


Teacher Wellness



About Your Presenter

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A hand is holding a dark, textured rectangular card. The card has a white, typewriter-style font printed on it. The background is a blurred landscape with green grass and trees under a bright sky.

If you change
nothing,
nothing will
change.



Physical Wellness

40% of our day
consists of habits.

Build Those Habits!

COMMIT TO ONE
CHANGE AT A TIME.

COGNITIVE DISSONANCE:
JUST DO IT, AND YOUR
BRAIN WILL FOLLOW.



Movement

Physical Benefits

Mental Benefits

Getting Started

10 Physical Benefits of Exercise



- The physical domain affects all the others!
- On especially busy days, our cognitive activity drains energy (in the form of glucose) from the brain, so our brain tells us to eat more. We can counteract this with just 15 minutes of exercise¹
- Improved cardiac/pulmonary health, digestion, stability, metabolism, and immune system; increased bone density²
- Engagement and enjoyment in life
- Sense of community and connection
- Transfer effect: one behavior change encourages others for yourself or for others
- Increases mood, optimism, and resilience to stress; insulates against depression, lowers anxiety³
- Improves brain health
- Makes sleep easier
- Recovery and regeneration for our bodies

¹ "Why Those With Busy Brains May Be at Risk for Weight Gain and How to Stop It"

² Myers et al 2004

³ Kandola et al 2018; Herman et al 2011

Find Your "Why"

- Motivations like losing weight and changing appearance are not long-term and can actually be harmful to your goals and mental health
- Motivations like stress management, mood, enjoyment, finding a personal challenge, and building community are more successful
- "Feel-better" effect ("exercise high"): just 20 minutes of movement can lead to a change in brain chemistry and perspective

I _____ because _____.



Mental Benefits to Exercise

"Physical activity – whether through exercise, exploration, competition, or celebration – makes us happier because it stimulates these instincts. Movement is intertwined with some of the most basic human joys, including self-expression, social connection, and mastery. When we are active, we access innate pleasures, from the satisfaction of synchronizing to the beat of music to the sensory thrill of moving with speed, grace, or power. Movement can also fulfill core human needs, such as the desires to connect with nature or to feel a part of something bigger than yourself...Getting hooked on exercise points...to our brain's capacity to latch onto a relationship that is good for us."⁴



Movement Basics

- 2 1/2 – 5 hours of moderate–intensity activity per week, or 1 1/4 – 2 1/2 hours of vigorous physical activity per week PLUS
- 2+ days of strength training

3 C's for Lifelong Fitness



Consistency: Avoid the all-or-nothing approach to fitness by starting with slow, consistent baby steps. This helps your body get used to it, and it becomes an essential part of who you are.⁵

Curiosity: Add different challenges over time: more frequency, better technique, new movements, more weight, longer distances, higher speed. This forces your body to adapt and keep working hard. Be fully engaged in your workout, and motivation will stay high!⁶

Compassion: Have grace when you mess up or experience setbacks; focus on the positive changes you've made!⁷

⁵ Heffernan 59

⁶ Heffernan 61;

⁷ Heffernan 62



Make it Possible

Make it
Enjoyable

Make a
Commitment

Make a Plan

Make it Happen

Make a Commitment

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

1 Corinthians 6:19–20



Maximize Everyday Opportunities for Movement

- Schedule your physical self-care on your calendar and protect that time!
- Replace time on social media or television with exercise.
- Include your family or pet in a group exercise challenge!
- Park at the far end of parking lots.
- Stop by the gym BEFORE going home!





Maximize Everyday Opportunities for Movement¹²

- When you watch television, exercise during the commercials.
- Take the stairs whenever possible.
- Minimize time spent sitting during the day; an object in motion stays in motion!
- Pair movement with an activity you already enjoy doing
 - Watch your favorite show *ONLY* while working out
 - Listen to your favorite podcast *ONLY* when taking a walk
 - Listen to your favorite playlist *ONLY* when at the gym
- Try habit stacking: associate it with a habit you already complete (e.g., after you brush your teeth, you stretch for 10 minutes).



Nutrition

What does good/bad nutrition look like?

Practical Strategies

Planning for Wiggle Room

Psychological Value of Food

- Defining our relationship with food: why we eat, how we eat, what we choose to eat, and how we feel about what we eat
- Indicators of a poor relationship with food
 - Guilt
 - Anxiety
 - Disordered eating
 - Not eating intuitively (stopping when full)
 - Demonizing food
 - Preoccupation with food and/or food rules



It's a lifestyle, not a diet.



What does good nutrition look like?

- Minimally processed foods
- Vegetables and fruits
- Nuts and seeds
- Legumes
- Whole grains
- Dairy
- Fish and seafood (2–3 meals that feature fish each week¹⁸)
- Fiber
- Focus on 3 big macronutrients: protein, carb, and healthy fat



Protein, Carbs, & Healthy Fats

- Protein: chicken, fish, beef, Greek yogurt, legumes, eggs¹⁹
 - Strong satiety effect - makes you feel full quickly!²⁰
 - Aim for 25–30 grams per meal
- Carbs: Unrefined carbs keep fiber and nutrients
- Fat: keep saturated fats ("junk" food) below 10% of daily calories

¹⁹ Kibasova

²⁰ Leidy et al, "Beneficial Effects"; Leidy et al, "High-Protein Breakfast"

Bad
nutrition
starts with
psychology.



What does bad nutrition look like?

- "Most unbalanced relationships with food are caused by being unaware of heart hunger. No food can ever satisfy this form of hunger. To satisfy it, we must learn how to nourish our hearts."²¹ ~ pediatrician Dr. Jan Chozen Bays
 - Why am I hungry? What emotions or thoughts may be affecting this impulse?
- Dichotomous thinking: thinking about foods as purely good or bad, which develops negative relationship with food²²
- Disinhibited eating: overconsuming food out of guilt in response to "breaking a rule" ("I ate some unhealthy food, and now I'll do that for the rest of the day because I already messed up")²³

²¹ Sholl

²² Johnson et al

²³ Johnson et al

The Many Forms of Bad Nutrition

- Diets with refined and processed foods are associated with long-term negative health outcomes
- In "junk" food, the mysterious ingredients that add flavor and extend shelf life are additives that have "never been encountered by human physiology," which is what makes them difficult to digest and convert into usable energy; this is why we often feel tired and hungry after eating junk food – all that food is just sitting in our stomach²⁴
- Potentially harmful dietary patterns:
 - Clean eating (no processed foods at all): leads to psychological distress²⁵
 - Very low-calorie diets (400–800 calories): increased hunger, risk of disordered eating, complications
 - Detox (drinking juices or teas and taking supplements instead of meals): doesn't build any healthy nutrition behavior

²⁴ Cox

²⁵ Ambwani et al

Practical Strategies

- Clean up your environment – don't have sweets and junk food laying around²⁶
- Drink more water – toss the sodas (even the sugar-free ones), juices, coffee, and alcohol²⁷
- Mindful eating (paying attention to what you're eating in the moment)
 - May reduce snacking by reducing cortisol²⁸ (hormone that sends hunger signals)
 - Chewing also increases fullness, because digestion begins when you chew²⁹
 - Multitasking while eating leads you to eat more

²⁶ Kibasova

²⁷ Kibasova

²⁸ Daubenmier

²⁹ Walther



Practical Strategies

- Take a "mealtime intermission." It takes 20 minutes to signal fullness, so pause halfway through the meal³⁰
- Intermittent/time-restricted fasting: 12-hour fasting window between dinner and breakfast³¹
- Keep a food journal – and don't lie to yourself about sneaking snacks!³²
- Occasional sweets – if we try to fully deprive ourselves, we'll end up eating more in the long run³³

³⁰ Lewine, Zelman, Boogren, "Physical Wellness" 16

³¹ Fielder 43

³² Boogren, "Self-Care" 13

³³ Fielder 43



Recognizing Little Things That (Unexpectedly) Make Us Gain Fat



- Eating fast: it takes time for our body to send "I'm full" signals to the brain³⁵
- Not drinking enough water³⁶
- Eating from large plates/bowls: study showed that people consumed 31% more ice cream unconsciously in larger bowl, but didn't feel more full³⁷
- Drinking calories: apples vs. apple juice study
- Not eating enough protein

³⁵ Kokkinos, et al

³⁶ Raman

³⁷ Hollands, et al; Wansink, et al



Sleep

Improving our sleep hygiene

Practical Strategies



*We don't get
enough sleep...*

...but that has consequences.

- Impaired ability to form new memories³⁸
- Increased risk of neurodegeneration (Parkinson's, Alzheimer's)
- Weight gain – 24% increased chance of obesity, and 6% increase of food intake when we're tired³⁹
- Mood impairments
- Increases depression, anxiety, and negativity bias⁴⁰



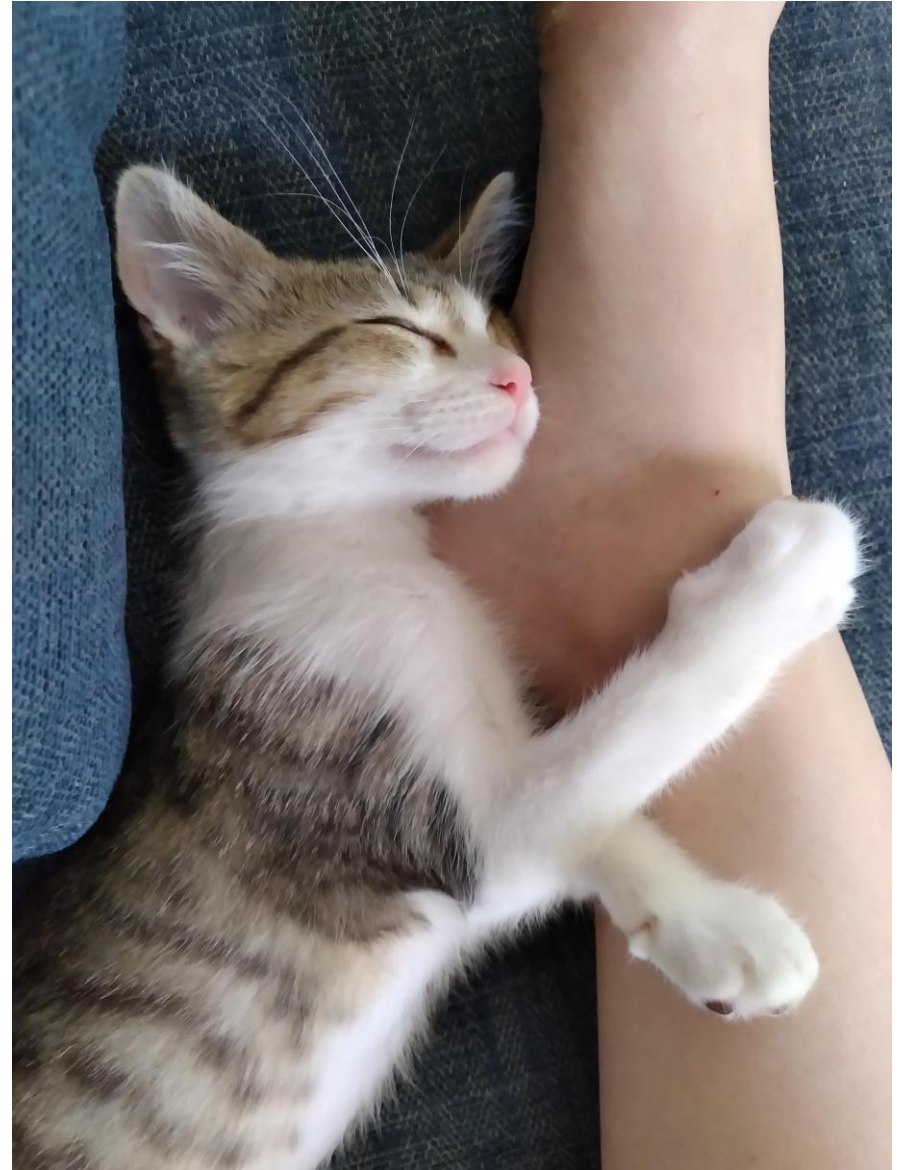
³⁸ Basner et al

³⁹ Moreno et al; Markwald et al

⁴⁰ Daut and Fonken; Tamm et al

Ways to Improve Our Sleep Hygiene

- Regulate light exposure (avoid light from blue light devices at least an hour before bedtime)
- Manage worries
- Stay cool at night
- Relax before bed (bath, reading, music)
- Stick to a schedule
- Daily exercise
- Use your bed only for sleep, not waking daytime activities like watching TV or studying
- Avoid meals, caffeine, and alcohol late at night



Bite-Sized Strategies

- Create a bedtime routine with steps starting 60 minutes, 30 minutes, and 10 minutes before bed⁴¹
- Tackle "revenge bedtime procrastination," where you stay up later for fun stuff to counteract a long or stressful day – gives you the illusion of control over your day⁴²

⁴¹ Boogren, "Physical Wellness" 38

⁴² Boogren, "Physical Wellness" 70



Bite-Sized Strategies

- Rest throughout the day helps prime the brain for sleep
 - Take 2-5 minutes to rest at the end of the workday before going home
- Use the evening moments before bed to reflect on the day; the last things you think about matter and set the stage for restful sleep⁴³
- Active rest is just as important as sleep⁴⁴

⁴³ Becker

⁴⁴ Boogren, "Self-Care" 128





General Thoughts

- Approach physical self-care positively!
- Don't expect perfection or fast results; use positive self-talk if you slip back into old habits (not calling yourself names or punishing yourself),
- Be flexible and open-minded when choosing certain types of food, physical activities, etc.

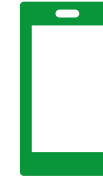
Ready, Set, Go!



Create a physical wellness vision board. Focus on physical wellness or expand to all domains of wellness.. Reflect what you want to do and how you want to feel 30 days from now.⁴⁶



Create a personal wellness slogan/word to inspire and focus your goals.⁴⁷



Try new fitness apps⁴⁸:

- ~ Life Time Fitness (free workouts, including dance, strength, yoga, and boxing)
- ~ Sworkit Health (customized workouts)
- ~ PlateJoy (customized meal plans and grocery lists based on dietary preferences and restrictions)
- ~ My Fitness Pal (tracks nutrition and exercise)

⁴⁶ Boogren, "Physical Wellness" 42-43

⁴⁷ Boogren, "Physical Wellness" 59-60

⁴⁸ Boogren, "Physical Wellness" 125

Modeling for Our Students

- Ideas
 - Incorporate natural movement into the classroom
 - Offer healthy snacks instead of candy
 - Talk about exercise and healthy foods positively in conversation
- Your ideas!

Mental & Emotional Wellness



What is mental health?

- According to the CDC, mental health...

"includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices."⁴⁹

3 Notes About Self-Care

- Self-care is "taking an active role in protecting our wellness and happiness, especially during periods of stress" (Oxford Dictionary of Languages)
- Self-care isn't selfish; pastors are now using the program CrossTrain for physical, emotional, rational/mental, and spiritual peer coaching



3 Notes About Self-Care

- God-pleasing self-care starts with your "why"⁵⁰
- We take care of ourselves...
 - so we can take care of our neighbors⁵¹
 - so we can serve the LORD to the best of our ability
 - to respect our God-given bodies and minds

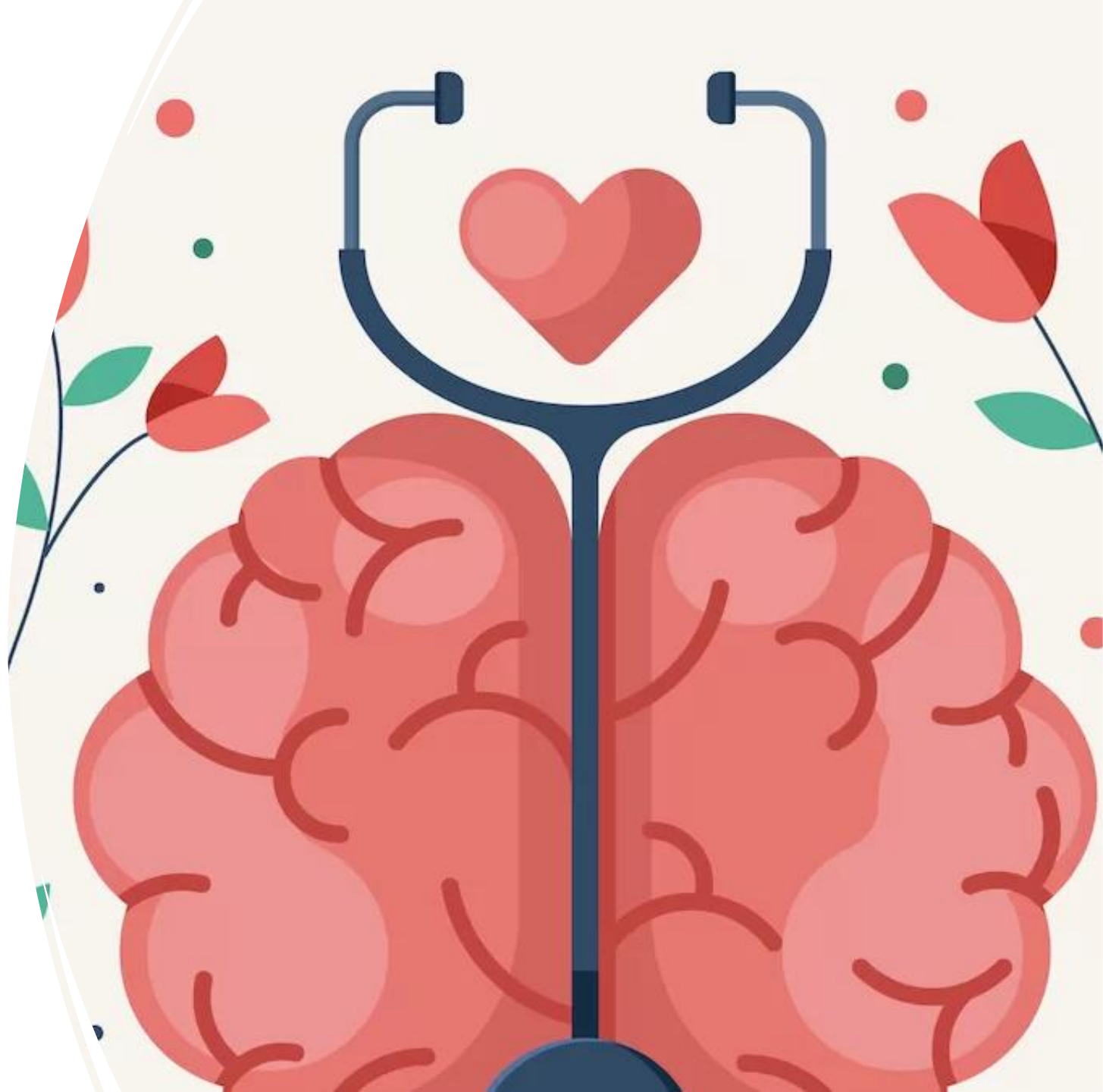
⁵⁰ Londgren 17

⁵¹ Londgren 28



Why can positive mental health be so challenging to maintain?

- Emotions are complex, and we can't sometimes identify what we're feeling
- Embodied cognition: mind/body connection
 - Punch to the gut, slap to the face, pit of my stomach, feeling down, cheer up



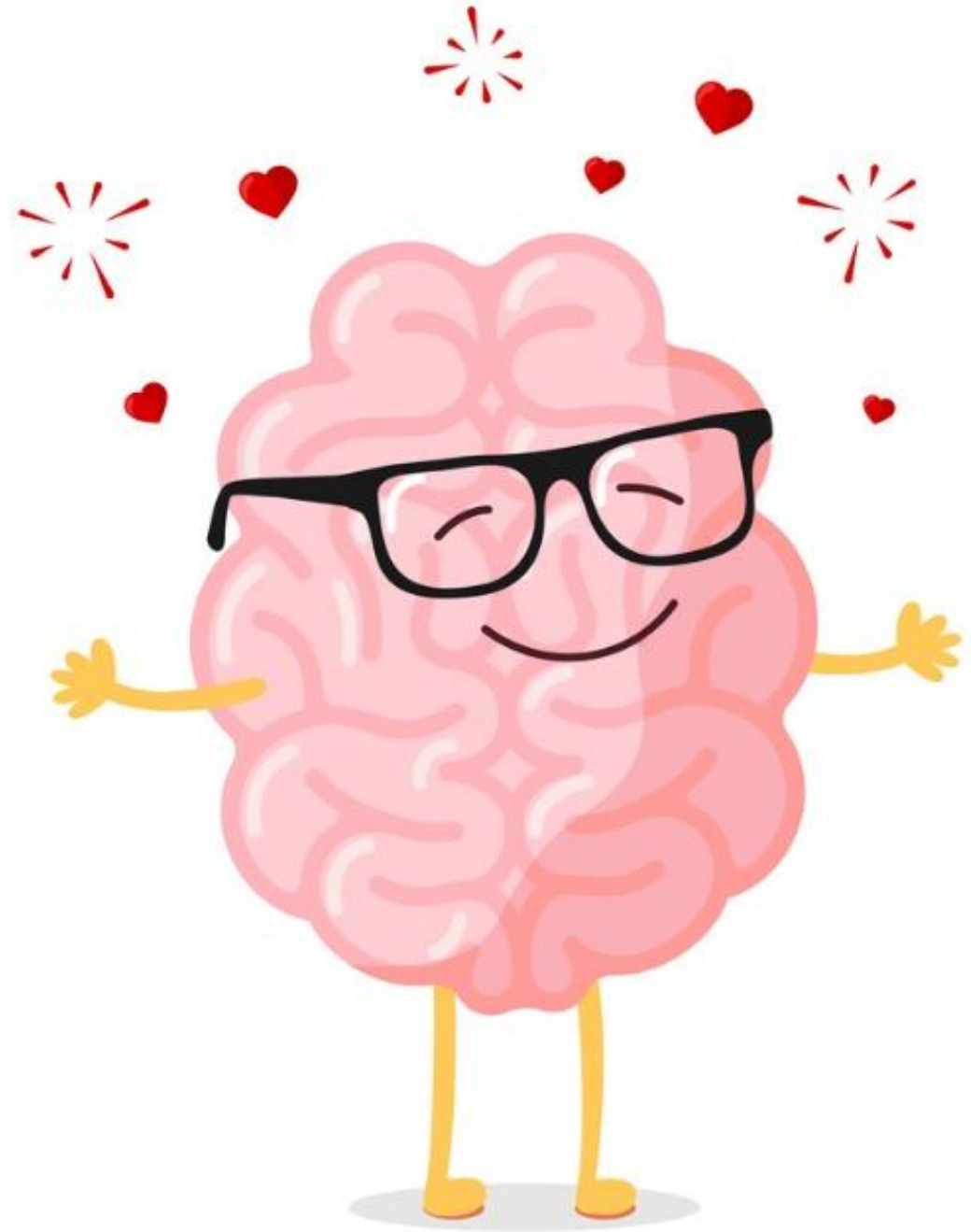
Signs That Your Mental Health Needs Attention

- You're sleeping poorly
- Your stomach feels off
- Your eating habits change
- You can't get motivated or don't feel like leaving the house
- You don't enjoy things that usually matter to you
- You've been snappy lately⁵¹

Building Positive
Mental Health

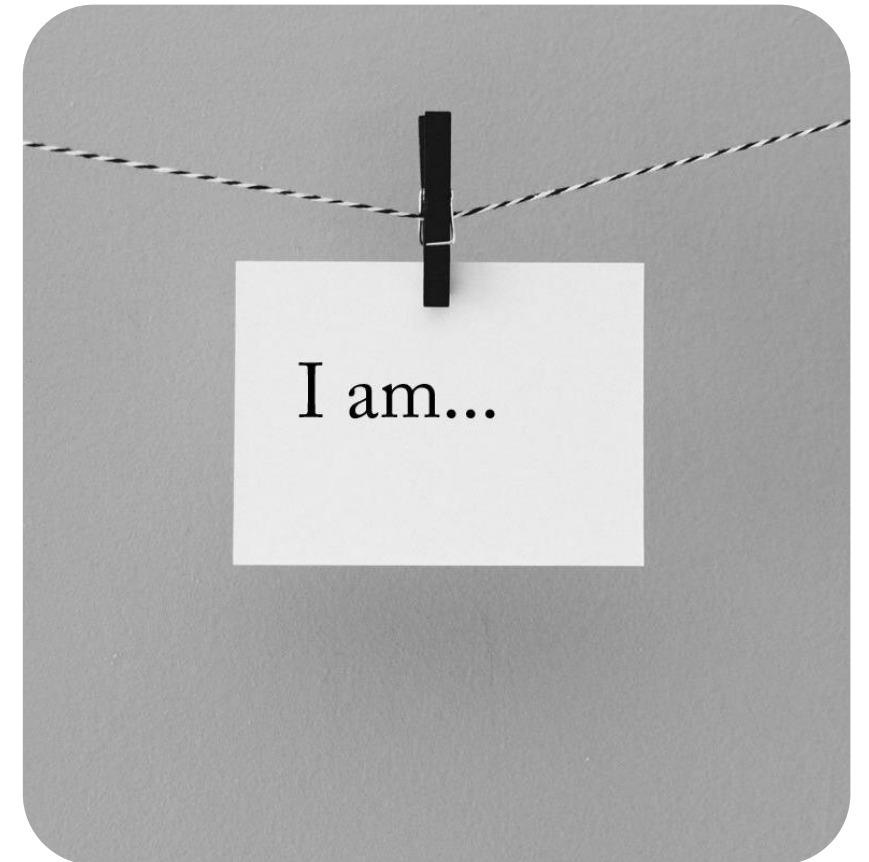
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Managing Negative
Mental Health



Build Your Identity

- Start with your identity as redeemed child of God!
- Ask yourself, "Who do I want to become?" to gain further clarity.
 - "Personal and professional growth can occur when you develop identities you are proud of."⁵²
 - "That is when your brain starts to create a picture of your ideal self and you can work toward growing into that person"⁵³ (Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, Director Marc Brackett)



⁵² Londgren 35

⁵³ Londgren 37

More Ways to Build Positive Mental Health

- Make a mission statement⁵⁷
- What brings you joy? How much time do you spend doing activities that are meaningful?
- Positive psychology (created by Martin Seligman, 2006): train and develop positive character traits that promote wellness in multiple areas of life
- Mindfulness (not like the practice of trying to empty your mind of thoughts to achieve a sense of godliness)⁵⁸
- Gratitude is biblical
 - "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." (1 Thess 5:18)
- Find your tribe, find your peace⁵⁹



today
i choose
joy

⁵⁷ Sean Covey 90

⁵⁸ Fink 141

⁵⁹ Gobin 104-105

Managing Negative Mental Health

- Exercise improves the ability to regulate emotional states
- Reframe negative feelings more positively
- We have a choice about what we focus on, and can control our own thought processes; excessive complaining gives us a victim mindset⁶⁰
 - "I don't want to be at the mercy of my emotions. I want to use them, to enjoy them, and to dominate them." (*The Picture of Dorian Gray*)
- "We live in a culture that overwhelmingly wants not to feel the bad feelings. The immediate gratification culture teaches us that if we feel any sort of discomfort, we can easily and quickly 'fix' it. When we do feel the 'bad' emotions...we feel like there is something inherently wrong with us...Sometimes, even as Christians, we are told to just pray and to trust in God and to know our feelings aren't real"⁶¹
 - In reality, the "bad" feelings serve good purposes (bringing us closer to God, showing us to change our behavior, etc.)
 - "What is grief, but love persevering?" (WandaVision)

⁶⁰ Longgren 56

⁶¹ Longgren 66

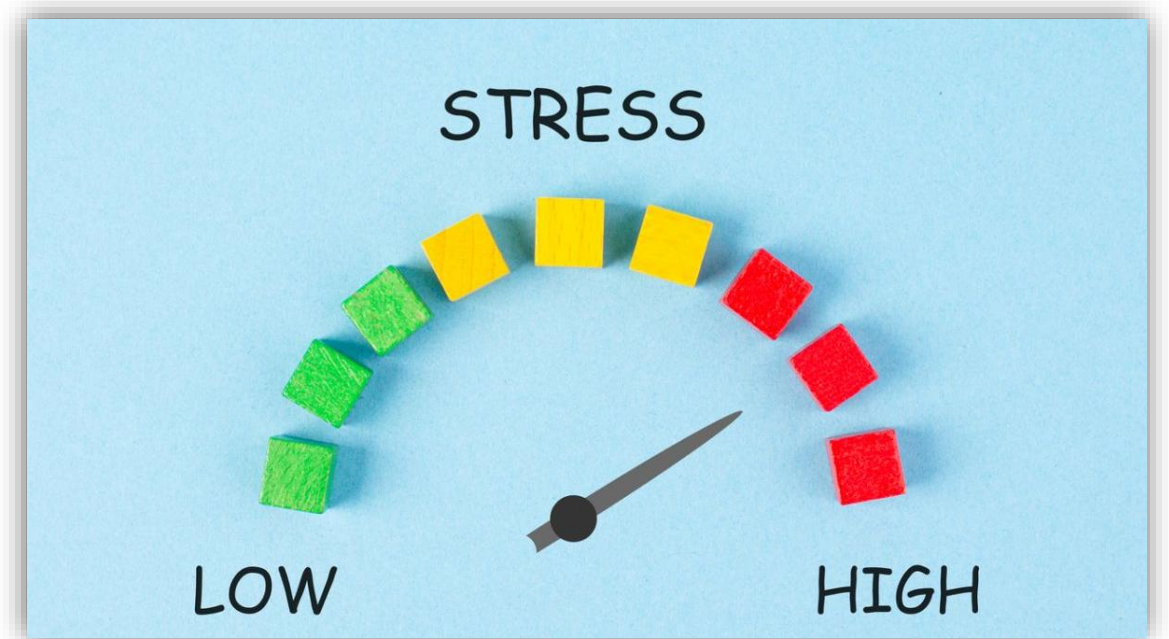
⁶² Longgren 69

Stress

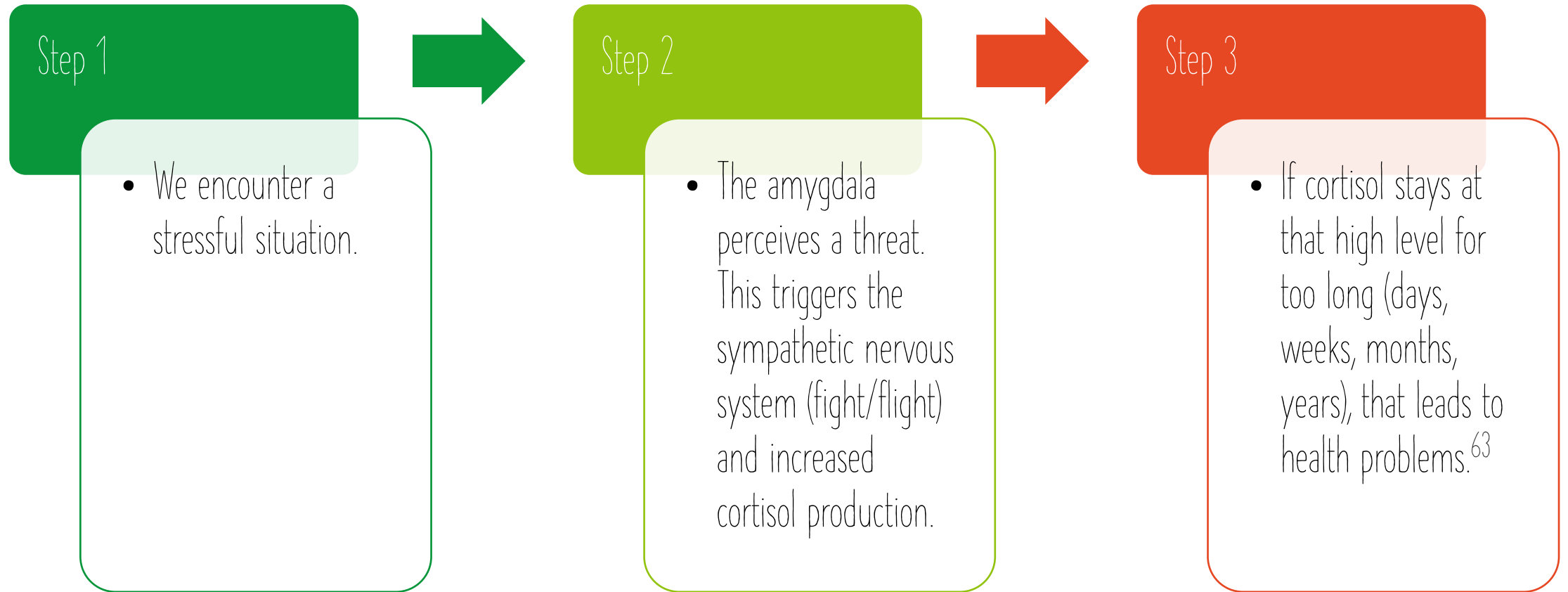


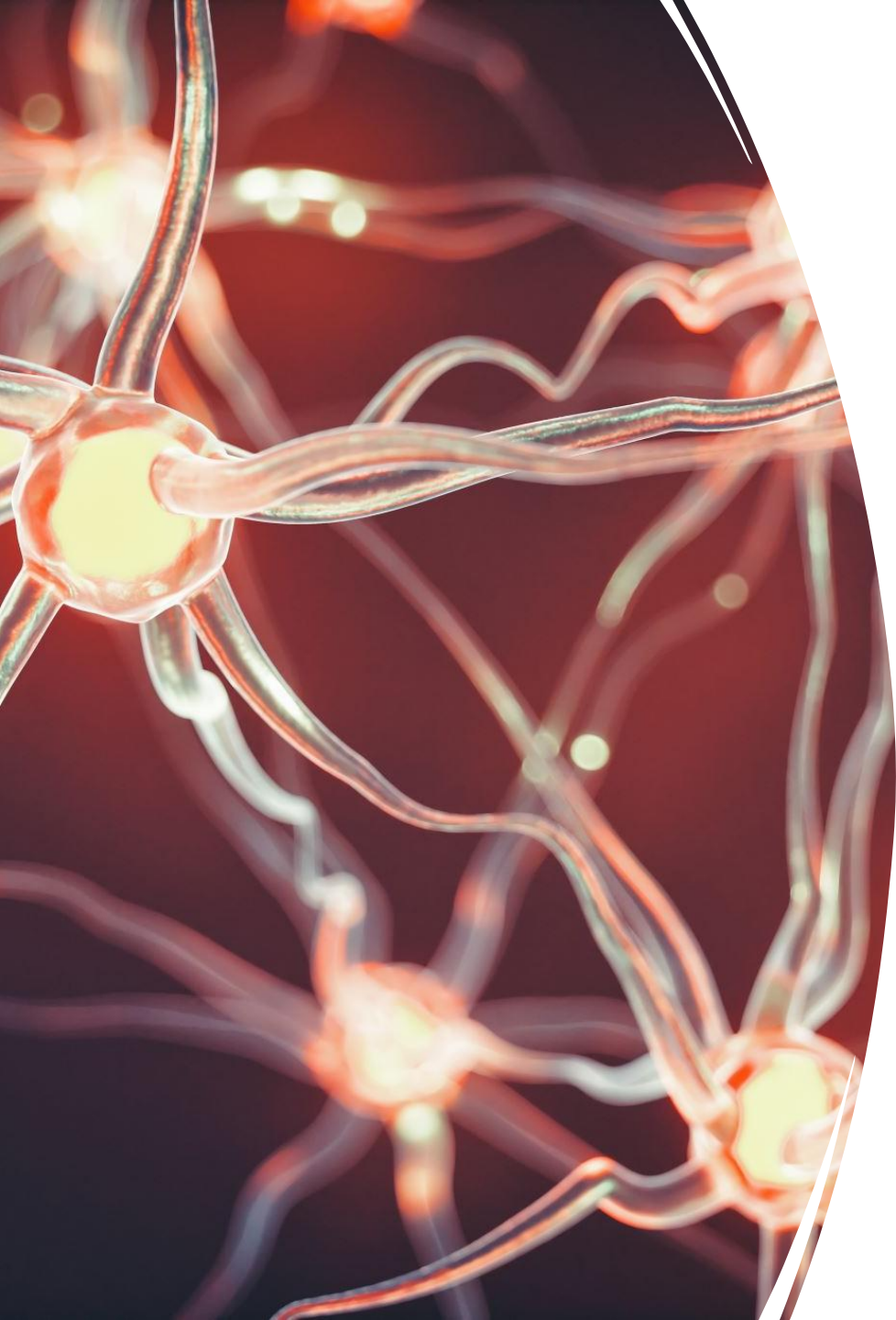
Stress 101

- Our brains are hard-wired to recognize negative events more than positive events
- Bucket analogy:
 - Individual bucket fills with distress and eustress (good stress)
 - The goal is to not overflow the bucket; we can't empty the bucket (because some stress is needed to drive change), so we create plenty of "recovery" holes for stress to leak out
- Stress reduction strategies: grounding, deep breathing, reading, music, journaling, gratitude practice, hobbies



Understanding Stress & Lessen its Power





Neurons that fire together wire together.

The more you have certain thoughts, the easier those thoughts will become.

Stress Management

- Biblical meditation: "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." (John 10:27)
 - "Christians are not using meditation and mindfulness practices to receive a special message or enlightenment from God apart from His Word, nor are they looking into themselves for a new truth or self-enlightenment."⁶⁵
 - Jesus regularly withdrew to quiet places to think, pray, meditate, and align himself with God's will⁶⁶
- Prevent certain stressors, reframe stress
- Regulate stress response: breathing, mindfulness, visualization/imagination
- Minimize consequences of stress: physical activity, good sleep, healthy diet, cognitive activity, social activity⁶⁷

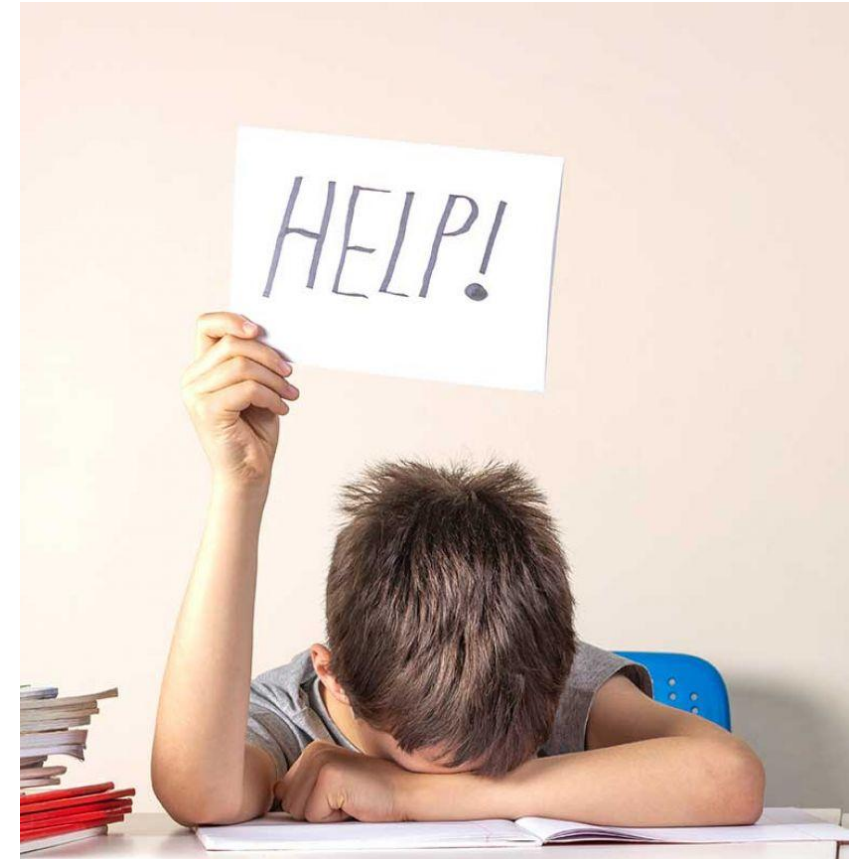
⁶⁵ Favorite 13-14

⁶⁶ Favorite 14

⁶⁷ Meriwether 46-47

Practical Solutions & Modeling for Our Students

- Christian Family Solutions: "Mental Health Moments" newsletter
- Mental & intellectual stimulation: get to know your own interests
 - Try online classes
 - Read a nonfiction book
 - Go back to school
 - Explore the community
 - Watch a how-to YouTube video
 - Take a learning vacation
 - Join a group or organization⁷¹



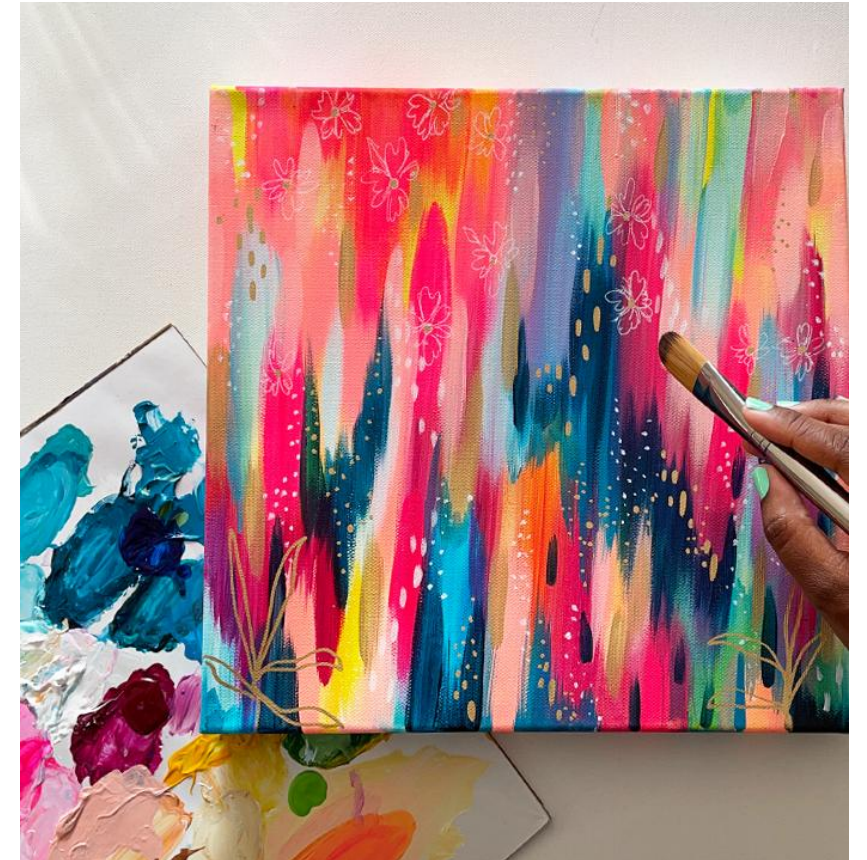
Practical Solutions & Modeling for Our Students

- Music reduces anxiety, blood pressure, depression, and pain; improves sleep quality, mood, memory; increases cognitive functioning, enhances learning and concentration, and wards off the effects of brain aging⁷²
- Do acts of kindness for others each day – that can decrease stress and enhance mental health⁷³
- Seek out inspiration: change your environment, learn something new, create a vision board, try a new art form, go beyond your comfort zone⁷⁴

⁷² Hampton

⁷³ Achor

⁷⁴ Boogren, "Self-Care" 61-63



Benefits to Journaling

- "When you remember, you relive and reclaim your own past. You can tell where you are on the journey of life only by seeing where you have been."⁷⁸
- Journaling in the morning can set intention for the day
- Journaling leads to decreased anxiety and eased depression symptoms⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Klug 80

⁷⁹ Spayde, "Diary" 72



Modeling for Our Students

- Your ideas!



Thank you,
LORD!



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