossil fuel coal that fueled the Industrial Revolution, forever changing the way people would live and utilize energy. While this propelled human progress to extraordinary level, it came at extraordinary costs to our environment, and ultimately to the health of all living things. (para. 9)

The Industrial Revolution and use of coal led to global warming. Global warming is the long-term warming of the planet's overall temperature (Kristoff, 2010, para. 1). It is believed that global warming has caused the greenhouse effect.

Kristoff (2019) adds:

As the human population has increased, so has the volume of fossil fuels burned. Fossil fuels include coal, oil, and natural gas, and burning them causes what is known as the "greenhouse effect" in Earth's atmosphere. The greenhouse effect is when the Sun's rays penetrate the atmosphere, but when the heat is reflected off the surface cannot escape back into space. Gases produced by the burning of fossil fuels prevent the heat from leaving the atmosphere. The excess heat in the atmosphere has caused the average global temperature to rise overtime. (para. 1-2)

We contribute to the greenhouse effect by burning coal and oil. Reducing the greenhouse effect would require us to plant more vegetation.

According to Mann and Selin (2019):

Climate scientists have since the mid-20th century gathered detailed observations of various weather phenomena and of related influences on climate. These data indicate that Earth's climate had changed over almost every conceivable timescale since the beginning of geologic time and that the influence on human activities since at least the beginning of the Industrial Revolution has been deeply woven into the very fabric of climate change. (para. 1)

Global warming causes melting glaciers and sea level rise. There have also been political debates over the validity of global warming and climate change. Climate change is the long-term change of temperatures and weather patterns. Climate is mistaken for weather, but it's different.

Climate is the measure of weather over a long period of time. Van Hare (2019) stated “climate change can actually have a large effect on your seasonal allergies. Even minor changes in temperature can have a big impact on how much pollen plants produce and for how long, and this can worsen symptoms of allergies” (para. 7).

Along with changing the Earth’s atmosphere, we are doing destruction to the Earth’s surface through deforestation. Deforestation is the permanent destruction of forests to make the land available for other uses. This includes wanting more farmland, or land for livestock, and the desire to build due to personal reasons or overpopulation.

According to Grainger (2009):

The world’s most valuable ecosystem is under threat because of our need for farmland, timber, minerals, and other resources. These forests, which spread over more than sixty countries, account for almost two fifths of all closed forests in the world and contain half of all plant and animal species. Yet deforestation is happening on such a scale that if it were to continue at present rates the forests could disappear within the next on to two hundred years. (p. 17)

Deforestation occurs mostly through mining but burning is another method used. This occurs even in the Amazon rainforest. We’ve all heard of campaigns to save the rainforests, and it’s for beneficial reasons. Deforestation affects natural wildlife and native plant species. Climate, or global warming, and the greenhouse effect are also affected. Soil erosion and flooding is also caused by deforestation. When deforestation is done through burning off the land, it has terrible effects on our health. According to Van Hare (2019) “aside from the clear danger of the fire itself, smoke from wildfires contains particulate matter, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides and some volatile organic compounds, which react with other compounds in the atmosphere to

worsen ozone” (para. 15). Ozone depletion is the reduction or thinning of the Earth’s ozone layer. The thinning of the Earth’s ozone layer allows in more ultraviolet radiation. As we discussed earlier ultraviolet radiation leads to skin cancer.

Outside of deforestation we also do damage to the Earth with everyday activities. By changing how we do things we can make a positive impact on the Earth.

Gips (2016) writes:

Walk bike, carpool, or use public transit instead of driving. Turn off lights and computers when they’re not being used. Replace regular bulbs with energy-saving compact fluorescents. Reduce your heating cooling. Decrease mined metals by recycling and using rechargeable batteries, mercury-free thermometers, lead-free fishing weights, and sustainable building materials. (para. 4)

It is a moral obligation for humans to protect the environment from pollution and other activities that hurt the environment. Without our protection the health of the animals, humans, and plants is threatened.

Gips (2016) adds:

Reduce paper use by using cloth napkins, making two-sided copies, opting out of junk-mail lists, and bringing reusable shopping bags to the store. Purchase certified, sustainably harvested forest products and use 100% post-consumer recycled content paper, tissues, towels, and toilet paper. Eat lower on the food chain with an organic, plant-based diet or eliminate consumption of endangered and factory-farmed fish and seafood. Protect and conserve precious water with low flow faucets, toilets and showers, native landscaping, green roofs and rain barrels and gardens. Compost yard material and food scraps. (para. 15)

Conserving our Earth's supplies will allow the generations after us to also have natural elements to live off of. It is everyone's responsibility to take care of the environment to make this planet a wonderful place to live.

Social Health

Social health consists of your relationships with others and being able to interact in healthy, positive ways. It includes how you develop and maintain those relationships also. Social health includes how you interact and adapt in different social environments. This can include communicating with strangers or dealing with family or co-workers. We see different personalities and how people adapt and react socially. There are outgoing and talkative, people who are withdrawn and quiet, and different personality traits in-between. Aspects of social health includes not only how a person gets along with others, but also the support they receive, if they criticize or blame, if they own up to their part, and how a society contributes to each other. Rook (2019) shared "close relationships can provide emotional support and instrumental assistance that help us adjust to stressful life events and afford the opportunities for companionship that fosters happiness and a sense of meaning in everyday life" (para. 2). Social health is important because it is a state of complete well-being. Therefore, it is important to consider your social health as part of your overall wellbeing.

Montez and Umberson (2010) commented:

Social relationships, both quantity and quality, affect mental health, health behavior, physical health, and mortality risk. Sociologists have played a central role in establishing the link between social relationships and health outcomes, identifying explanations for this link, and discovering social variation at the population level. Studies show that social relationships have short- and long-term effects on health, for better and for worse,

and that these effects emerge in childhood and cascade throughout life to foster cumulative advantage or disadvantage in health. (p. 54)

Social health is taught to you from the time you're born. You're taught from birth how to interact with people. Positive social habits can help you become healthier mentally and physically. If your social health needs improving start small.

Getting along with others is important to our social health. How we interact with the people we deal with day to day plays a crucial role in our happiness. This can be at work, school, at the grocery store, or your love life. The more accepted, liked, and loved, the happier we are. Our acceptance is a large part on how we treat others. Like our parents and teachers told us, treat others the same way we would want to be treated. You can socialize with people and work on your social health together. Make sure your interactions have quality. Montez and Umberson (2010) write "quality of relationships includes positive aspects of relationships, such as emotional support provided by significant others, and strained aspects of relationships, such as conflict and stress" (p. 54). It's great to have a lot of friends, but it's important to remember that meaningful, positive relationships are most valuable. Join a running group, get a partner to walk with, or go to the gym with a buddy. Loneliness can lead to a decline in emotional health. Make sure that you are not only making healthy social interactions but that those around you are also. Elderly adults are in the biggest category of social loneliness and it leads to depression. Montez and Umberson (2010) add "adults who are more socially connected are healthier and live longer than their more isolated peers" (p. 54).

The support we get from the people and the organizations we belong to can also influence how we interact and socialize. This can be your church, school, or gym. If we are not initially accepted by people or an organization, we may easily develop negative thoughts and feelings

which can lead into poor social interactions. Also interact with the community you live in. It helps when getting involved if you make yourself approachable. Put a smile on your face and make eye contact. And most importantly, be friendly. Don't be afraid to pay people compliments, in can be a positive way of starting a conversation. Listen to what people have to say. When meeting other people, it's important to listen to them and show an interest in them. Find a group focused on a favorite hobby like reading or painting. Another option is to find a group to learn something new like cooking or a computer class. Rook (2019) added "demands from network members were associated with a lower risk of mortality among chronically ill individuals" (para. 15). Have positive social exchanges for your health because there is research showing that health can be damaged from poor social exchanges.

Rook (2019) shared her thoughts:

Negative social exchanges can be thought of as a type of stressor and, like other stressors, can trigger the release of stress hormones in the bloodstream. These hormones activate or deactivate bodily systems to prepare the body to deal with the stressors. Typically, if a stressor is short-lived, the release of stress hormones slows and ordinarily bodily functions resume, but when the stressors are prolonged or recurring, stress hormones remain elevated which can damage bodily systems. (para. 18)

Social interactions that are recurring, negative, and disappointing can put damage on important bodily systems. Work on your social exchanges; stay focused on the other person's words and points. To add to that, don't multitask while listening. Set aside what you are doing, if not, it annoys the person you're talking to.

Practicing self-care affects our social health. It is about maintaining healthy supportive relationships. Socialization is key to self-care. Scott (2019) wrote "self-care is vital for building

resilience toward those stressors in life that you can't eliminate. When you've taken steps to care for your mind and body, you'll be more equipped to live your best life" (para. 5). It's hard to make time for friends and it's easy to neglect friendships when life gets busy. Scott (2019) added "figure out what your social needs are and build enough time in your schedule to create an optimal social life" (para. 3). Other areas of self-care to practice are taking care of our physical health so as we age, we hopefully won't be as depended on others. Also, take care of others and you will appreciate the care you may need some day. Ways to perform social self-care is scheduling a lunch with friends, going on a date, make time to call your mom, or invite a friend to go shopping or walking. Have fun with the people you love. You never know how long you'll have them around. McCoy (2019) shared "people with poor social ties are more likely to experience ongoing stress, which can further reduce the quality of their relationships. Self-care that values relationships and stress management can improve overall health outcomes by social support" (para. 19).

Not only is self-care important for yourself, but it's something to teach your children. Parents have an important job. Handle (2011) wrote "parents ordinarily understand that they have some responsibility of preparing their child for adulthood in the society or segment of it into which she-he had been born" (p. 18). Bond with your kids. How you interact with them can help them learn social behaviors. Your behavior with them and time spent with them teaches them how to behave in society. Catch your children showing good behavior and praise them. Use kind words when giving instructions or making requests. Listen to them sincerely and thoughtfully. Love is listening. Spend time with them daily in loving positive ways. Set rules for yourself when using your mobile phone so it doesn't distract you. Ask about your children's

concerns and worries and listen to their answers. Be available to them and create social bonds. Make sure they're comfortable talking to you.

Montez and Umberson (2010) offered a better understanding:

The most salient ties for health vary over the life course, with parents having the greatest influence on children's health, peers becoming particularly important in adolescence, intimate partners becoming most important in adulthood, and adult children taking an elevated role in later life. (p. 56)

Bonding with your kids can also help them not only socially, but also mentally and emotionally. Take family walks with the dog to benefit your family's physical health. Participate in activities that your children enjoy. Handle (2011) states "as a child grows, she experiences many different kinds of incentives toward socialization and integration into society" (p. 4).

Criticizing, judging, and blaming others is hurtful to social relationships. Listen to others without judgement or blame. People will tend to not be inclined to interact with you. You have to learn to accept your own faults and not put blame on others. Disagree with others respectfully. Don't allow a conflict to turn into a personal attack. Golden (2018) reported: Decreasing your tendency to blame others for how you manage anger may have provided you protection from some very uncomfortable feelings. As such, it may be a long-term predisposition, reflecting a habit in your thinking, feeling and behavior. (para. 31)

Own up to your part. Take responsibility for your actions. If people can't trust you, they won't like you. Appreciate yourself and others. This includes all strengths and weaknesses.

Gips (2016) wrote "make the commitment to smile and be respectful to every person you see, no matter where you are or how you feel" (para. 20)

Your social health also has effects on you mentally and emotionally. For most people, socialization is easy and effortless. Others struggle with meeting new people and planning social events. This sometimes leads to isolation which is a sign of depression. Troyer (2016) shared her views “interacting with others boosts feelings of well-being and decreases feelings of depression. Research has shown that one sure way of improving your mood is to work on building social connections” (para. 4). People who are depressed may feel less of a sense of belonging and may withdraw from family and friends. Not having human interaction and emotional support is stressful and can make us feel as if we don’t have a purpose in life. Collingwood (2018) outlined “mental health conditions can also impair a person’s ability to socialize normally. Feeling disconnected from other people and feeling a lack of belonging bothers everyone, but anxious or depressed people can be particularly sensitive to these painful social encounters” (para. 9). It’s incredible that something as simple as friendship can make such an impact on positive life outcomes. It’s important for people to seek out social interactions. Collingwood (2018) added “evidence suggests that depressed people often fail in their quest to satisfy their need for belonging in relationships, with potentially severe consequences” (para. 11). Surround yourself with supportive friends and family to help elevate your mood. Try to take part in social activity every day. Keep in mind that it is quality of your relationships and not the number that determines why benefits you will receive from socializing. It is deeper, caring relationships that provide benefits, and not the shallower temporary ones. Initiate activities with friends and family. Introduce yourself to neighbors and other people you see frequently. Join groups. Create a profile on a dating website.

Along with mental health benefits there are also physical health benefits of socialization and your social health.

Troyer (2016) showed:

You may live longer. People with more social support tend to live longer than those who are more isolated, and this is true even after accounting for your overall level. You will enjoy better physical health. Social engagement is associated with a stronger immune system, especially for older adults. This means that you are better able to fight off colds, the flu, and even some types of cancer. (para. 2)

Babysit your grandkids or help them with their homework. Sing in a choir or play music in a group. Participate in a neighborhood or community group. Get a group to go hiking with on Saturday mornings.

Troyer (2016) adds:

You may even lower your risk of dementia. More recently, there has been accumulating evidence that socializing is good for your brain health. People who connect with others generally perform better on tests of memory and other cognitive skills. And, in the long run, people with active social lives are less likely to develop dementia than those who are more socially isolated. (para. 5)

Could this be because that just being around people who encourage us to keep healthful habits like, better eating, exercising, and other healthy habits? It's also possible that people who are socially health have decreased stress. Some people are only willing to exercise if they have friends to exercise with, this and additional health benefit.

Conclusion

The major categories of health studied; physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, environmental, and social health overlap in multiple ways. If we allow ourselves to live a poor quality of life that affects our physical health, whether this is through poor nutrition, obesity,

inactivity, or substance abuse we see it have negative results elsewhere. We see it affect our emotional health and how we feel about ourselves. It affects our social life when we can't physically do the things we used to do with friends. When these categories of health are negatively affected, we begin to live a poor quality of life. We don't have total control, but it is our responsibility to take care of ourselves the best we can and make ourselves the healthiest we can.

Being physically fit is extremely important to fighting aging and injuries. Being physically fit helps maintain weight and promotes easier recovery from injuries. Fitness has proven to prevent and manage strokes, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and arthritis to name a few. But it also helps our emotional health and our mental health with combatting depression. This may be due to feeling good about our self, or the socializing that's done in fitness groups. Physical fitness can also help our spiritual self. If we choose to run, walk, or hike in nature it gives us peace and this peace promotes spiritual health.

Physical health affects mental and emotional health. These categories of health can be harmed when we don't feel good about ourselves, when we feel fat, or we can't get out and socialize because we're sick or injured. Joining a fitness group helps our mental and emotional health when we're making connections with people who have the same goals as us. Stress can be combatted with exercise also. Take your stress out in the gym or on the pavement by running. Also, the rest and sleep that our body needs for recovery from physical activity is also important when battling stress or depression. Sleep also gives you energy to help you fight stress and whatever is mentally bothering you. The yoga people do for their physical health is also beneficial for the mind and depression through relaxation techniques and focus. Nutritious food that we eat to fuel our bodies are good for fueling our mind. Not smoking for our physical health

benefits our mental and emotional health because we won't turn to nicotine for stress relief. Avoiding alcohol and its useless calories is helpful for us mentally because alcohol is a depressant. And staying away from recreational drugs is necessary for our physical, mental and emotional health.

Spiritual health is also affected by the ways we take care of our bodies. When we want to improve our spiritual health, we rely heavily on our mental and emotional health. When we don't have inner peace with ourselves or we are depressed it can be difficult to want to work on our spiritual life. But when we do yoga or meditate, we are not only benefitting our physical, emotional, and mental health, but we are also benefitting our spiritual self. Going outside in nature for exercise or vitamin D from the sun we help our spirit grow with the peace and relaxation we receive. When we focus on living a spiritual life and making connections with people who do also, we improve our inner mental health. The connections we make help our emotional health. A strong spiritual health helps us be strong and positive. And there are strong beliefs that our spiritual beliefs along with prayer can health our bodies whether if it is a disease, sickness, or injury.

A strong and positive social health is important when wanting to be mentally and emotionally health. Friendships can help with depression and give you someone to talk to about hard or stressful times. Being able to be comfortable socially allows us to enter a gym, join a fitness group, or a counseling group like AA or a victim advocate group. If you spiritually choose to join a church this is a benefit to your social health and can lead into other small groups like bible studies or prayer groups.

Even though environmental health isn't directly connected to us, the health of our environment can have effects on us due to pollutions and toxins. The chemicals we use are toxic

and can have an affect our health. Pollution in the air affects our lungs, causes asthma and allergies, and can trigger heart attacks and lung cancer. Things we can do to improve our environmental health and help our physical health can be taking a walk with a trash bag and pick up litter. By changing what you do daily you can have a healthier life and well-being.

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