

## A foundation for good mental health



**Dr. Akram Razzouk**

Mental health. Historically, it's been a subject that few have wanted to discuss, much less address on a personal level. Times have changed, however, and good mental health has become a priority in the midst of today's technological, emotional, physical, spiritual and mental stresses.

Think about it. Every day we're bombarded with stresses that didn't exist 15 years ago. Things like social media pressure, addictive video games and cyber bullying can raise blood pressure and lower self-esteem. Couple that with socio-economic burdens and an endless procession of negative news stories, and you have a recipe for feelings of alienation, loneliness and depression.

We need a better understanding of what constitutes good mental health and, more importantly, what steps we can take to build a foundation that supports strong mental health for ourselves and our family members to counteract these outside pressures.

People in good mental health are in balance. They adapt well to outside influences and are effective in dealing with life and the others around them, avoiding behavioral extremes such as rage and withdrawal through substance abuse.

But how do you achieve balance in a world where everything is considered urgent and the most common form of communication is through technology? While mental health professionals, physicians and counselors throughout the world's medical community agree that a balanced life leads to positive mental health, there are different approaches to achieving this goal.

We are seeing the benefits of an approach known as CREATION Health, a unique whole person health philosophy based on eight key principles.

Developed by Adventist Health Studies, these principles lay the foundation for

balance in mind, body and spirit.

**Choice.** Life is about options, and every option we choose will either take us closer to a feeling of well-being or lead us further away from the positive changes we seek.

**Rest.** Often unappreciated, taking time for relaxation and getting a good night's sleep empowers your mind, body and spirit to function at their best.

**Environment.** Our surroundings affect both our mental and physical well-being. Eliminating outer clutter can free your thoughts and emotions, while soothing images and scents help reduce stress.

**Activity.** The mind and the body are intimately connected. A fit mind promotes a fit body, and a fit body promotes a fit mind. Exercising both is important to staying in balance.

**Trust.** There is an important relationship between spirituality and healing. Our faith, beliefs and hopes affect our health in ways we are only now beginning to acknowledge.

**Interpersonal relationships.** Celebrate friends and family, because when you're connected to other people who love you, every cell in your body responds positively. You'll be happier and healthier.

**Outlook.** Your attitude influences your health. A more positive, happy attitude has even been shown to impact the progression of disease.

**Nutrition.** Be conscious of the food you eat. Even small improvements in your diet, when done regularly, can enhance your mental and physical health.

Now that we've reviewed what contributes to good mental health, in future columns writers will take a closer look at those things can undermine mental wellbeing and discuss how to address them.

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