MENTAL HEALTH: LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

Helpful Ways to Cope With Stress:

1. **Exercise**
   Physical activity in any form is proven to reduce stress. An example could be standing up after a study session, going on a walk outside, or simply going to the gym.

2. **Try New Hobbies**
   Allowing yourself the time to do something you enjoy daily can reduce the stressors in your life.

3. **Maintain Healthy Sleep Schedule**
   Allowing the body to recharge and be ready for the next day can do so much for stress. Whether you are a night owl or an early riser, there are many positives to following and giving your body the desired sleep.

4. **Cultivate a Support System**
   Talking and connecting with people is something that can relieve your stress naturally. This can be through your family, friends, or coworkers. Sharing your thoughts and opening to your support system lets your body feel more connected, builds trust, and strengthens the relationships in your life.

It’s Not What you Say, But How you Say It...

“Mental Health” is far from black and white. In order to promote diversity, equity and inclusion, it’s important to spotlight this often-overlooked topic that is essential to our overall health and stability. Mental health encompasses our emotional, psychological, and social well-being, in addition to affecting how we act, think, and handle various situations. While it may be that some are more vulnerable than others, we all face challenges that impact our mental health. Hence, it is imperative that we hold compassion and understanding, while promoting awareness for those living with mental health issues, as they discover pathways towards healing.

Daily instances of being aware of mental health can be seen in identity-first and person-first language. Identity first language is defined as labeling someone by their condition/disability instead of acknowledging their personhood. For example, someone saying “he’s autistic”. This language takes away from this person’s ability to be treated as an individual, by instead identifying them based on their condition. Person first language on the other hand is the complete opposite and is defined as labeling someone by their personhood instead of their condition. For example, someone saying “he has autism”. These two examples are similar in meaning but have completely different connotations. For this reason, it’s important to use person first language, and be mindful of the impact of our words when addressing or interacting with those who live with Mental Health conditions.
**Definitions**

- **Major Depressive Disorder**: common and serious medical illness that negatively affects how you feel, the way you think and how you act
  - Symptoms must last at least two weeks and must represent a change in your previous level of functioning for a diagnosis of depression.
  - Depression affects an estimated one in 15 adults (6.7%) in any given year. And one in six people (16.6%) will experience depression at some time in their life.

- **Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)**: characterized by persistent and excessive worry about several different things.
  - Diagnosed when a person finds it difficult to control worry on more days than not for at least six months and has three or more symptoms (below)
  - Feeling nervous, irritable, or on edge; Having a sense of impending danger, panic or doom; Having an increased heart rate; Breathing rapidly (hyperventilation), sweating, and/or trembling; Feeling weak or tired; Difficulty concentrating; Having trouble sleeping; Experiencing gastrointestinal (GI) problems
  - GAD affects 6.8 million adults, or 3.1% of the U.S. population, in any given year.

- **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**: may occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event such as a natural disaster, a serious accident, a terrorist act, war/combat, or rape or who have been threatened with death, sexual violence or serious injury.
  - Symptoms fall into 4 categories: Intrusion, Avoidance, Alterations in cognition and mood, and Alterations in arousal and reactivity
  - Affects approximately 3.5 percent of U.S. adults every year, and an estimated one in 11 people will be diagnosed with PTSD in their lifetime

- **Bipolar I disorder**: causes unusual shifts in mood, energy, activity levels, concentration, and the ability to carry out day-to-day tasks.
  - Diagnosis includes manic episodes that last at least 7 days, or by manic symptoms that are so severe that the person needs immediate hospital care. Usually, depressive episodes occur as well, typically lasting at least 2 weeks.

**Resources**

- **Apple/Android Store Apps**
  - Calm App
  - Headspace
  - Breathe App

- **Person-first and Identity-first Language Choices**

- **NIU Counseling and Consultation Service Center** provides comprehensive mental health support for all students. If you need immediate support after office hours, please call **815-753-1206** and you will be forwarded to speak with an on-call therapist.

- **If you or someone you know is in crisis and needs immediate help, call the toll-free, 24-hour hotline of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)**

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