



Reach your potential

How's Your Emotional Health

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Let's face it. The 2-year pandemic has taken its toll on all of us. Even before the pandemic, the struggle of anxiety and depression was at epidemic proportions. One of the reasons I decided to write this article was to encourage those who suffer from anxiety and/or depression. I want to say to you that you are not alone in your struggle. You can also be encouraged by the fact that there are resources to help and support you. There is hope for you!

The research shows that 16.2 million Americans suffer from depression and 40 million battle anxiety disorders. Anxiety and depression increased from 5% of the U.S. population in 2008 to 7% of the population in 2018. Over 30 million Americans are on anti-depressant pills. We average over 40,000 suicides each year. That doubles the annual number of homicides. As you can see, the struggle is real and we need to pay close attention to emotional health. We need to be concerned about our own emotional health, but we also need to be addressing emotional health in our circle of relationships, communities and as a nation.

Anxiety and depression can literally suck the life out you, robbing you of joy, peace and hope. Everyone experiences stress and anxiety at one time or another. Stress is a response to a threat in a situation. Anxiety is a reaction to stress. Another survey reports that over 50% of the American population feels that the Covid-19 pandemic has harmed their mental health. The good news is the numbers of cases, hospitalizations and deaths are declining and we also are seeing progress with the vaccination rollout. In spite of the positive trajectory we are seeing, we still are dealing the aftermath of how the pandemic has affected the economy, jobs and normality of life. With this aftermath is the social isolation, which can exacerbate anxiety and depression.

Here are some recommendations that counselors and psychologists suggest:

1. Join a community support group. A support group will be a safe place to share your struggle with others who are going through your same pain.
2. See a professional counselor. They have tools and resources that will help you manage anxiety and depression.
3. Learn as much as you can about anxiety and depression. Knowledge is power.
4. Eat healthy. Even the foods we eat have an impact on our emotions.
5. Exercise daily or regularly. Physical exercise will release some of those "feel good" hormones.
6. Get eight hours of sleep each night. Some studies show that serotonin promotes good sleep. Other studies show that sleep deprivation can alter serotonin levels, which can lower your moods.



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7. Take time to nurture your spirit. Prayer, meditation and devotional reading can help calm your spirit. It will also shape your thinking. Emotional disorders have a way of distorting your thinking, causing you to think in negative and hopeless ways. Nurturing your spirit will help you replace those negative thoughts with a more positive spin on life.

Don't lose hope if you are one of the millions struggling with anxiety and depression. There is freedom and hope for you.