THE EMOTIONAL FITNESS WORKOUT

PROTECTING AND IMPROVING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

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Resilience

- Process, not a trait
- May be non-conforming
- More than just coping; rather the ability to navigate through adversity using psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources
**Post Traumatic Growth**

- Some are increasingly vulnerable
- Some “bounce back” to previous state
- Some experience growth beyond previous state

Barskova T, Oesterreich R. *Post-traumatic growth in people living with a serious medical condition and its relations to physical and mental health: a systematic review.* *Disability Rehabilitation* 2009;31(21):1709-33
The Workout Prescription

- Social Connections
- Acceptance
- Communication
- Recreation
- Imagination
- Healing Environment
A low CD4 cell count was found more frequently in men with low social participation scores.

“HIV infection: social network, social support, and CD4 lymphocyte values in infected homosexual men in Malmö, Sweden”

- Persson, Gullberg, et al.
  *J Epidemiol Community Health* 1994;48:580-585
Lower levels of baseline loneliness predicted more rapid declines in CD4 levels over the follow-up period.

This association was independent of baseline CD4 values, negative affect, and health practices.

“Social relationships and immune processes in HIV seropositive gay and bisexual men”

Social Connections

- Women with good family functioning were less affected by changes in their CD4 cell counts.
- Women with poor family functioning were more emotionally responsive to changes in CD4 cell count.

“The Protective Role of the Family and Social Support Network in a Sample of HIV-Positive African American Women: Results of a Pilot Study.”

People with AIDS who owned pets reported less depression than persons with AIDS who did not own pets.

This beneficial effect of pet ownership occurred principally among persons who reported fewer confidants.

“AIDS diagnosis and depression in the Multicenter AIDS Cohort Study: the ameliorating impact of pet ownership”

Social Connections

- How has being socially connected helped you manage your health?
  - Challenges?
  - Benefits?
Acceptance

- **Radical Acceptance**
  - Tara Bruch and Jack Kornfield
  - “The trance of unworthiness”
    - Feeling separate versus belonging
    - When pain arises we take it personally
    - Causes feelings of shame and deficiency
Acceptance

- Trance of Unworthiness results in:
  - Blaming
  - Striving
  - Self-numbing
Acceptance

- Clearly recognize what we are experiencing in the moment and regard that experience with compassion
Acceptance

- How do you stay in the present?
- How do you approach acceptance?
3 Step Dialog

1. **Mirroring**
   - Using “I” statements to send message
   - Listener repeats message until sender is satisfied
     - I heard you say . . . or You said . . .
     - Am I getting you? or Did I get that?
     - Is there more about that?
     - Summary mirror
2. Validation

- After summarizing, validate them by simply saying “That makes sense to me.”
- Don’t have to agree, but can show respect for their reality.
  - You make sense to me, and what makes sense is . . .
  - I can understand that . . . given that . . .
  - I can see how you would see it that way because sometimes I do . . .
3 Step Dialog

3. Empathy

- Imagine what partner might be feeling. Feelings are simple words like “Angry, Sad, Lonely, Afraid, Happy, Joyful, etc.”
  - I imagine you might be feeling . . .
  - Is that what you’re feeling?
Communication

- What are some experiences where communication has had an impact on your health?

- What are the qualities of a good listener?
Recreation

- Works different parts of the brain
- Essential for physical and emotional balance
- Improves health
Participation in physical activity was significantly correlated with...[improved]...HIV-RNA (viral load) values, general health status, and self-reported CD4+ cell counts.

“Participation in physical activity by persons living with HIV disease”

Among adolescents playing sports:

- odds suffering depression down 25%
- odds suffering suicidal ideation down 12%

“Sports participation as a protective factor against depression and suicidal ideation in adolescents as mediated by self-esteem and social support”

Recreation

- How easy is it for you to have fun?
- How do you practice recreation?
Problem Solving:

- Instills a sense of change
- Empowers
- Moves us “outside the box”
Finding Purpose

- Live your passion
- Stand for something
- Believe in yourself
Imagination

- Visualization
  - Vividly utilize all five senses

- Vision Boards

- Mind Maps
  - Radical, non-linear, graphical brainstorming
What are some of the ways you can use imagination to enhance your emotional fitness?
Healing Environment

- Nature/ Natural images
  - resonate with us on a deep level
  - help us reconnect with our own basic nature
  - flowers and trees
  - the sound of water,
  - natural materials like wood and stone
Healing Environment

- Symbols
  - bring a sense of meaning to our lives
  - bridge the visible and invisible worlds.

- Beautiful things/art

- Cues
  - remind us of the natural pace and cycles
Healing Environment

- What are ways you create your own healing environment?
Thank You!

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