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Now that Spring has finally sprung, folks are getting outdoors and throwing off the layers of clothes they had to wear to keep warm during this long winter. There is no denying that there is just something about warmer weather and getting out in nature that helps improve moods. In fact, this article will look at the many mental health benefits of getting out in nature.

First, it helps slow down our brains! According to Kirsten Weir's article *Nurtured by nature* as found in the American Psychological Association Webpage, there is research to support how nature slows down a busy brain. From the research done by University of Chicago psychologist Marc Berman, PHD, and his student Kathryn Schertz, "green spaces near schools promote cognitive development in children and green views near children's homes promote self-control behaviors."

In fact, it was Francine Shapiro, the founder of Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing (EMDR), that made the discovery of the benefits of rapid eye movement as she was walking in a park. Others too seem to have cognitive benefits while out in nature. Think about Isaac Newton and his gravitational theory.

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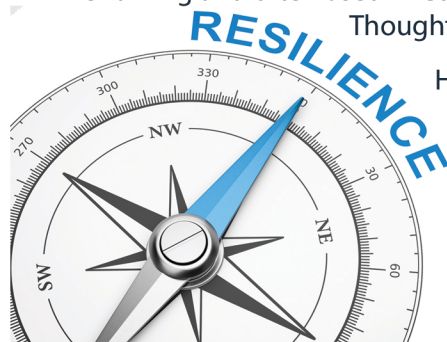
Resiliency Tips

By Jamie Leslie

When working with clients, I often work towards increasing their resiliency to lessen the emotional suffering that they experience. Resiliency is the ability to bounce back from stress or tension with increased tolerance to the stress experienced. We are not able to control events or others around us, but we can work to accept what is outside of our circle of control and work to persevere. That is where resiliency comes into the picture.

Here are a few tips you can use to increase your own resiliency:

1. Get connected with Battle Buddies! A warrior relies on their battle buddies to protect their six! The same goes for us all. The Cowboy mentality of “do it on your own” only increases hardship. Battle buddies can provide us with support, connections, and companionship. You can find a battle buddy with a small group of friends or even by getting involved in a community group!
2. Find Purpose and Accomplishment! When we complete a task or overcome a strong burden it helps to see the work we did to overcome the obstacles. We all need a sense of purpose to feel a sense of belonging in our chaotic world. It increases a sense of hope and connection. It also helps us make meaning out of tough journeys that we may have gone through. You can do this by setting reachable goals and reviewing the goals you have achieved when you have completed a task. You could also write about your journey through a tough spot that you may find yourself traveling through.
3. Do Daily Self-Care! Creating a daily wellness routine will help increase your window of tolerance to the stressors that you may experience. This could be developing a sleep hygiene routine, adding exercise in, stretching, meditation or prayer, also practicing mindfulness and creating self-compassionate mantras. Think of it like taking a daily vitamin. You don’t just eat vitamins when you start to feel sick, you do it to prevent sickness. The same with self-care, don’t just do it when the “poop hits the fan”, do it every day!
4. Accept what you Can’t Change! Often the mental health suffering that we experience is because we are mentally battling a reality that we cannot change. Example: Maybe you’re running late for work and you hit every red light and get behind a sweet older lady who is going about 10 MPH. You might battle the reality of time and external factors such as the red lights and the little old lady. This could cause you to have thoughts such as: “Why is this happening to me” and actions steps such as yelling/cussing at the lights and the little old lady. Radical acceptance is to be able to notice when you are battling a reality that you cannot change and to switch your mind into acceptance. Example of accepting thoughts: “It is what it is”, “Not my circus, not my monkeys”, “Not in my circle of Control”. Letting things be that we cannot change helps decrease mental health suffering.
5. Switch Your Perspective! Your thoughts have an impact on your mood and behavior. Automatic negative thoughts that go unchallenged increase the likelihood of depression and anxiety. Work toward developing awareness of automatic negative thoughts and develop an argument against the automatic negative thought. This is referred to as reframing and often used in Cognitive Behavior Therapy. You could start by keeping a Thought Record. You can find a copy of a Thought Record online.



Here is a link to see what Thought Record looks like:
https://threetrailsefap.org/pdf/cbt_thought_record.pdf

Hopefully this gives you tools to put in your own personal mental health tool shed! Also remember that a counselor can be an effective Battle Buddy to help pass on resilient tools as well!



Types of Plants for Curing Depression and Anxiety

Found by Three Trails EFAP Plant Guru Trish Hussion

Read more from this article

<https://mindful.care/blog/benefits-of-plants-for-mental-health>

1. **Lavender** is one of the most used plants for curing stress and anxiety.
2. **Peppermint** is known for having a very calming and peaceful effect on the nervous system and is also known to enhance brain activity positively.
3. The **Jade** plant is known to reduce the chemicals in the air of our natural environment. These chemicals can have a stressful and harmful effect on our minds and bodies.
4. The main use of **Aloe Vera** in gardens and houses is that it purifies the air and reduces the irritation causing chemicals in the air which stops stress and uneasiness from reaching us.
5. **Chamomile** is known for its stress-relieving features. The leaves are used in preparing Chamomile tea which is very effective in treating insomnia and depression. Not only does it treat insomnia, but the smell of chamomile also provides calmness to the brain and reduces stress and anxiety in the mind of a human being.



Trish Hussion is our Admin Assistant here at Three Trails EFAP. She has lived in Casper most of her life and is married. She has two children, 4 step children and 10 grandkids. Trish has a love of the outdoors including barbecue, camping, hunting, hiking, taking care of her farm animals and fishing. Her hobbies include crafts, painting, reading books and working with her horses. She has a Black German Shepherd that has received his AKC Good Canine Citizen Certificate and a Jack Russell/Rat Terrier that is working on her title. They both are working toward becoming Therapy dogs.

Hayoka, aka Hoka is a 9 month old Jack Russell/Rat Terrier mix. She is working on becoming a Therapy dog for the clinic. Hoka loves to be around people & snuggles. Hoka is at the office most days. If you don't see her please feel free to ask about her. She will be glad to come out of her crate to visit.



(continued from page 1 - *The Nurturing Power of Nature*)

We all know the story involves him being out in nature and watching an apple fall from a tree.

Spending time in nature not only has benefits for the brain but it also benefits our moods. Nurtured by nature cites the research done by Gregory Bratman, PhD, that shows how “contact with nature is associated with increases in happiness, subjective well-being, positive affect, positive social interactions and a sense of meaning and purpose in life, as well as decreases in mental distress”. Most counselors, doctors, and medical professionals are aware that getting out in nature will improve sleep quality and decrease stress.

Earl E. Bakken Center for Spirituality and Healing’s web article *How Does Nature Impact Our Wellbeing?* notes that being in nature can help reduce pain. His article states that “Because we are genetically programmed to find trees, plants, water, and other nature elements engrossing, we are absorbed by nature scenes and distracted from pain and discomfort.”

Nature is also a connecting element for human beings. While being out in nature, we tend to feel more connected to our spiritual wellness. According to the article written by Madhuleena Roy Chowdhury, *The Positive Effects of Nature on Your Mental Wellbeing*, found in *Positive Psychology* website, “each encounter with the natural environment takes us deeper into exploring the truth behind our existence and what a happier world would look like.”

So, take time to “smell the roses”! Get out and explore the many natural delights of Wyoming!

Here are few suggestions if you are needing some travel spots to connect in nature:

1. Check out **Alcova Lake!** It offers a variety of camping spots (Black Beach, Cottonwood, Okie Beach, Westside Campground, Fremont Canyon Campground). It is about a 30-minute drive from Casper, Wyoming and offers lots of beautiful views of the lake and opportunities for Kayaking, fishing, and swimming.
2. Drive to **Pathfinder Dam!** Close to Alcova Lake you will find Pathfinder Dam. It also has great camping spots and fun water activities to consider!
3. Head north to take a drive through **Yellowstone National Park!** Probably one of the top natural wonders in Wyoming! So much to do and see while there. You can see bears, wolves, Elk, and Bison. Just please practice good distancing with wildlife and don’t put baby bison in your car!
4. On your way to Yellowstone Park stop by the **Grand Teton National Park.** These jagged peaks will bring you ample trout and snow-capped views! Also keep your eye out for bison, moose, elk, bears and eagles.
5. Take a climb (or hike as I would prefer to do) on **Devils Tower!** Yep, if you’re daring, you can rock climb up Devil’s tower. Personally, I will stay along the hiking trail that surrounds this amazing natural monument.
6. Swim in the natural hot springs in **Thermopolis!** What a good way to get some much needed magnesium. Thermopolis is home of the Hot Springs State Park. The park has two swimming pools that you can soak in and a free bathhouse as well.
7. Do some rock climbing at **Vedauwoo Recreation Area.** The enormous granite rocks are spread out far and wide at Vedauwoo and offer endless opportunities to do both rock climbing and bouldering.



There are so many other natural wonders that our state has to offer. So put on your sunscreen, get your hiking shoes on, and get out there. Running low on gas money? Then take a walk out your own front door and do some gardening or simply walk around the block of your neighborhood. Hope to see you out there!

