

# PIECE OF MIND

## MAGAZINE

ISSUE # 5

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# HOW TO MANAGE YOUR MENTAL HEALTH AT WORK / SCHOOL

BY: STEPHANIE CATALANO



*It's not uncommon for people to put more emphasis on physical health, but it's time to recognize mental health as essential.*

## **Mental Health is Important.**

We are living in a world where there is a lot of outside pressure and noise all which can cause additional stress and interrupt one's mental health. It's crucial to take care of yourself to promote your mental health and overall well-being. Good mental health is critical for a person's success in school, in work, and in life and research shows that individuals who receive social-emotional and mental health support do better academically and professionally.

It's important to know having good mental health doesn't indicate the absence of mental health problems, but rather the awareness and the ability to manage one's anxiety, depression, and other psychological problems so that it doesn't interfere with one's functioning. It's normal to experience emotional problems, go through hard times, and life challenges, but such can cause anxiety, sadness, stress, and other symptoms. Just as a one is able to heal, recover, or bounce back after physical injury, people with strong mental health are able to do the same from difficulties, stress, and trauma. This ability is called resilience.

## **What Is Mental Health?**

As humans, we are biologically, cognitively, physically, and spiritually wired



for connection. Every person wants to love, be loved, and belong. The biggest problem in most people's lives is trauma, which typically manifests or appears as mental health concerns or problems. Most people have a misunderstanding of mental health and believe it to be only the "extreme" cases such as severe bipolar, severe major depression, and schizophrenia-spectrum disorders. While yes, the following are a diagnosis of mental health, it doesn't begin and end there.

Mental health also includes anxiety, depression, addiction, eating disorders, personality disorders, and others. 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 is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood. When we don't believe we have the abilities or resources to cope with a problem, stimuli, or trigger, we create adaptive behaviors to avoid or deny it. This occurs even if the behavior isn't one that serves or supports us, hence, mental health disorders or "responses."

### **Self-help Techniques for Managing Mental Health at School / Work:**

- **Deep Breathing** - breathe in for 5 seconds, hold the breath for 3 seconds, breathe out for 7 seconds. This gentle repetition sends a message to the brain that everything is okay (or it will be soon). Before long, your heart will slow its pace and you will begin to relax—sometimes without even realizing it.
- **Mental Reframing** – this involves ta-

king an emotion, stressor, or trigger and thinking of it in a different way.

- **The 5 Senses** – this involves focusing on your senses as a way to help keep you grounded. For example, if you begin to experience high anxiety rather than focusing on your anxiety, use your senses to be guided to the present moment – what do you hear, see, taste, smell, feel – this is one way to help you return to center and a place of calmness.
- **Opposite-To-Emotion Thinking** – this requires you to do the opposite action of whatever your emotion in the moment is telling you to do. For example, if you're feeling overwhelmed and you want to give up or quit, do the opposite. Allow yourself to start over, to take a break, to try again.
- **Practice Mindfulness** – this allows you to focus on what's happening in the "here and now" and to stop, think, choose your response, then respond.
- **Take breaks** – give yourself permission to take breaks. It can be very helpful to walk away from your desk, to step outside, and get some fresh air. By doing this, you give your mind a break, a time to rest, to disconnect, and reset.

-SC

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