

Mental Health

There is a distinct overlap between emotional and mental health; both have much in common. As such, many of the things listed under this category may be interchangeable with the other

I wanted to address this aspect of my health before the others because it's something that I've been personally struggling with for quite some time now. When I was about sixteen years old, I was officially diagnosed with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Body Dysmorphic Disorder, and Depression. Ever since then I've struggled greatly with them, and I wouldn't hesitate to say they have easily been some of the biggest obstacles between me and proper mental wellness. My diagnosis has controlled many aspects of my life, including my social life, physical wellness, my confidence, motivation, and perhaps even my personality. Since that year, my mental health has greatly improved, but I certainly still have a long way to go in order to reach a place I want and need to be in.

Possible barriers, challenges, and obstacles:

1. As previously mentioned, my diagnosis is the major thing holding me back from achieving proper mental wellness.

Overcoming those challenges:

1. **Take my medicine every day.** I'm instructed to take two antidepressants every night before bed. I'm a bit ashamed to admit it, but the combination of the two have probably been the driving force behind my recovery. Despite this, I often still find myself neglecting to take them and making excuses not to. "I need to take them on a full stomach" "It's just one day" "I need to save them for a rainy day". I *know* how I am without my medicine; I'm irritable, unmotivated, moody, and melancholy. In fact, I was

off of my medicine when I failed out of my first year of college. **I will begin to take my medicine on a regular basis: every night, after dinner.**

2. **Seek help from loved ones and professionals.** Right after my medicine, the support of my family, friends, and professionals have been the second most driving force behind my recovery. My family has always told me that, while they don't struggle with the same circumstances that I do, they are older and, therefore, wiser and are able to see possible barriers and challenges that may compromise my mental health. Professionals, such as my psychologist and psychiatrist, are trained in the area of addressing my mental illnesses. **I will follow the advice of my family and loved ones** (I will, at the very least, consider the advice and help from my family, as they are not professionally trained).

How will this improve my Environmental Health?

Improving my mental health will have a large impact on those around me. My loved ones, specifically my parents and boyfriend, often worry about my ability to cope and improve.

Improving my mental wellness will greatly alleviate them of that stress.

How will this improve my Intellectual Health?

Improving my mental health will positively affect how I view the world around me: I will approach problems with a more positive attitude and be able to accept the mistakes I make and grow from them.

How will this improve my Spiritual Health?

Improving my mental health will affect both how I view the world around me as well as how I view myself (in a spiritual sense) Clearing my mind and being able to think in a more positive

way will allow me to put a new meaning on life, success, and love, while also allowing me to potentially have a more positive relationship with a higher power.

How will this improve my Financial Health?

Improving my mental health will, perhaps, affect how I spend money. I often tend to buy things compulsively, as a way to fill an empty hole I feel I have in my life. Improving my mental health will allow me to have a type of completeness, helping to eliminate the need to hoard material things to replace something I feel I lack.

Emotional Health

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My emotional health is certainly something else I struggle with greatly. Ever since my diagnosis, I have had a great deal of trouble properly processing strong emotions, particularly anger and sadness, in a constructive and appropriate way. I tend to bottle things up until I reach a point where something little tips me off, and I end up releasing those pent-up emotions on something or someone who didn't deserve it.

Possible barriers, obstacles, and challenges:

1. It's become much of a habit for me to store my emotions. I feel that my family is at least partially responsible for this; I was never taught how to properly control those emotions. I also tend to look up to my mother, and over the years I've found that she often tends to bottle up her emotions as well.
2. I feel that, as a society, we've done a horrible job of teaching how to handle powerful emotions, especially in 1) children, who are often times considered to be disrespectful if

they express anger and 2) women, who are expected to be peaceful and gentle as part of their gender role.

3. I've been shy my whole life. As such, I've never been a major recipient of attention from people who weren't my family. I feel like I've never been able to explore myself properly through my relationships other people. When I do receive attention, it's usually in the way of people gushing about how "nice" and "kind" I am. I've found that I often thrive off of this type of attention, and I often find myself defining myself in terms of how nice I am. I still can't possibly imagine losing that.

Overcoming those challenges:

1. **Discuss with my therapist about appropriate ways to cope with anger and depression.** As I previously mentioned, both my psychiatrist and psychologist are highly trained and work with many people in a similar situation as mine.
2. **Discuss with people who also struggle with expressing their emotions.** Talking with others like me could open up many possible ways to cope with my emotions, as well as developing proper ways to convey them.
3. **Work on improving my own self-confidence.** If my self-confidence improves, I may be able to understand that my own worth isn't and shouldn't be defined by how nice I seem to others. I, like everyone else, am a multifaceted individual with many different qualities that go into determining who I am.

How will this improve my Environmental Health?

Improving my emotional health will ultimately lead to less episodes of me having angry outbursts at innocent people or having depressive episodes that greatly worry my loved ones. Both situations make the environment around me very tense and hard to bear.

How will this improve my Intellectual Health?

Similar to improving my mental health, improving my emotional health will result in a drastic change in how I approach difficulties. I will have a much more positive outlook on solving problems, and I believe that regular difficulties will cause me much less stress.

How will this improve my Spiritual Health?

Improving my emotional health will greatly improve my outlook on life. I will no longer tend to think of life as a punishment. I will not hold grudges, and I will find myself to be much more compassionate and optimistic. It also means that I will be able to finally have a much more positive relationship with God; I will not be angry and blame them for my difficulties. Rather, I will praise them for the many wonderful things I've been given.

How will this improve my Financial Health?

Whenever I'm in a particularly bad mood, I often purchase things for myself that I think may cheer me up. This is an extremely dangerous habit, and has, on several occasions, put me in a moneyless situation. If I'm able to better regulate my negative emotions, I will no longer feel the need to make purchases to change my mood.

Physical Health

My physical health is something that often goes unnoticed, but definitely deserves to be addressed, considering it is something that has greatly affected both my mental and emotional

health. In fact, I've noticed a major cyclical pattern between all three factors. When I become stressed, I have a habit of overeating. In turn, I gain weight, which triggers my BDD and, therefore, my stress, so I continue to overeat and so forth and so on. I also tend to pour all of my attention into one activity at one time, so, when school comes around, I spend almost all of my time either studying or attending classes, and I usually don't have the time or energy to exercise. In addition to this, heart disease and related conditions run in my family, and neither my diet nor my lack of exercise help to lower the chance of developing those. I also have a very disorganized sleep schedule, which may play a roll in both my energy level and weight gain.

Possible barriers, obstacles, and challenges:

1. Between my job and school, my busy schedule leaves me little time or energy for exercise.
2. I have a terrible habit of overeating when I'm under stress.

Overcoming those challenges:

1. **Develop a routine sleep schedule.** Sleep is an unbelievable important factor in not only energy, but also in weight management and metabolism. If I get enough sleep, my energy level will likely increase. **I will sleep for at least eight hours a night.**
2. **Start counting my calories.** I've found that, in the past, I've had much more success in maintaining a healthy weight when all of my daily calories were accounted for. **I will count all of my daily calories, and I will eat no more than 1,300-1,400 calories in a day.**
3. **Keep track of what in the food I eat.** It is equally as important to keep in mind the exact substances that go into the body, regardless of calories. Fat, cholesterol, and

carbohydrates, in excess, are all dangerous to one's health, especially for someone with a predisposition to poor heart health, such as me. **I will avoid eating foods with high amounts of fat, cholesterol, and carbohydrates.**

4. **Create a precise schedule of when to do what.** There are many important factors that go into building a successful and productive lifestyle, and it is necessary for one to find a balance. Many people find it easier to find time to do things if they follow a strict schedule mapping out different times of when to do things and how long each will take. **I will find time to exercise by forming a precise schedule detailing when I will attend classes, complete homework, study, work, spend time with my loved ones, have free time, and exercise.**

How will this improve my Environmental Health?

I aim to someday be an elementary educator, and over the years I'm employed as one I'll have many children that look up to me as a role model. If I improve my physical health, I'll demonstrate to my students the importance and attainability of proper physical health.

How will this improve my Intellectual Health?

Many studies have explored how certain foods, as well as a proper amount of exercise, improve different bodily functions, especially brain functions like memory, decision making, and problem solving. I believe that routine exercise, in addition to a healthy diet, will improve those function of the brain.

How will this improve my Spiritual Health?

I believe that the human body, as well as all other forms of life and creation, are a special gift from a higher power. They were designed with intelligence and a specific idea and function in

mind. In many religious texts, the human form specifically is described as being designed after God himself. Not taking care of my own body means that I feel very guilty, as if I've neglected the gift made by God. I feel that improving my physical health and taking care of my body will largely remove that guilt, and it won't continue to strain my relationship with God.

How will this improve my Financial Health?

Lessening my food intake will ultimately lessen the amount of food purchased.

Social Health

Social Health is a type of health that often goes undervalued, despite the fact that it plays a significant role in both emotional and mental health. It is also yet another area of my health that I lack in. As I previously mentioned, I've been shy my whole life, and even though I've been able to greatly come out of my shell, being quiet and saying very little have become major habits of mine. My friends and family often urge me to say more and to express how I feel, but I have such a difficult time doing so; it just doesn't feel right or normal. Because of this, I've had a terrible time of taking up for myself and saying no, which has led to a long string of not-so-great friends. And because of my history of having bad friends, I've become very bitter to the idea of having friends and forming friendly relationships with people.

Possible barriers, challenges, and obstacles:

1. I've formed a habit of staying quiet and not expressing my thoughts or feelings.
2. I'm not entirely comfortable with the idea of forming friendly relationships and potentially being hurt again. I feel safer being with only a few people.

Overcoming those challenges:

1. **Recognize that my boundaries and feelings are just as important as everyone else's and deserve to be voiced.** I feel that if I create a habit of (politely) speaking my mind, I will be able to form healthier relationships based off of mutual respect, as well as weed out bad friends who only want to take advantage of my kindness.
2. **Start by forming acquaintances and let those slowly blossom into what might be friendships.** I don't know that I'll actively be accepting of having more friends, but I am looking to have many friendly acquaintances, which may be beneficial in school and in my future workplace. I will always prioritize my grades and my career over making friends, but I will try to allow friendships to happen naturally if that's how things turn out.

How will this improve my Environmental Health?

Changing my social health is the driving force behind changing my environment. Having more friends means having diverse personalities influencing me; having good friends will likely create a positive atmosphere around me.

How will this improve my Intellectual Health?

Having more friends will allow me to explore myself through and with them. Ultimately, having positive friends will bolster a multitude of aspects of my intellectual health, such as my ability to approach problems and perceive unique situations. I will have many more opinions and viewpoints that will allow me to see the world through someone else's eyes.

How will this improve my Spiritual Health?

I often get caught up in the idea that people are inherently bad. Having good friends may lead me to feel much more positively about humanity as a whole. I may find myself to be much more loving and compassionate towards others.

How will this improve my Financial Health?

I can't seem to think of any ways in which having more friends would improve my financial health