Self-Care Tips For The New Year And Beyond

(NAPS)—The New Year is a time where many people make a choice to take better care of themselves. But often, even with good intentions, people tend to fall back into familiar habits. Reframing a New Year's resolution into something that can be obtained on an ongoing basis, such as acts of self-care, can help create sustainable emotional wellness.

Regular self-care can have a strong impact on mental health, preventing burnout, reducing the negative effects of stress and helping you to refocus.

Self-care is less about "treating yourself" as popularized in pop culture and has more to do with creating sustainable and attainable wellness for your whole self. Taking the time to intentionally care for your whole self—body, mind and soul—can keep you energized and can improve mental health. And when you care for yourself, you can offer more to others and can help create wellness for the community around you.

Here are five ways to take care of your whole self to improve your emotional well-being over the course of the new year and beyond.

1. Practice Self-Compassion: Self-compassion is about giving yourself room to be human and not letting mistakes define you. It's the ability to turn kindness, understanding and acceptance inward. Self-compassion has also been shown to correlate with less anxiety, depression, shame and fear of failure. Think of the way you would treat a good friend, or even a beloved pet, and then begin treating yourself accordingly.

2. Reach Out to Others: Fostering connections with the people around you also is self-care. Take opportunities to connect more deeply with the people you care about. Loving and supportive relationships are perhaps the single most powerful thing to help people grow and thrive. Showing kindness toward others increases the production of the hormone oxytocin (which is associated with feelings of attachment and love) and the neurotransmitter serotonin (which is involved in good sleep and feelings of happiness).

3. Practice Mindfulness and Meditation: Research links mindfulness to better health, lower anxiety and more resilience to stress. The practice of mindful meditation involves sitting comfortably, focusing on your breathing and bringing your mind's attention to the present without drifting into concerns about the past or future. Meditation not only leads to lower levels of stress and anxiety, it physiologically nurtures parts of the brain that contribute to well-being.

Spending time with people and activities you enjoy can go a long way toward helping you make the most of life's journey.

4. Enjoy Nature: Nature and sunlight can improve your mood, restore your spirit and enhance focus and clarity, helping you feel better overall. Good self-care includes making an extra effort to find ways to spend time in nature and get the benefit of natural light. Enjoy your morning coffee or tea outdoors, go for a walk during lunch, check out a new park, invest in indoor plants, take a weekend hike or just open up the blinds to let in the sunshine.

5. Enjoy the Journey: Life is a messy, beautiful journey of ups and downs. But sometimes the pressure for everything to be perfect can get in the way of simply enjoying the things you look forward to.

Try these tips:

- Accept that perfection is unattainable.
- Spend time participating in activities, and with people, you enjoy.
- Prioritize activities that make you happy.

So enjoy the journey this year as you engage in meaningful self-care practices and visit www.eachmindmatters.org for more information about self-care and mental health.

• *Each Mind Matters (EMM) is California's Mental Health Movement, with a focus on ending stigma and uniting a community of people where mental health is a priority and each mind truly matters.*