

Well-being this Week

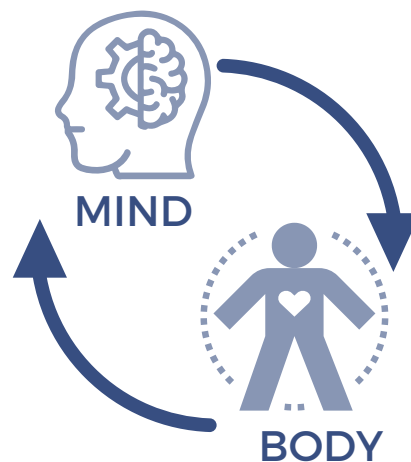
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Time for a little TLC: Therapeutic Lifestyle Choices

by Lisa Sanetti, PhD

Therapeutic lifestyle choices are simple, healthy choices we can make that are cheap, readily available, have few negative side effects, and combine to optimize our physical and mental well-being.

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The "Big Three" TLCs

1

Exercise

Only about 30% of people globally get sufficient exercise!

2

Nutrition

What we eat directly impacts physical health AND mental health.

3

Sleep

Sleep quantity and quality affect almost every tissue in our bodies.

EXERCISE



There are two main forms of exercise needed:

- **Moderate Aerobic:** Any activity that requires breath to complete. This includes any activity during which holding a conversation would be difficult (e.g., walking fast, water aerobics, riding a bike, playing tennis)
 - 2 hours per week minimum
- **Resistance training:** Any activity that places good stress on your bones and muscles, requiring them to strengthen. This includes weight lifting, some styles of yoga, working with resistance bands, bodyweight exercises like pull ups.
 - 2 days per week minimum



Exercise has numerous health benefits:

- **Lowers risk** for heart disease, diabetes, stroke, high blood pressure; help lower weight if wanted or needed; improves sleep, and sex life
- There are also **mental health benefits** including ease of depression, relieve stress/anxiety, increase self-concept, improve outlook on life

We all know we "should" exercise...but often tell ourselves things like:

- "I do not have time."
- "I'm too tired."
- "It is boring."

But it doesn't have to be time consuming, super tiring or boring!



Exercise **toward achieving a fun purpose** (e.g., improving leg strength for a hike you want to do in the summer)

OR

for fun itself (e.g., you enjoy bike riding)
is more likely to stick and result in benefits compared to exercise that feels like a chore.

NUTRITION



There's a staggering amount of information out there about diets. Of all the diet recommendations, the simplest to follow is **moderation**.

Moderation means

- Eating less than we may be used to, want to, or feel like we need to.
 - Eating mostly nutrient dense foods, most of the time.
- Important: This doesn't mean eliminate all comfort foods. A good rule to follow is the 80/20 rule. 80% of your food comes from nutrient dense options and the remaining 20% is what you want



Why is nutrition important for mental health?

- Certain foods trigger hormonal responses in the brain (e.g., dopamine from sugar which makes us feel good), AND also trigger hormones and chemicals in the body.
- Approximately 90% of serotonin - a chemical that regulates many things including sleep, mood, social behavior, appetite, memory, and sexual function - is produced in the digestive system!

TOP TIPS:



1. How we eat matters. Slow down, eat mindfully, and eat socially with others who also try to eat in moderation. Try to avoid distracted eating.
2. Include fruits and vegetables
3. Eat healthy carbs and grains. This typically means less white grains or those identified as "enriched."
4. Eat healthy fats and limit unhealthy fats. Healthy fats include nuts and cheeses.
5. Eat a variety of protein other than red meat.
6. Limit sugar and salt intake. This does not mean completely eliminate but be mindful.

SLEEP



Improve your sleep quantity AND quality!

Quantity: How much sleep you get.

- Schedule sleep and wake times so you consistently get 7-9 hours of sleep!

Quality: How well you're sleeping—is it restful and restorative?

- *Sleep latency:* How long it takes you to fall asleep. Drifting off within 30 minutes or less is ideal.
- *Sleep waking:* How often you wake during the night. Waking up once or not at all suggests that your sleep quality is good.
- *Wakefulness:* How many minutes you spend awake during the night after you first go to sleep. 20 minutes or less is ideal.
- *Sleep efficiency:* The amount of time you spend actually sleeping. Ideally, 85 percent or more.



- Sleep is an essential and involuntary process, without which we cannot function effectively.
- Sleep is as essential to our bodies as eating, drinking and breathing, and is vital for maintaining good mental and physical health.
- Sleeping helps to repair and restore our brains, not just our bodies.

Our minds are meaning-making machines and rarely shut off. How many times have you put your head onto your pillow only to immediately have your mind filled with thoughts?!



To reduce this, develop meditative practices prior to sleep.

- A very simple meditation practice is to focus all of your attention on your breath. Just follow your breath in and out. Your mind will wonder. You may even find these meditative practices boring. When you have these thoughts, notice them and gently bring your attention back to your breath. Do this enough and you may fall asleep without realizing it!

REFLECTIONS

Consider the TLCs outlined above and those you already may practice.
What new choices are you going to adopt?
What TLCs have helped you?

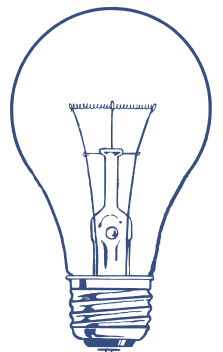
Well-being this Week Take-Aways



Our mind and body are connected. Taking care of our body through exercise, sleep, and nutrition, we can improve our physical and mental well-being.



You don't need to have *perfect* adherence to exercise, diet, and sleep habits. Make small changes consistently over time and you will reap the benefits!



Well-being work isn't selfish. It's necessary.