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Health Promotion Project Article

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Stress and Covid-19

Covid-19 has taken an emotional toll on everyone this past year. Did you know that senior citizens are more affected by the pandemic than the younger population? Seniors are more likely to have concerns with their daily routines being disrupted, issues getting healthcare and difficulties adapting to new technology like telehealth and video calls with their family and friends. Social distancing and the “lock down” has also added feelings of loneliness and isolation from loved ones. It’s stressful!

Let’s talk about stress reduction. Stress reduction can help improve mental health as well as reduce chronic pain. Stress reduction is also something you can do yourself to participate in your own daily health and well-being. Some researchers, right here in Massachusetts, have found that senior citizens who practice mindfulness exercises have lower stress and increased psychological functioning. Mindfulness is awareness that arises from paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally. Here are a few ways you can practice mindfulness.

-Mindful Eating. Eat slowly and pay attention to the flavors and textures of what you are eating. How do you feel eating it?

-Deep Breathing. Take a nice deep breath in, really focusing on how it feels to have your lungs fill up with air. Then exhale slowly, thinking about the small air currents your breath is making in front of you.

-Progressive Muscle Relaxation. Squeeze your eyes shut really tight and hold for 5 seconds. Then release. Squeeze your hand, arms and shoulders really tight and hold for 5 seconds. Then Release. Do the same thing with your legs and your feet. Try doing one body part at a time for extra relaxation!

-Active Listening. Pay close attention to the person you are talking to. How are they feeling when they talk to you (happy, sad, angry, excited)? Let them finish talking before you think of what to say back.

-Positive Reflection. When you go to sleep, think of at least one positive thing from that day. It can be anything that made you feel good like a nice phone call, hot shower or bath, a walk, anything!

Exercise can also help reduce stress. Whether it is gentle stretching, walking, or even strenuous chores. Exercise can also lower blood sugar, cholesterol and help us maintain a

healthy weight. It has been hard to stay active during the Covid-19 pandemic so congratulate yourself for every effort you have made. Stress reduction and exercise together can help reduce the psychological impact Covid-19 has on our senior citizens.

*Note-Article was kept light hearted and engaging per Marguerite's House Newsletter guidelines. No specific length was given but 1 page was a suggested length. The point of contact also changed from the Director to Tasha Nelson who oversees the newsletters and a phone call was made to discuss details. She also said the formatting would be completed by Marguerite's house so it matched their other articles.

Reference

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