

MY MENTAL HEALTH

Season 2, episode 14

Mental health is a very important, but sometimes ignored, topic. Mental health affects every aspect of life. If we are in poor mental health, we don't eat well, nor do we want to exercise, which affects our physical health. If we are in poor mental health, we don't want to interact with other people. We don't want to do the things that we need to do to survive. That makes it easy to fall into depression.

I have always thought that I need to take care of my mental health. I used to believe that I had a lot of things under control. However, a big event occurred in my life in February 2022. This event caused me to evaluate my mental health and the impact of other people on my wellbeing.

Now I am very conscientious of my mental health. I think about my energy and activities. When I notice that I am in a bad mood, I think about why and I try to fix the situation.

I do several things to better my mental health. First, I try to think positively. When life is hard, I try to find at least one thing, even if it is small, that brings me happiness. For example, this weekend I felt lonely, as I typically do when my sons are with their dad. So I left my house in search of something to make me happy. The little thing that brought me happiness was a forest of aspens with their yellow leaves. I stopped in the middle of the trees and breathed the fresh air. I listened to the wind and felt the sun on my face. I felt better almost immediately. I still felt lonely, but my happiness was stronger than my loneliness.

It's hard to be positive when I am with negative people, so I try to ignore negative voices. There is a difference between constructive comments and negative comments. A single negative comment can ruin my whole day, even if there were ten positive comments. That's why I decided to ignore negative people.

I spend time with positive people. I have fantastic friends that listen to me and help me. When I have a bad day, I call my sister or I talk to a friend. They listen to me and offer support and, sometimes, solutions. I try to do the same for them.

There is a lot of negativity in the world. If I focus on negativity, I turn into a negative person. So, to avoid it, I don't spend a lot of time on social media. I know that social media also has positive aspects, like photos of my nieces and nephews or students and cat videos, but in general, I don't feel good after spending time on social media.

In addition to thinking positively, I exercise. I believe that my physical strength is connected to my mental strength. When I am physically strong, I am also mentally strong. When I can, I lift weights. I don't have space for a gym in my house and I don't have time to go to one, so I move my table and I lift weights in my dining room. Lifting weights is not my favorite activity, but I always feel good afterwards.

When I am angry, I run. I don't like to run much, but when I am angry and full of adrenaline, I feel much better if I run. I have a treadmill in my dining room and I run until I can't run anymore. Then I walk until I can run again and I repeat the cycle. At the end, I am too exhausted to be angry. My mind fills with endorphins and I feel much better.

I can't lift weights or run every day, but I can walk. I walk every day during my 30 minutes of lunch. I teach classes from 8 in the morning until 4 in the afternoon. My only break in all that time is lunch. I eat quickly and then I go outside with one of the English teachers and we walk. We walk in circles around the school. We normally do two circles, which is more or less a mile.

While we walk, we talk about our classes, students, and lives. Sometimes we think of solutions for school problems. Other times we talk about what we did during the weekend or our plans for vacations. We feel the sun and breathe the fresh air. When we finish, we are renewed to teach three more classes.

I know that food is important for mental health. When I eat poorly, I feel bad. I try to eat well, but sometimes it is hard because I don't like to cook at all. I eat protein and vegetables. To be able to walk during my lunch, I bring a lunch that I can eat quickly, like a sandwich, a yogurt with granola, fruit, cheese, and nuts. I also drink a lot of water. I drink two to three liters of water each day.

Physical and mental health are connected. However, we need to do more than physical activity to take care of our mental health. Another thing that I do every day is read. I read a physical book, because I believe that reading from an electronic device doesn't have the same effect on me. When I read, I calm down. I escape my world and my problems for a moment. I learn about historical moments or I feel empathy for groups of people with problems much worse than my own. I believe that reading is so important that all my classes begin with six to eight minutes of reading, not only because it is an excellent way to learn Spanish, but also because it has a lot of benefits for mental health.

Sometimes, I watch a movie or a television program that makes me laugh or cry. I especially enjoy watching stand-up comedy. Just like a book, I escape into the story and I find happiness.

It's hard for me to be still, so I typically knit or crochet while I watch. Creating something with my hands calms me and helps me concentrate. Also, at the end I have something pretty. Sometimes I knit during meetings or during church.

My religion helps me a lot with my mental health. When life is hard and I feel like I can't take it anymore, I talk to God. I sing religious songs, I listen to spiritual music, and I read the scriptures. My faith is an essential part of my life and my mental health.

Sometimes it is hard to maintain mental health without professional help. I participated in therapy that helped me a lot. My therapist helped me recognize my emotions and the causes of my emotions. She gave me ideas to change my mentality and control my reactions.

There are moments when I simply don't want to do anything, when life seems too complicated and hard. Those days, I put on fun music. I get up and dance, clean my house, or drive to a remote trail. I push myself to walk, or if it is winter, to ski, for hours and I spend time in the curative presence of nature. When I see the beauty and grandioseness of nature, my problems seem small. I remember that I can do hard things and that I don't need to do them alone; I have my family, my friends, and my God.

When I have a bad day and none of my activities help me, I always feel better after a hug from my sons. I have two marvelous sons and I am very thankful to be their mom. I want to give them a good example of physical and mental health to carry into adulthood.

What do you do for your mental health?



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