

Wellbeing

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1. The connection between physical and mental health

So starting with you brother Amin, I guess sometimes in life stressful or difficult things can bring our bodies out of balance and make us feel a bit unwell. So just with the first question how is our physical health and our mental health how are they connected and what are some strategies people can use to rebalance?

Yeah it's really important in terms of overall well-being we always look at the part body in a package that our brain and in our other part of the body working together when it comes to health we normally in the scientific world we just say mental health what is related to the brain and the physical health related to the GP or whatever is the rest of the body but it's really important we understand and we consider that our brain and the rest of the body working together in a feedback system so I would say mental health and physical health are associating with each other and it's really critical when you're looking for each component you're looking for a holistic approach rather than one like you said sometimes we go out of balance one of these components might be out of the balance so for example if you have a poor mental health that can be a risk factor for lots of chronic disease or physical condition including diabetics blood pressure heart disease chronic fatigues and things like that at the same time a poor physical health or sedentary lifestyle or overweight or being being injured for a long time or being ill it can impact your life and your mental health as well yeah it's really important to see as a holistic approach but what we can do when we seeing the life out of balance we could use first thing top of the list with which we recommended by GPs by scientists by researchers would be exercise move the body and do some you know physical activity I totally agree I mean in general practice we find that people often present with physical symptoms that are actually called by medical illness and diabetes and blood pressure you mentioned but also just headaches and tension and migraines and things like that and and we will be talking a bit more about medication later but we've got a lot of other strategies that we use

2. Strategies to improve our mental health

One of my favourites is the green prescription where we get somebody to come out and talk about these and try to encourage individuals to you know, we've got the ability to get people to use the swimming pools or exercise and we've had pilates classes going in since March the 15th and so and Get out in the garden do something you enjoy, you know, and that's right

3. How can medication help_

You briefly touched on medication, so when is it appropriate to use medication to help deal with stress? I'd have to say sometimes. It's not always appropriate and every individual is different. If the situation of stress causes anxiety, and anxiety really is unresolved stress, and we've had an awful lot of stress in our community recently, as we all know, and certainly sometimes we do need to use medication to help with anxiety. If that anxiety leads to a very, very, very poor sleep, for instance, or if stress leads to depression, where people might actually start to really find it very hard to function on a day-to-day basis, they might find it hard to even do the housework, get out, do their jobs, and stop enjoying life.

They might be waking up in the middle of the night with very, very strong intrusive thoughts, and also the sort of physical problems we've already touched on. We might look at antidepressants, where when all these things occur, the stuff in the brain called serotonin, which gets really severely depleted, and if we can use an antidepressant to try and lift those chemicals, to make you give a better feeling of well-being, along with the other strategies we talked about, because it's only a small, I think it's a small but important part of the overall package that we try to get people to consider.

But good news here, sorry to interrupt, but if you do physical activity and exercise, what will happen in the body? First of all, talking about the stress, when you do physical activity and exercise, there's a chemical neurotransmitter called epinephrine. Epinephrine will increase, the level of epinephrine increase, the blood flow to the brain increase, so that will decrease the stress. Having more physical activity will increase, like doctor said, increase the level of serotonin, so that will make you happy and stop being sad or, you know. And another research showed that people that done 15-minute run or one-hour exercise, like walking, normal walking, they reported the self-happiness, increased level of self-happiness.

Medication, I would tend to reserve for more severe cases, where it's actually quite hard to get out and do these things, because you lose and lack the motivation, and it just makes it difficult to actually achieve these things. But we do them in conjunction at the same time when we talk about those other strategies. You know, do something that you enjoy on a daily basis. You know, smell the roses. You know, get out into the botanical gardens. Or swim, get up in the... And be physically active. Be physically active. But sometimes it's actually quite hard to do that, and we just need that at the same time.

If you're having a lot of trouble sleeping, there's one or two more natural things we use. We use a bit of melatonin sometimes, which is a hormone which is produced in the pineal gland in the brain, which is a natural product which aids sleep. And unfortunately, you'd have to pay a little bit for it. It's not freely funded, which is a pity, but it just helps some people just get off to sleep. And if you get a decent night's sleep, you can cope with the day a great deal better. If you're waking up at 2, 3, 4 o'clock in the morning with intrusive thoughts, it's hard to cope with the day. And that's where I see where medication of different sorts...

We have quite strong anti-anxiety medications that sometimes we need. I use a lot straight after the earthquake. We use a small amount after March 15. We only use that for a short length of time just to get people over the initial difficulty. The problem is they can be quite difficult to come off. So we use them when it's really urgent and you feel a few days, have half a dozen, half six, and then stop. And also, like you said, when you're in the middle of depression or anxiety and it's like the chronic stress that you're facing, it might be really hard. You can be bothered doing anything. You don't have the energy.

Because what will happen during the depression, your brain is consuming lots of energy. So you are lying on the bed. You don't feel like doing nothing. You just want to lie down. You have no energy to even go out. So my recommendation is to start doing, you know, a step-by-step thing. You don't want to think about going to a fancy gym or doing a hard workout. It's just for a moment that just five minutes, start with a five-minute walk around the block that you are doing, that easy step, and then you can increase. Obviously, having a coach, would definitely help. A supervised training would be definitely, always I say, is 10 minutes supervised exercise would be way more than, better than hours of you do it yourself.

So things like that, a step-by-step approach will help a lot. Sometimes, I mean, medication is useful, but we do use a lot of other strategies, as we've mentioned. I mean, one nice thing about your general practitioner and your practice nurses is they're people you know well, and you often trust them. Hopefully, well. And people just sitting down talking about issues to yourselves, often unburdening the things that are on your mind will make you feel a great deal better. And, you know, the problem shared is a problem halved. And sometimes, I've seen since March 15, some people on multiple occasions, just sit down and talk and just pass the time of day with people, and keeping the door open so that people feel welcome to be able to come in and discuss issues.

Sometimes, it's quite hard to go and talk to counsellors and people that you don't know. And sometimes, people need to see more than one person. Just because they've tried something in the past and they didn't find it worked, maybe now it will. So sometimes, we encourage people to have another go because there was a lot of counsellors early on after March 15, and a lot of people weren't really ready for it. And often now, it might be the right time. And as GPs, I sometimes feel that we're sort of a central part with spokes coming

out in every direction where we've got the ability to refer to a social worker, write a letter because the house they're in is too small for them now, help them get family members over and support them when they're coming in.

And so, hopefully, we've got a lot to offer. Yeah, in terms of social, I quite agree with that. That's why we always offer people to come to social sport, to a yoga class or team sport. When you get out and express your anger, your happiness and share your feeling with others, that will help a lot. First of all, we give you confidence, we give you self-esteem, and we give you power to pass your anxiety, pass your depression. Talking to people will help a lot. So, my final point would be sitting in the house and lying in the bed is not going to help us moving, passing depression. Thinking too much.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Without actually... Yeah, because the brain is just like a hole dragging you down. You go around the circle of thinking and thinking and thinking. Obviously, by having depression and anxiety, you're craving more sugar and more junk food and, as a consequence, you're overeating and, as a consequence, you get overweight. And, you know, it's just like a sickle. And that business gets worse. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Exactly. And I really like the approach of working. That's what I'm trying to do after my PhD. Trying to look at health as a holistic approach. Because if Dr. Issa does his job, I do my job, separate, and all psychologists do their job differently, it's not going to help.

But if we team up and work together, I believe that it's going to have a better effect in people's lives. So you've touched on various strategies and you've mentioned about medication and that for some people medication is necessary and that you do have to prescribe it. What if someone refuses that medication? I suppose it depends on how emphatically they refuse it. Because I think at that point you've got to say, you know, why don't you want to take medication and just sit and listen to somebody out? There might be very, very good reasons why. And the reasons might be multiple. There might be very, very different answers from different people.

First of all, we're not the health police. You know, this is, you know, we've got to work with people. And we've got to find the strategy and the support for an individual which will work for them. So I think you've got to move past that and discuss about other options. There's always that other option. And you just have to work with what works. Thank you for your time. Thank you. No problem.