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Me, My Mind, and I

NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

Big Brothers Big Sisters
of Central Carolinas

defining mental health

Mental health refers to the **health of our minds**. It is composed of emotional, social, and psychological aspects. The state of our mental health can have huge impacts on our day-to-day life, from our moods and thoughts to our relationships and decisions. Many things can impact our mental health, both for better and for worse:

Relationships – whether with a loved one, friend, coworker, or colleague, can impact our mental health tremendously. Healthy positive relationships can make us feel supported, respected, and appreciated. Being around people you connect with can boost your mental health, just as being around negative and toxic individuals can create an unnecessary amount of stress and be harmful to your mental health.

Work/school – both work and school can provide a sense of accomplishment and purpose, things which increase our mood and help build our mental health. However, when the balance between work/**school** and life gets out of whack it can negatively affect our mental well-being. All work and no play makes for an unhappy and unbalanced person.

Responsibilities/obligations – this can be a social club, a sports team, or any other thing you commit to outside of work/school. These can be a great way to blow off steam, meet new people, and grow your network. The problem appears when you have too many obligations and don't make time for yourself. Remember to schedule in some time with yourself, especially around busy periods in your life!

Mental health illness – sometimes we can be predisposed to certain mental health **illnesses** and disorders due to the DNA we were born with. In other cases, certain diseases can appear under high stress environments or after traumatic events. If you feel you show signs of a mental health disorder, it is important to talk to your doctor to determine a plan of action.

Mental Health Boosters

1. Get your sweat on! **Exercise** releases endorphins, which instantly boost your mood
2. **Sleep** 7-8 hours each night
3. Take time to be spiritual, whether through prayer, meditation, or another way
4. Spend time with a loved one
5. Hugs!
6. Hang out with **your pet**
7. Create something – paint, draw, write, dance, cook, journal, build, etc.
8. Take a time out from your devices and enjoy some time outside, unplugged
9. Read a good book
10. Do something you enjoy that makes you feel happy

Stress CAN be a good thing in low doses! However, too much stress can have serious implications on our body and health. Check out these links to learn more about how stress affects us and how to **talk to kids** about managing the stress in their lives.

Photo by freepik

Social Media & Mental Health

You may have heard too much social media or screen time can increase a person's risk for depression and anxiety. While scientists haven't completely figured out **the link** between the two, they do have some ideas as to how it impacts our mental well-being: Seeing other's photos of travel, expensive material goods, and family/relationship status can create feelings of **envy or jealousy**. Although envy isn't always a bad thing, it can lead to negative feelings about one's own life and decrease satisfaction. It can also affect our **sleep**. The blue light emitted from phones, laptops, and tablets can disrupt sleep. A lack of sleep can have serious implications on mental and physical health. Those who use social media view it as a **waste of time**. If you spend a lot of time on these platforms it can create feelings of wasting lots of time and not doing something meaningful can contribute to a depressed/lowered mood. Increased screen time can mean **increased sedentary time** for the viewer. We have all heard time and time again that it's important to get up, move, and be active during our day. Sitting around all day looking at screens not only has the potential to impact us mentally but physically as well.

Thank you for taking the time to be part of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Carolinas. Keep an eye out for next month's topic:
Exploring Feelings