

INTRODUCTION

HEALTHY BODY ↔ HEALTHY MIND



This issue of *Focal Point* focuses on the recognition that mental health and physical health should not be considered separately. The integration of physical and mental health is sometimes referred to as holistic health. Holistic health is an approach to well-being that recognizes the inter-relationships among who we are, how we are feeling inside and out, and what we are experiencing in the world around us.

The idea of a link between a healthy mind and a healthy body is far from new. Thousands of years ago, the Chinese developed a system of medicine that is based on the yin/yang – the idea that life is lived best when in balance. Food and exercise, work and sleep, stress and play – all help us thrive, but only if we experience them in proper balance. Similarly, some tribal cultures are guided by the Relational World View. This model states that good health only exists when things are in balance; the four quadrants of ourselves – our mind, body, context, and spirit – all need to be in harmony in order to achieve well-being. The trick is, by simply living our day-to-day experiences, our lives are in a constant state of change. We are not the same people now that we were when we first woke up. Our levels of rest, stress, and nutrition are constantly shifting. Whether we realize it or not, we are continually altering ourselves to remain in balance so that we feel more grounded and whole. Sometimes, however, we are not able to maintain balance among

the quadrants, and we feel out of sorts, even lost.¹ That's OK. With time and support, we can find our way back into well-being.

Thus, this issue of *Focal Point* is dedicated to exploring how the mind and body impact each other, and how we can strive to achieve good balance within ourselves. Some articles in this issue address how a healthy body can improve mental health. One written by Casadi Marino highlights how mental health can benefit from moving the body and getting in touch with the senses through yoga. Another article written by Celeste Moser emphasizes the importance of eating right and getting proper nutrition in order to improve mental health. A Data Trends research review summarizes how much exercise is enough to curb depression, and another article written by Belinda Garner and colleagues describes a program in Australia that uses massage therapy in residential treatment as a means to reduce stress.

Sometimes, however, one's mental health can interfere with a desire to maintain a healthy body and/or lifestyle. Two articles on medication used by persons with schizophrenia – one from the medical perspective written by Victor Vieweg and Mehrul Hasnain, and another from a counselor's perspective with insight from a young adult client – underscore the seriousness of weight gain as a side effect to medication treatment. Thankfully, some solutions are provided to help navigate the difficult balance between

medication use and maintaining a healthy body.

Finally, some articles address overcoming the tensions between the mind and body. One article written by Robert Roeser describes how young adults can benefit from mindfulness, the practice of bringing one's attention to the present experience to reduce stress and promote a positive outlook on life. Additionally, three youth describe their struggles to maintain both positive physical and mental health – and how these two goals are consistently intertwined. While their stories reveal challenges, they also offer hope.

Achieving balanced health is a process, not an outcome. The goal of holistic health is simply to function at our very best level possible.² There will always be times in a person's life that are healthier than other times. If you are feeling healthy while you are reading this, that's great. If you are experiencing a time when your health is not ideal, hopefully some of these articles will support your journey toward an improved sense of well-being in both body and mind.

REFERENCES

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