

July 2024 Issue – Self-care

The whole person

Holistic health is simply the idea that our health involves more than just our physical bodies. It is the interdependence of several types of wellness: physical, mental, and emotional health. Some believe it may also include spiritual, financial, and sexual health. Each aspect of our lives requires attention and balance. When we are stressed out, it is likely that one or more parts of ourselves need attention. Approaching our health in this way is beneficial in figuring out what may be wrong, and identifying your strengths, or what is going well.



The mind-body connection

Many people can relate to the feeling of butterflies in your stomach when you are about to try something new, or to speak in front of a crowd. It is easy in this example to understand how our thoughts and feelings can cause a physical reaction. Other examples of a mind-body connection might include someone who has a chronic pain condition may also experience symptoms of depression, or gastrointestinal issues because of worry.

Studies show that people who experience more happiness and joy have healthier blood sugar levels, healthier weight, have lower blood pressure, and have a reduced risk of heart disease compared to people who experience more negative emotions (anger, sadness, anxiety, fear). By using brain imaging, researchers have found that positive emotions can trigger “reward” pathways located deep within the brain. The longer the reward pathway is activated, the better the rewards.

There are ways you can use the mind-body connection to improve your health. You can be aware of the physical reactions to an emotion and do the opposite. For example, if you are angry and you notice that you are clenching your jaw and fists, relax your body and this can help to soften the angry feeling. You can also practice being more aware of your thoughts and feelings. If you realize you are worried about a negative interaction with a family member, this could also give you a headache. You can challenge the thought and replace it with something more neutral. This alone, may reduce the intensity of your headache.

"Once you replace negative thoughts with positive ones, you'll start having positive results." – Willie Nelson

Healthy time management: monotasking v. multitasking

Monotasking, otherwise known as single tasking, refers to dealing with only one task. In this form of time management, you take on only one task to complete. Multitasking refers to dealing with more than one task and up to as many tasks as you'd like to take on.

Recently conversations about “hustle culture” and multitasking ourselves into overload have become front and center. When we multitask, we are switching tasks, and too much of this can increase stress in our brains. Research tells us that multitasking can make us less productive, and that monotasking is much better for our health and productivity.



The benefits of monotasking & multitasking

Monotasking

- Improves focus on tasks
- Dedicates prioritization
- Increases mindfulness
- Beneficial if you have advance notice or an urgent task to complete

Multitasking

- Allows progress to occur on multiple projects at once
- Develop techniques for preventing distractions
- Form coping mechanisms in busy environments
- Beneficial if you're short on time or behind on your work

Tips for monotasking

Interested in trying to monotask? First, you need to understand that it is a skill that will improve with practice. No one is born with exceptional focus.

- Try working in intervals: Work for 25 minutes straight with no distractions, and then take a 5 minute break.
- Block distractions: Silence your phone, close extra windows on your screen, and set your status to “do not disturb.”
- Be intentional about your time: Choose and list only two daily priorities, and follow them through until the end.