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May 2019 Enhance Webinar #3: Self Care: Myths, Strategies and the Mind

Dairy Girl Network had the pleasure of hosting Monica Kramer McConkey, LPC from Eyes on the Horizon Consulting for our webinar on May 31, 2019 entitled “Self Care: Myths, Strategies, and the Mind”. May is Mental Health Awareness month, so this is a perfect time for us to discuss mental health and share our stories with one another. We also want to stress that this discussion can continue year-round, and we encourage you to use the hashtag #StrongerTogether when you post on social media.

Throughout the presentation, Monica focused on the myths of Self-Care and shared how our minds and our thinking are the greatest attributes that we possess. Self-Care is defined as the practice of taking an active role in protecting one’s own well-being and happiness, in particular during periods of stress. Self-Care should be considered as a preventative measure for our health. Stressful events will occur in our daily lives, but if prepare ourselves we can lighten the load.

Breaking down the myths of Self-Care:

- Self-Care does not have to be a time-consuming endeavor. We all think of the stereotypical expensive massage, big vacation, or girl’s weekend, but self-care does not have to be an expensive or all-out event.
- Self-Care does not rely on our “worth”. Monica shared a wonderful example of airplane oxygen masks. The flight attendant always tells passengers to place their own oxygen masks on before helping others. If you are depleted of oxygen, you will be unable to serve others like you could if you placed your oxygen mask prior.
- Self-Care is not always the easiest task/route. For example, the bowl of cereal is much easier to prepare than a meal with roasted vegetables.
- Self-Care is not the same for everyone!

Monica then continued to discuss human needs. The hierarchy of needs is a well-studied theory that explains how we function as human beings. The bottom of the pyramid is basic needs (sleep, nutrition, safety and physical health). These needs must be met to move to any higher place in the pyramid. Next is our emotional needs (intimate relationships, friendships, feelings of accomplishment). The highest portion of the pyramid is spiritual needs (faith, connection to something outside of ourselves, purpose in life, values/beliefs). Spiritual needs can be outside of religion and are often very different for different individuals.

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The next topic of discussion was the power of our thoughts. Our thoughts, feelings and actions are deeply intertwined. If we feed our minds positive thoughts, we will notice the positive aspects in our daily lives. This positivity can reinforce our previous thoughts and feelings, leading to a healthier mindset. Negative thinking is similar and can be an easy trap to fall into. Monica challenged us to be conscious of our thoughts, and to realize when we are slipping into a negative mindset. Working to keep that negative door shut takes self-discipline and focus. If you notice yourself falling into negative feelings and thoughts, make a plan to address those issues. Try to figure out the root of your negative thoughts.

Mindfulness is non-judgmental awareness of what is happening in the present moment. Monica explained that when you are mindful, you can discover why you are feeling the way you are in that moment. Focusing on your senses and taking in your surroundings can help calm and reduce anxiety. As silly as it may sound, focus on the green of the grass, listen to the birds chirping, admire the animals around you on the farm. A sprig of mint or slice of citrus in your water can challenge your senses on a normal day (and keep you hydrated!). Mindfulness can change mundane tasks into satisfying and even fun events.

Although the bulk of Self-Care begins with thinking, here are some strategies for introducing Self-Care tactically in our lives (Find what works for you!):

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| -Health | -Volunteering |
| -Nutrition | -Reading |
| -Sleep | -Podcasts |
| -Organize | -Massage |
| -Senses | -Hobbies |
| -Physical Activity | -Scheduling |
| -Meditation | -Muscle relaxation |

We would like to thank Monica for spending time with us and discussing this very important topic.

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