

Wellness Culture

December Wellness Component: Mental and Emotional Wellness

Key Information: Science tells us that thoughts communicate throughout the body in a chemical messaging system. Negative thoughts create the most chaos in the body. They also move more quickly, tapping into the emotional memory patterns stored in the amygdala, an area of the brain that stores patterns of fear response.

How Thoughts and Emotions Affect Your Health

Thoughts are driven by emotion. Two systems are activated by the emotions we experience: the autonomic nervous system and the hormonal system. Emotions that are high energy (anger, excitement) activate the sympathetic nervous system which speeds up the processes in our body. Emotions that are low energy (despair, calmness) initiate the parasympathetic nervous system which is responsible for slowing the body's systems down. At the same time, the hormonal system is activated with negative emotions increasing levels of cortisol and positive emotions increasing levels of DHEA.

Cortisol is known as the "stress Hormone" because we produce more of it when we are stressed. Cortisol plays an important role in controlling our metabolism, immune system, and other important functions. DHEA is often called the "anti-aging" or "vitality hormone" Low DHEA is associated with most major diseases.

The speed of a thought is dependent on the emotional charge attached to it. The stronger the negative energy, the faster it goes, the more positive it is, the slower it travels. A thought becomes a belief when it is fixed in both memory and behavior. The behavior becomes an automatic reaction to the perception of the thought. An effective way to begin noticing whether the beliefs we hold are limiting or beneficial for us is to "tune in" to our thoughts. "Healing Happens", Carol Ritberger, PhD

Action Steps Made Easy:

1. **Notice and identify negative thoughts and emotions that may occur repetitively and set an intention to be in the awareness of what created them.** By setting the intention to be in awareness you can allow your negative emotions to help you discern where you are undermining your self-confidence and self-esteem.
2. **Give yourself a time-out!** Remember that you are a human, not a machine. If you only have a moment or two, close your eyes and listen to yourself breathe.
3. **Bring nature inside.** Use the metaphors found in nature to apply to your own life learning (ie. stillness of stone, flexibility but strength of tree, flow of water). Bring in a rock, a leaf, a flower to your workplace to help in this mindfulness practice.

Resources: Institute of HeartMath <http://www.heartmath.org/>, <http://www.helpguide.org/>



Schools Insurance Authority, Prevention Services
P.O. Box 276710 • Sacramento, CA 95827
(916) 364-1281 • (916) 362-0904 fax • www.sia-jpa.org

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