At the Heart of Wellness

Leaning Into Vulnerability. October 2023

Dear friends,

My experience is that readers of this newsletter are particularly inclined to move through the world with hoops of empathy. I wonder, has it been hard for you lately? Today's world can feel like we are being tested on our empathy muscles every time we turn on the news, or attempt to connect with other people, or even just want to just escape or shut down. In times like these, how do we go about leaning into our vulnerability and keep our hearts and minds sensitive to the US and around the world as we continue to hang hope, grief, and hopelessness. Lewiston, Israel and Palestine, Ukraine – we go on with our lives, but we are affected by what we see. It is easier for us to process our grief in catch out bouts, but culture doesn't allow space for spending the time to examine the impact/ causes/ potential solutions to all of this. We are left with our own personal experiences of fear, and we assume a self-protective posture that just feels numb. I am witnessing many sensitive souls who are experiencing significant emotional pain and are trying to find a way to cope with what is left of being so continues to come from pain and illness. And, allowing ourselves to fully feel the pain of human suffering is exhausting, so we do what we can to cope. I want to focus on in the short term, but as we know (and is highlighted in the new article in this newsletter) it can have devastating effects on our health and our ability to be contributing as and having as fulling life any actions on our take, are finite.

Last week, our staff had a profound training facilitated by Eric Nickerson called Compassionate Accountability. Eric's approach to healing racial bias in our world is to do the deep work of self-reflection, to examine our own biases, to examine our personal and cultural beliefs about ourselves and one another are carried, and reconciling those with compassion and love. His called us to access our hearts and our minds and our souls and our bodies, and our humanity and utilize that part of ourselves to do the hard work of empathetically relating to one another. It is deep, challenging, and it is hard work. It requires vulnerability and it requires that we have any meaningful shift in how we show up in the world. Enter invited us to lean into our vulnerability, to fully feel the vast emotions that are underneath our fear, and to be curious about what than what is our daily consciousness. It is in these deep layers where we find and can access the experience of oneness.

Susan Cain, author of Quiet and Bittersweet says:
Such rose-tinted call to a sunlit uplift, to spend
Our days in a state of gratitude, joy, and love
Amplifies blind and white narratives.
They call us to feel deeply at our own bias and move them
Into a place of healing, of wholeness, of connection.
We can stand against violence while seeking understanding;
We can grieve the loss of innocent life in Israel and in Gaza.
We can condemn Hamas terrorist and Israeli xenophobic, domestic terrorist attacks and collective punishment.

So, my dear friends, I imagine screaming empathy has indeed been hard for you lately. I understand and relate! Please give yourself the gift of quiet reflection, compassion, and empathy for the overwhelm. Please remember that it is OK to be sad, to be angry, to be afraid and that empathy will return. With empathy comes grace and the next right steps towards healing ourselves and one another. Keep hope, dear ones, we need you.

One last important and helpful note: the Litchfield County Opioid Task Force is holding an "Empathy: A Decade of Unity and Resilience" discussed here. We'd it's a collaboration of myriadsun-organizations and individuals from every sector of society who can dosplyl are coming together to share their stories, and to celebrate the work of g. World renowned experts Johann Hari and Dr Gabor Mate are keynotes – and we have extraordinaire CT and local experts on the panel. Please, please, please, if it is in your, I hope you have the opportunity to be together, heal and be inspired. Please be sure to be there!

All my best to you always,

Maria Costant Skinner, LCSW
President & CEO

EMBRACING MENTAL HEALTH

Dr. Brock Chisholm, the first Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), famously stated, "There can be no peace in the world if there is no peace in the minds of people." A mental health revolution is, at last, in progress, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. And now, the current mental health crisis has brought the relationship between physical and mental health to the forefront.

Understanding the mind-body connection.

"Research has shown that it is a misnomer, there is a fundamental link between both physical and mental health," says McCall's Chief Clinical Officer, Ary Pendola, LMFT LADC. "Our mental health can impact our physical health, and our physical health can impact our mental health, and when we're in physical pain, it may be hard to concentrate."

Studies demonstrate that conditions such as depression are intrinsically linked to chronic physical ailments like arthritis, diabetes, and cardiovascular health. Conversely, certain mental health interventions, such as positive psychology skills and cognitive behavioral therapy, help in managing chronic pain or reducing the risk of stroke or heart conditions.

The mind and body are not separate entities. They're deeply intertwined. If you treat both, you'll be in better health overall.

The journey to awareness.

Not too long ago, seeking help from a mental health provider or a therapist was stigmatized and seen as a sign of weakness. However, society has made progress and integrated mental health into the conversation. There's a growing acceptance of mental health as a vital component of overall well-being.

Despite this progress, we still encounter silos that separate physical and mental health, and Western medicine often tends to treat symptoms rather than address root causes. Fortunately, steps are being taken in the right direction, including depression screenings in primary care settings and a more holistic approach to patient care.

We've expanded our capabilities.

Taking care of both aspects of our well-being is essential. Factors such as regular exercise, a nutritious diet, sufficient sleep, and avoiding alcohol and substances play a significant role in maintaining both physical and mental health. Regular check-ups with healthcare providers are gamechanger on a regular basis is critical for early disease detection and intervention.

At certain stages or times in our lives, it may be beneficial to reach out to a behavioral healthcare provider to discuss our mental health. There are many types of therapy beyond simply talking to a therapist. There are also medications that can help you when you need it.

Did you know that you can come to McCall for mental health support? You don't need a substance use disorder to take advantage of our services. Our comprehensive approach encompasses a range of services, including outpatient mental health services, access to psychiatric advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs). They can help you heal from trauma, and you treat anxiety, depression, and even bipolar disorder or schizophrenia. What's more, we have the ability to coordinate care and establish connections with physical health providers when necessary.

If you're concerned about your mental health or the mental well-being of a loved one, please reach out to us. Call 860.426.2202 and an Intake Coordinator will help put you or your loved one on the path toward mental wellness.

Four more resources that will enhance your "External Resources" page:

Learn more on WCBG.

Don't worry, we've got you covered! Visit our presenters to hear McCall's Chief Clinical Officer, Ary Pendola, LMFT LADC, discuss the connection between physical and mental health.

Click on the image to listen to the full FM 97.3 WCBG interview.