

O & A



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HOW DO YOU DEFINE A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE?

I believe a healthy lifestyle is built on nine universal pillars: nutrition, movement, rest, meaningful relationships, passion/purpose, financial and emotional health, a strong spiritual foundation and FUN!

If we tend to each pillar

and seek an overall balance, we will create resilience and a well-rounded life. Seek progress, not perfection.

HOW DID YOU COME TO PRACTICE IN YOUR CAREER FIELD?

I struggled with anxiety from childhood. In college, I received a lot of healing benefits from psychotherapy. In my late 20s, I discovered the power of pushing past limiting beliefs with life coaching.

I've trained extensively in both modalities and worked in the field of mental health for 22 years. I love the process of helping people to heal, discover self-compassion and grow into their potential.

WHAT ARE YOUR PRACTICES TO KEEP YOURSELF, YOUR FAMILY HEALTHY?

Moderation is the key for me, and I try to impart this wisdom to my daughter. I seek balance between work and play; striving and rest; planning ahead and being present.

We eat clean (mostly organic). We exercise, have fun and pray together. Laughter is an important part of every day. You can't laugh and be stressed at the same time!

HOW DO YOU DEFINE SELF-CARE; WHAT IS YOUR GO-TO WAY OF PRACTICING IT?

Self-care involves a balance between discipline and permission to do what feels good. Tuning in to how

I'm feeling and being real about what is needed in the moment is helpful. I often ask myself (and clients): "What would self-care look like right now?"

WHAT ARE YOUR BIGGEST HEALTH, WELLNESS TIPS?

Learn to monotask. This is another way of saying, "be present" as much as possible. When we are present with another person, it conveys "you are important." When we are present with what we are doing, we make fewer mistakes. When we are present in our environment, we can appreciate the small wonders that surround us.

Being present naturally reduces stress and anxiety and builds an attitude of gratitude.

Photo: Darnell/Renee

Breathe Easier

by Brooke Miller, Therapist and Holistic Life Coach, Brooke Miller Coaching

Life is easier when we are able to manage our emotional state and our reactions.

One of the best things we can do for our mental well-being is to develop the skill of emotion regulation. Having money, intelligence, beauty or power doesn't solve the personal and relationship problems that result from the inability to effectively manage stress, anxiety, mood and anger.

It's helpful to start with recognizing our patterns.

Is there a bad habit you can't shake? Do you respond with anger anytime you feel disrespected? Do you constantly over extend yourself and feel resentful?

Identify the emotional trigger and where it originated in your past; then identify what need the habitual response is attempting to fill. This starts the process of creating some understanding and self-compassion, while separating the past from the present.

Next we need an action plan to replace the knee-jerk response. Enter: motion regulation skills — the DOs to replace the DON'Ts. Skills are needed for both mind and body to manage our emotional state so we can consciously respond rather than unconsciously react.

Diaphragmatic breathing is a strategy that engages the mind and calms the body. It triggers a relaxation response by downregulating the nervous system, while giving the mind something to focus on besides the triggering event. Calming the nervous system and grounding in the present are two amazing benefits of diaphragmatic breathing.

THE TECHNIQUE

On the exhale, squeeze the belly to completely empty the lungs (imagine the belly button reaching back toward the spine). Simultaneously form a small "o" with your mouth as if you are exhaling through a straw — this lengthens the exhale. Breathe in fully through the nose, and direct the breath to your lower belly.

As you continue to inhale and exhale, your lower belly should be filling and emptying, moving several inches with each breath. Continue until calm and repeat throughout the day as a grounding practice.

What was learned can be unlearned. New skills can be practiced and new habits can be formed. Life can be different.

Change can start here and now with self-awareness, a sacred pause and a slow, deep breath.

