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INSTRUCTIONS AND READINGS

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Emergency/Crisis

If you are experiencing a medical or mental health emergency, please call 911 immediately or present to your closest ER department. Emergency departments are capable of dealing with mental health emergencies as well as physical emergencies. **DO NOT WAIT FOR A SPECIFIC PERSON TO AID YOU IN A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS, ACTIVELY SEEK OUT THE FIRST COMPETENT PERSON AND ALLOW THEM TO ASSIST YOU.**

INSTRUCTIONS

UNDERSTANDING AND MINIMIZING RISKS OF MEDICATIONS

HOW TO RELAX BY STRESSING YOURSELF OUT EACH MORNING.

HOW TO BALANCE YOUR IMPROVEMENT

HOW TO SEEK SERENITY MORE THAN EXCITEMENT

HOW TO KEEP A GOOD ROUTINE

HOW TO SEEK SUPPORT FOR GOOD DECISIONS

HOW TO BE MORE MINDFUL

HOW TO TRACK YOUR SYMPTOMS

HOW TO AVOID DESTRUCTIVE IMPULSES

MEDICATION POLICIES

- Try to maintain a relationship with a pharmacy that has a list of all of your medication (even if you don't fill them all there.). Ask them to run an interaction profile with any new medication. Pharmacies have the most up to date drug-interaction programs.

- Do not drive on a new medication before you know how it will effect you. - Always practice birth control while on psychotropics. Any changes in family planning discuss with us. **LET US KNOW IMMEDIATELY IF YOU BECOME PREGNANT.**

- Monitor blood pressure weekly unless instructed to do so more often.

- Always read instructions, labels, and warnings from pharmacy and follow instructions unless specifically directed differently.

- **ALWAYS MAINTAIN A RELATIONSHIP WITH PRIMARY CARE.** Most Psychiatric conditions worsen in states of physical neglect. Likewise Psychiatric conditions can worsen medical problems. Also please get labs on time when ordered. This is an important part of monitoring medications and also assessing underlying conditions that can appear to be psychiatric in nature but are really physical in nature.

RISKS OF MEDICATIONS

SEDATING AGENTS ARE DANGEROUS

Although commonly used and prescribed, sedating agents are associated with an increase risk in mortality and falls, particularly when combined together or with pain medications.

People are supposed to be active in the day and shutting down in the evening. Activation in the first part of the day is the most important component to relaxation in the second. The first part of your day is when your stress hormones are highest. This is when your body is prepared for stress and activity. Make the first part of your day the most difficult physically and emotionally. Face your stressors and be active. This will help you release them in the evening.

Try to keep a good rhythm to your day with consistent mental and physical activity during daylight hours (particularly morning) and calm shutting down as evening approaches. The more consistently you do this the more stable you will be and the less you will need to rely on sedating medications.

Sometimes these medications are useful or may impart enough quality of life benefit they are worth the risk but we should always try to minimize the risk.

ASSOCIATED RISKS OF COMMONLY PRESCRIBED MEDICATIONS

(SEE PACKAGE INSERT FOR FULL RISKS)

Anti Anxiety Medications

(Lorazepam (Ativan), Alprazolam (Xanax), Diazepam (Valium), Buspirone (Buspar), Clonazepam (Klonopin) Triazolam (Halcyon) Clonidine (Catapres), Prazosin (Minipress), Terazosin, Hydroxyzine (Vistaril), Propranolol

(Inderal), Tiagabine (Gabitril), Gabapentin (Neurontin), Pregabalin (Lyrica), Chlordiazepoxide (Librium), Clorazepate (Tranxene), Baclofen

Chemical Dependence, Sedation, Impairment of Ability to Operate Heavy Machinery, Cardiovascular Collapse, Memory Loss, Death in overdose, Do not rapidly stop these medications or it could kill you. Do not operate machinery when changes doses of these meds. Do not drink alcohol while consuming these medications. Do not get pregnant on this medication without discussing with physician. Damage to Fetus in Pregnancy.

Alpha-Blockade Agents:

(Clonidine, Prazosin, Tizanidine (Zanaflex)

Can both lower and increase blood pressure resulting in strokes and other neurological symptoms. You need to monitor your blood pressure daily while on these medications, never miss a dose unless instructed to and coordinate your care with your primary care physician.

Antipsychotics:

Haloperidol (Haldol), Ziprasidone (Geodon), Olanzapine (Zyprexa), Quetiapine (Seroquel), Aripiprazole (Abilify), Chlorpromazine (Thorazine), Fluphenazine, Perphenazine, Thioridazine, Thiothixene, Asenapine (Saphiris), Brexpiprazole (Rexulti), Cariprazine (Rexulti), Clozapine (Clozaril), Iloperidone (Fanapt), Lurasidone (Latuda), Paliperidone (Invega), Pimavanserin (Nuplazid):

Diabetes, Weight gain, Irreversible Movement Disorders, Increased risks of death in the elderly compared to sugar pills, Liver damage, Heart Problems, Seizures. Cataracts. Skin Rash. Do not get pregnant on this medication without discussing with physician. Damage to Fetus in Pregnancy.

Antidepressants:

Fluoxetine (Prozac), Paroxetine (Paxil), Sertraline (Zoloft), Venlafaxine (Effexor), Mirtazapine (Remeron), Bupropion (Wellbutrin, Zyban), Citalopram (Celexa), E-Citalopram (Lexapro), Amitriptyline (Elavil), Nortriptyline (Pamelor), Clomipramine (Anafranil), Doxepin (Sinequan), Vilazodone (Viibryd), Phenzelzine (Nardil), Vortioxetine (Trintellix), Venlafaxine (Effexor), Desvenlafaxine (Pristiq), Levomilnacipran (Fetzima), Duloxetine (Cymbalta)

Seizures, Increased thoughts of suicide, Nausea, Headache. Sexual dysfunction, Confusion from Low Sodium. Do not get pregnant on these medication without discussing with physician. Damage to Fetus in Pregnancy.

Lithium:

Heart Problems, Sudden Death, Neurological Problems including seizure and tremor, Kidney Failure, Thyroid Problems, Weight Gain, Parathyroid problems. You need to have your blood monitored on lithium. Do not get dehydrated on this medication. Do not get pregnant on this medication without discussing with physician. Damage to Fetus in Pregnancy.

Stimulants:

(Dextroamphetamine (Adderall), Armodafinil (Nuvigil), Modafinil (Provigil), Atomoxetine (Strattera) Lisdexamfetamine (Vyvanse), Phentermine (Adipex), Dextroamphetamine (Dexedrine)

Weight Loss, Suicide, Depression, Heart Attack, Stroke, High Blood Pressure. Do not get pregnant while on these medications.

Anticonvulsants:

(Tegretol, Valproic Acid, Depakote Topiramate (Topamax), Keppra (Levetiracetam):

Seizure, Hair loss, Tremor, Liver failure, Pancreatitis, Hepatitis, Weight Gain, Bleeding problems, Life threatening rash. You should not operate heavy machinery when titrating new doses of these meds. You should have lab draws on these meds. Do not get pregnant on these medications without discussing with physician. Damage to Fetus in Pregnancy. Suicidal Thoughts and behavior.

Lamictal:

Death from Life Threatening Rash. Liver problems. Do not get pregnant on this medication without discussing with physician. Damage to Fetus in Pregnancy. Suicidal Thoughts.

Neurontin:

Seizures, Increase in Suicidal thoughts. Do not get pregnant on this medication without discussing with physician. Damage to Fetus in Pregnancy. May cause sedation. Do not operate heavy Machinery while changing doses. Suicidal thoughts.

Sleep agents:

Ambien, Sonata, Lunesta, Restoril. Suvorexant (Belsomra) Triazolam (Halcion), Temazepam (Restoril)

Chemical Dependence, Sedation, Impairment of Ability to Operate Heavy Machinery, Cardiovascular Collapse, Memory Loss, Death in overdose, Do not rapidly stop these medications. Do not operate machinery when changes doses of these meds. Do not drink alcohol while consuming these medications. Do not get pregnant on these medication without discussing with physician. Damage to Fetus in Pregnancy. Can cause sleep walking or eating or driving.

Trazodone:

Trazodone can cause a painful erection or genital swelling that can lead to damage to the tissue. This can occur at any time in treatment but is relatively uncommon. It can also cause sedation and drop in blood pressure increasing your risks of falls.

TAKE OWNERSHIP OF YOUR CONDITION...

BUT ALLOW US TO GUIDE YOU

You are seeking treatment because you have a problem we believe we can help you with.

"Help" is the qualifying word here.

Our assistance without your effort will be limited.

Not only do we need your effort, we need you to let us direct it. This may be the most important thing you can do to get better quickly. Let go of a little control. Allow us to direct your energy. Try to follow all of our instructions.

We are not trying to control you.

We are trying to give you greater control over your life.

We may not be able to help you if you don't allow us some influence in changing the way you live your life. Part of your mental health may be the life you're trying to live. Many people who suffer trauma really struggle letting go of control. But you have to surrender a little control now to give yourself more later.

We are trying to give you more eventually but give us a little more while you're improving and learning.

How to Relax...

By Stressing Yourself Out Each Morning.

We all want to relax.

There is an epidemic of anxiety.

Countless pills, books, and glasses of wine are purchased every day with the hope of relaxing.

But most of it isn't effective and a lot of it is dangerous with increases in mortality associated with the use of many sedative agents.

Why?

Why is trying to get calm so difficult?

The simple answer is that we are doing it all wrong.

I was doing it wrong.

There is a good chance that you are too.

Understanding and applying these next simple points will change your life and make it so much easier to relax and improve your productivity.

There are three things to know to understand implementing these changes.

1. There are two independent systems affecting your level of stress or arousal.

Our bodies have two nervous systems a sympathetic (or activating) nervous system and a parasympathetic (or calming nervous system).

The sympathetic nervous system traditionally called the “fight or flight” system is designed to activate muscles and face stressors, to pursue food or run from predators.

The parasympathetic is designed to rest and restore the body, to calm down at the end of the day. It is responsible for processing food, emotional bonding, and the healing of wounds.

2. These systems have a daily rhythm

Our ancestors had a daily rhythm when it came to stress. They had most stress and activity in the morning hours. Your stress hormones are highest from around 7a.m. to 10 a.m. as your body is ready for stressful activity.

Emotional stress was highly connected to this period of increased physical activity. They worried about food while hunting. They worried about shelter while looking for it.

We know that stressors are handled better in this window, particularly when tied to physical activation.

3. The most important part of relaxing is the “release” of this activating system NOT enhancement of the calming system.

Not only do we know that stress is handled better in the a.m. but we know that the most important component of calming is actually facing stressors in this window.

You have to “release” your activating system by engaging it. This will help your calming system take over in the evening for rest, recovery, restoration, and bonding.

We know that morning exercise lowers midnight blood pressure more than exercise at any other time during the day.

How should you change your life?

Morning should be a time of facing challenges (physical, mental, emotional).

Evening should be a time of recovery and emotional bonding.

Anything you’re going to worry about you worry about before noon. Pay attention to it. Think about it. While you keep your stressors in mind, try to be active, move around engage your body, your mind and your emotion.

If you can’t be physically active, expose your body to some others stressors, take a cool shower, acupuncture, all while imagining all of your emotional challenges for the day.

After noon attempt to deescalate. Do routine or mundane tasks. Avoid too much excitement. Bond with your network. Put off any challenges that you can until that next morning window.

People are supposed to be active in the day and shutting down in the evening. Activation in the first part of the day is the most important component to relaxation in the second. The first part of your day is when your stress hormones are highest. This is when your body is prepared for stress and activity.

The more consistently you do this the more stable you will be.

Avoid napping during the day. It can disturb the normal pattern of sleep and wakefulness.

Avoid stimulants such as caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol too close to bedtime. While alcohol is well known to speed the onset of sleep, it disrupts sleep in the second half as the body begins to metabolize the alcohol, causing arousal.

Exercise can promote good sleep.

Vigorous exercise should be taken in the morning or late afternoon. A relaxing exercise, like yoga, can be done before bed to help initiate a restful night's sleep.

Food can be disruptive right before sleep. Stay away from large meals and too much stimulation close to bedtime.

Mornings are for activity and stress, evenings for rest, physical restoration, and emotional bonding.

BALANCE YOUR IMPROVEMENT

There really are five ways that someone can improve: (SYMPTOMS, FUNCTIONING, INSIGHT, MEDICATION, STABILITY)

They can have fewer or less severe SYMPTOMS.

They can have greater FUNCTIONING.

They can have greater INSIGHT into their limitations.

They can be on less MEDICATION.

They can have more STABILITY.

Patients tend to focus on symptoms first, then functioning.

Therapists tend to focus on insight.

Doctors tend to focus on medications and stability.

All of these must be balanced.

The most important thing is NOT FORGETTING ABOUT#4.

Why? This is how people get in endless cycles of more and more medication. For example, Patient Jim feels bad symptoms while juggling

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three stressful activities. He goes to the doctor and gets medications. He goes to therapist and gets insight. He overall improves functioning and decreases symptoms. He comes back in three months with return of symptoms but he is now trying to juggle five things. So Jim thinks he needs more medication. We all want to have fewer symptoms, more functioning, and perfect insight. Sometimes the price with polypharmacy and instability is too high We need to keep all of these in mind.

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SEEK SERENITY MORE THAN EXCITEMENT

People often want to feel "happy." The truth is with our stimulus-overloaded society, many people have started to look for constant stimulation and "excitement" as the new "happy".

Perpetual excitement through video games, electronic stimulation, and intense interactions is probably not a sustainable form of mental health.

Peace and serenity as a baseline, with occasional excitement, is a far more achievable goal. Most people today probably need a little less stimulation and more contemplation which brings us to the importance of mindfulness.

GOOD CIRCADIAN INTEGRITY/ROUTINE/STRUCTURE

Give Yourself More Structure and Fewer Choices

Any parent who has watched their child decide between thirty-one flavors of ice cream can tell you that too many options can be a problem. Numerous psychological studies agree that excessive choices impair productivity.

The truth is, most successful people give up a lot of personal freedom voluntarily, they sacrifice choices by adding routine.

When we add structure to our lives we voluntarily limit the number of choices we make. We wake up at the same time, go to be at the same time, eat around the same time, and exercise on a daily basis. This structure means that were more likely to keep doing things in that routine. And it also means that we lessen the burden on our minds and bodies.

This can lower anxiety.

It can improve efficiency.

It can enhance productivity.

Set up a good routine for your life, a routine that plays to your strengths. Follow that routine and try to fit appropriate activities into it.

You'll have fewer choices. And your mind and body will thank you for it. And has you think about how your days are to be structured... remember to make the morning the most active physically, mentally and emotionally for the reasons below.

SEEK AND GIVE SUPPORT AND VALIDATION FOR GOOD DECISIONS

Too often in life we need, want, and expect support but we don't ask for it in specific ways. Then when it doesn't come, we are disappointed, disillusioned, and it may affect our relationships.

This goes for providers too.

As a provider, I tend to focus on what is going badly or struggling. It can be easy to miss positive efforts. And it is just as important for people to receive support for what they are doing well. Sometimes we need our efforts to be acknowledged Don't forget to remind me when you've done something well!

If you're proud of something, doing something well. Please point it out to me, remind me that most of us spend too much time obsessing what is wrong in life and not enough supporting and appreciating what is right...and that's just as important.

If you're doing something right. Remind me to celebrate it with you! Sometimes that is the most important role for a provider to play.

Do this in your relationships as well. Validate and support the good things people are doing in your life. Commit more emotional resources to strengthening healthy dynamics in your life.

CONSIDER BEING MORE MINDFUL

Expecting nothing while accepting and appreciating everything is the essence of mindfulness, viewing every interaction and experience in the most positive and productive way.

Mindfulness is a way of controlling and examining your thoughts and feelings that is helpful for not only minimizing the impact of negative events but also maximizing the appreciation of positive ones.

It helps us to survive when life is at its worst and thrive when life is at its best.

Please learn how to incorporate this way of thinking to minimize the impact of negative events and better appreciate positive ones.

TRACK YOUR SYMPTOMS

Most people are really inaccurate when reporting how they felt a week ago.

The best thing you can do to improve the quality of information you give us is keeping a mood chart.

There are many available on line.

There are apps for your phone (daylio).

At bare minimum, write down two numbers on your calendar every day. How many hours you slept? Your mood on a scale of 1-10 (1 is really bad, 5 is even and pleasant, 10 is way too good). We have a copy of the mood chart and sleep diary we recommend available on our website on the Patient Forms page.

This will help improve your awareness of your own mental state as well as the accuracy of the information you provide. Keeping a short daily journal is also a possibility. Dr. Grace wrote a journal writing guide that may assist you.

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING!

AVOID DESTRUCTIVE IMPULSES THROUGH PLANS AND ROUTINE

This may feel like a strange conversation.

Because if you're reading this, you're most likely calm. And when we're calm, and rational, we feel like we should always stay that way. Our "plan" is to remain calm. We say to ourselves—Okay...I'm in control right now. All I have to do is keep an eye on everything and stay in control.

This is NOT a good plan.

Why?

Because rational thought is hard to access in emotional situations. We often lose the ability to be reasonable when we need it most.

We all have buttons, our triggers, and our weakest moments. It is hard to avoid reactionary behavior, destructive impulses when facing these times. We may yell, say things we don't mean, break things we value...or worse. We often find ourselves regretting our actions during these episodes.

And even if we control our behavior, manage not to be destructive, we still pay a huge price for these contained emotional explosions. We may not sleep, be on-edge, and obsess throughout the night. It can take

weeks before our bodies begin the slow process of calming down from a highly triggered event.

So what should we do? We can we do when we can't count on ourselves to think reasonably.

We should practice a well-rehearsed plan—a rational routine.

Because even though it is hard to access the reasonable part of our brains when we're emotional, the routine and practiced component is still available. What we keep—even in highly emotional states—is the ability to access well-rehearsed behaviors and routines.

This is why people “practice” in anticipation of emotional situations.

Basketball players shoot free throws.

Soldiers drill.

Politicians rehearse speeches.

They do this so they can implement appropriate behavior in emotional situations without having to try to figure out how to behave in a heightened moment. This lets them stay in control of behavior; lets them return to a calmness faster. The earlier we intervene, the more effective our interventions.

This also let's us prepare contingency plans unless our first options are effective or available.

I believe in these. I use them on daily basis.

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Not only to keep myself calm but to appreciate my life more, to make the most of all of my experiences...even the difficult ones.

Keep your own plan with your triggers, warning signs, coping skills places and people. And minimize your access to dangerous impulsivity.