Opinion

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As a trained psychotherapist i cannot emphasize the importance of looking ourselves mentally as well physically

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Introduction

There is a huge focus nowadays on our appearance, weight and our physical health. Over the last number of years the fitness industry has boomed with new gyms and fitness based companies popping up all over the place! A huge percentage of the population have gone fitness mad and are hugely passionate about working out, eating healthily and really looking after their bodies. The same attitude should apply for our minds and our mental health, as it is just as, if not more important to mind our mental health given the huge rise in depression and other mental health issues in Ireland over the recent years.

In my work as a psychotherapist, I am shocked at the amount of young students I see on a daily basis suffering from depression, anxiety, panic attacks and a range of other issues. A lot of them I feel, also struggle hugely with self - acceptance and self - confidence and are extremely self -critical. If you struggle with accepting yourself for who you are, it can have a huge impact on your mental health.

Each and every one of us are different in many ways, however, one similarity that we all share is that none of us are perfect. There are many different things that makes us the person we are, such as gender, race, sexuality, personality, background and religion. All of us have something to offer and we are all entitled to live a fulfilling life full of happiness.

Young people nowadays are so preoccupied with their looks and how attractive they are to others but realistically if you are a beautiful person on the outside but struggling with mental illness on the inside, relationships and other areas of your life may be hugely affected. Being mentally healthy is just as attractive as looking good and being physically healthy.

Here are some simple but very effective ways to keep your mental health in check:

Surround yourself with positive people

Who genuinely care for you and you know you can rely on and take openly to whenever you may need. My Dad always said to me if you have 2 or 3 really good friends in your life you are lucky and he was right.

Take regular exercise

I cannot stress the importance of this one enough! Physical and mental health are closely linked and studies have proven that exercise releases chemicals in your brain that make you feel good. Regular exercise can boost your self-esteem and help you to concentrate, sleep, look and feel better.

Challenge yourself

Take on a new challenge or learn a new skill such as committing to a fitness goal or learning to cook a new recipe. Learning improves your mental fitness, while striving to meet your own goals builds skills and confidence and gives you a sense of progress and achievement.

Get plenty of sleep

Not getting a reasonable amount of sleep each night can have serious effects on your mental health. Try to get at least 7-8hours sleep a night as it restores both your mind and body.

Don't be afraid to ask for help

None of us are superhuman and we all get tired or overwhelmed by how we feel at times. Unfortunately, there is no such thing as a perfect, worry-free life. Everyone's life journey has its ups and downs but it's when the downs hit that you really need to reach out.

Don't isolate yourself

If you are going through a rough time the worst thing you can do is be on your own, where the negative thoughts and inner critic can have a field day! Push yourself to meet with friends and family who may be able offer different views from whatever's going on inside your own head. They can also keep you grounded, help you solve practical problems or just listen and be a shoulder to cry on.

Do something you're good at

Doing an activity you enjoy probably means you're good at it and when we achieve things in life it boosts our self-esteem.

Be mindful of alcohol consumption

Some people often drink alcohol to make themselves feel better after a hard day or to deal with sadness, but the effect is only temporary and the blues brothers will most likely be at the front door the next day! We all love a good night out but alcohol can also affect our mental health so just be careful not to over-do it.

So there's my words of wisdom for today! I know this post is a little different from most of my others but mental health is something I feel very passionate about. I think that we need to educate ourselves more on mental health and be more open and honest about the seriousness of depression and suicide in today's society rather than trying to avoid the elephant in the room!!!

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Conflicts of interest

Author declares there are no conflicts of interest.