

Staff & students are encouraged to use the counselling service where needed. The e-mail addresses to access counselling are as follows: counseling.staff@open.uwi.edu and counseling.students@open.uwi.edu

Fortunately, the wall of stigma surrounding mental health issues is coming down slowly. Conversations and action must continue to destigmatize and normalize mental health in the region. In recognition of May as Mental Health Awareness month, here are some specific ways to promote mental health courtesy of the WHO:

- early childhood interventions (e.g. providing a stable environment that is sensitive to children's health and nutritional needs, with protection from threats, opportunities for early learning, and interactions that are responsive, emotionally supportive and developmentally stimulating);
- support to children (e.g. life skills programmes, child and youth development programmes);
- socio-economic empowerment of women (e.g. improving access to education and microcredit schemes);
- social support for elderly populations (e.g. befriending initiatives, community and day centres for the aged);
- programmes targeted at vulnerable people, including minorities, indigenous people, migrants and people affected by conflicts and disasters (e.g. psycho-social interventions after disasters);
- mental health promotional activities in schools (e.g. programmes involving supportive ecological changes in schools);
- mental health interventions at work (e.g. stress prevention programmes);
- housing policies (e.g. housing improvement);
- violence prevention programmes (e.g. reducing availability of alcohol and access to arms);
- community development programmes (e.g. integrated rural development);
- poverty reduction and social protection for the poor;
- anti-discrimination laws and campaigns;
- promotion of the rights, opportunities and care of individuals with mental disorders.

Sources: <https://bit.ly/3iYG8xi> and <https://bit.ly/3wKPQY5>

Dayna Smith
Sports Activity Development Officer

Sources: <https://bit.ly/3vF3zhW>

5 WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

DAILY JOURNALING

Journaling helps both your memory and mental health. Everyday, write out your to do list, daily gratitude and affirmations. Practicing gratitude will change how you look at your life and the world around you.



REDUCE NEGATIVITY

Your emotions, feelings and environment have a huge impact on your mental health. If your environment is full of negativity, it will then begin to transfer into other parts of your life.



FOCUS ON SELF CARE

Self care is all about taking time to do the things you love. Spend some more time reading, painting and listening to music. Click to check out more posts on self care.



READ MORE

Reduce your screen time and read more. Books open our minds and enable us to grow and change as individuals. If you're not a fan of reading, try audiobooks with audible.



LET GO OF EXPECTATIONS

We are constantly surrounded by expectations. These expectations hold us back and limit us from achieving our full potential. Identify the expectations you and others have for yourself and begin breaking them down.



PHYSICAL WELLNESS

Being Physically Active Benefits Your Mental Health

Physical activity can improve your mental wellbeing. Being physically active means moving your body and working your muscles, for example, by walking, running, dancing, swimming, doing yoga or gardening. Physical activity is not only great for the body, it's also great for the mind.



Most of us know the many physical benefits of exercise: weight control, lower blood pressure, and reduced risk of diabetes, just to name a few. But what about the psychological benefits of exercise?

1 Reduce Stress

Physical activity helps to relax the muscles and relieve tension in the body. Since the body and mind are so closely linked, when your body feels better so, too, will your mind.



2 Boost Happy Chemicals

Exercise releases endorphins, which creates a positive feeling in the body and give you a happy mental state.



3 Depression

Studies have shown that exercise can even alleviate symptoms among the clinically depressed.



4 Alleviate Anxiety

Exercise is a natural and effective anti-anxiety treatment. It relieves tension and stress, boosts physical and mental energy, and enhances well-being through the release of endorphins.



5 Improves Memory

The same endorphins that make you feel better also help you concentrate and feel mentally sharp for tasks at hand. Exercise also stimulates the growth of new brain cells and helps prevent age-related decline.



Chemicals that make you feel good are released in the brain when you are physically active. These chemicals boost your self-esteem, help with concentration and sleeping well and make you feel better, which are all great for your mental wellness.

The following are other mental benefits of being physically active:

- ❖ less tension, stress and mental fatigue
- ❖ a natural energy boost
- ❖ a sense of achievement
- ❖ more focus and motivation
- ❖ feeling less angry or frustrated
- ❖ a healthy appetite
- ❖ having fun.

6 Improve Self Confidence

Regular exercise can greatly boost your self-esteem and can quickly impact the persons self-worth.



7 Prevent Cognitive Decline

Exercise can help shore up the brain against cognitive decline that begins after age 45 working out, especially between age 25 and 45, boosts the chemicals in the brain that support and prevent degeneration of the hippocampus, an important part of the brain for memory and learning.



8 Help Control Addiction

Exercise can help in addiction recovery. Short exercise sessions can also effectively distract drug or alcohol addicts, making them de-prioritize cravings (at least in the short term).



9 Better Sleep

Physical activity increases body temperature, which can have calming effects on the mind, leading to less sheep counting and more shuteye.



10 More Energy

Increasing your heart rate several times a week will give you more get-up-and-go. Start off with just a few minutes of exercise a day, and increase your workout as you feel more energized.



Being active doesn't necessarily mean running marathons or joining an expensive gym but finding physical activities you enjoy. Research shows that doing physical activity in nature can make you feel happier and help reduce levels of depression and anxiety. Get active and improve your mental health.

Akeem Dewar
Regional Sports Coordinator

Sources: <https://bit.ly/35FpISD>

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS
 October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Behind the Pink Ribbon:

Living with Breast Cancer

Get **HEALTH** Savvi

Awareness



October

Is Breast Cancer Awareness Month



Go for regular screenings and encourage friends and family to get a breast check.



Donate money to breast cancer organisations to aid in further cancer research.

Dos



Exercise regularly



Eat healthy foods



Breast-feed



Keep your weight down



Watch out for changes to your breasts



Go for a mammogram to check for signs of breast disease



You can exercise breast cancer prevention by doing these:

Don'ts



Don't smoke



Limit exposure to pollution



Limit your alcohol consumption



Limit using hormone medication

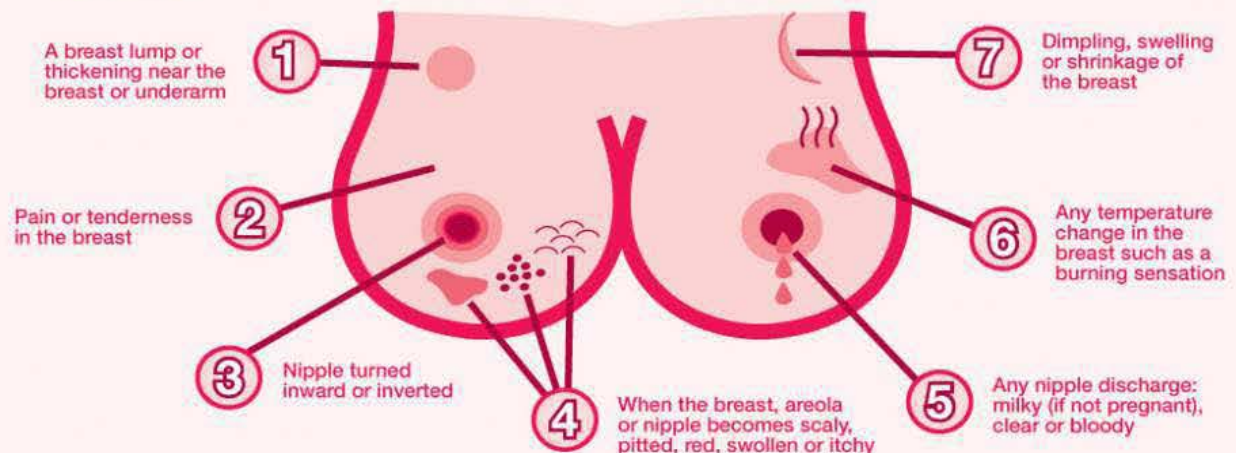
Symptoms



Keep an eye out for the signs and symptoms of breast cancer.



If you have any of these, see a doctor immediately. !



Risks



! Watch out for the dangers that can increase your risk of getting breast cancer.



- Being a woman (women have higher oestrogen and progesterone levels)
- Using birth control pills



- Having cancer in one breast puts a woman at increased risk of cancer in the other breast or another part of the same breast
- Women with benign breast tumours
- Having dense breast tissue (more glandular and fibrous tissue than fatty tissue)



- Gene defects inherited from a parent
- A family history of breast cancer



Women who haven't had children or who had their first child after 30.



Aging



White women are at higher risk than Black women.



Having more menstrual cycles (menstruating early and going through menopause later)



Women who had radiation to the chest as treatment for another cancer

Treatment



Treatment for breast cancer available for women **!**



Mammography: a mammogram detects about 90% of all breast cancers.



Stem cell treatment is used after radiation and/or chemotherapy (which affects the body's immune system) to replace damaged stem cells to aid in fighting infection.



Hormone therapy (tamoxifen pills) can slow breast cancer cell growth if taken every day for two to five years.



Chemotherapy may follow breast cancer surgery and can take the form of injections or drugs.

a mammogram is an X-ray of the breasts



Radiation is used after the cancer has been removed to destroy or shrink any remaining cancerous cells.



Mastectomy, the surgical removal of the breast for the treatment of breast cancer.



Lumpectomy, the removal of a lump from the breast.



A breast biopsy, the removal of breast tissue through surgery or using a needle.



Removal of the ovaries in pre-menopausal women as a way of eliminating the main source of oestrogen which can boost the growth of some breast tumours.

Self Breast Exam

How to check for breast cancer



Breast self-examination helps to detect any abnormalities. Discovering breast cancer in the early stages will make treatment more effective.



1 Do your breast examination in the shower
2 Move your fingertips in a circular and/or up-and-down motion around your breast and armpit area.

Visually check your breasts for any abnormalities in front of a mirror by:

1 standing up straight with your arms at your sides

2 raising your arms up

3 with you hands on your hips, flexing your chest muscles.

1 Lie down with a pillow under your one shoulder.
2 Reach the same arm behind your head.
3 Check your breast and armpit area by moving your fingertips in a circular and/or up-and-down motion.

Sources: <https://bit.ly/3iwbAly>

Breast Cancer Survivor Story

According to the Caribbean Public Health Agency (2018), “breast cancer is the main cause of cancer deaths among Caribbean females, accounting for 14%-30% of cancer deaths.” However, early detection and action can increase the chances of recovery and beating this disease. A living testament to this is Chelan Smith, Jamaican vlogger, tv host and owner of digital marketing agency, Chelan Communications; she was diagnosed with breast cancer in March 2020. Chelan, a.k.a. Mamachel, describes herself as “Bold but also Odd. Peculiar. and never one to back down from a challenge.” In the following video she shares her moving breast cancer diagnosis story and the start of her bold fight with the disease.

Sources: <https://bit.ly/3mrtivr>

Click picture to view



Sources: <https://bit.ly/2WIRZa6>

CREATIVE WELLNESS MY COVID-19 FEELINGS

Like it or not, I am instinctively aware of your presence, but struggle to understand why you are here.

Stumbling into pitch blackness and suddenly blinded by a presence so pervasive, I strain to discern your shape in the room.

I shudder even at your softest caress, so unwelcome and uncomfortable.

Like the stinging sharp bitterness of ginger on the tongue, you ensconce your strong presence as I struggle to gargle it away.

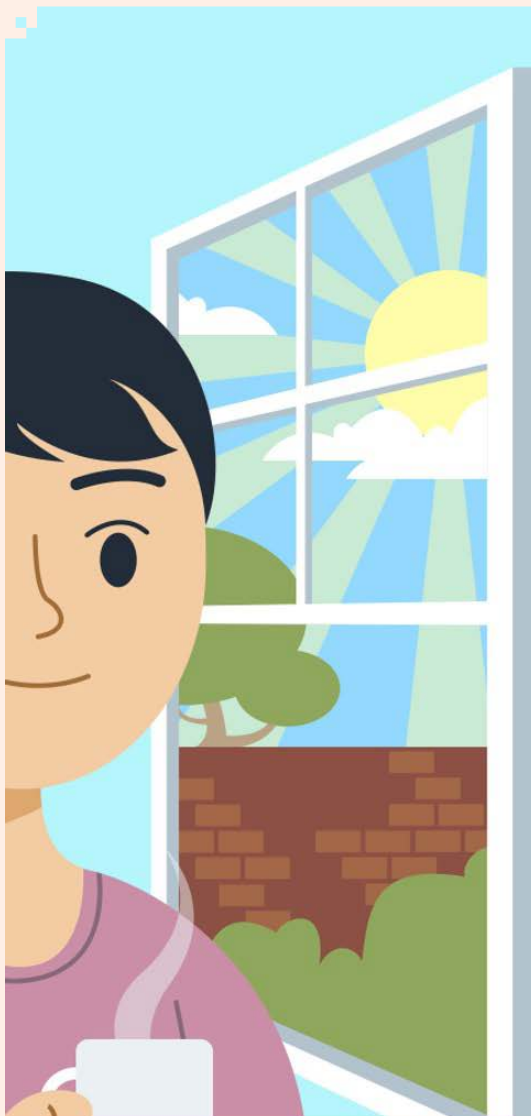
Pressing hard on my ears, I try to block out the piercing, irritating and persistent noise that you are.

With a pungent, yet indistinguishable scent, you lurk in every crevice, corner and pore of our small nation and the world at large.

Oh Corona! Corona! I know the day will come when I will no longer feel compelled to bow to your retched majesty.

Marcella Franklyn

"Take time to make your soul happy" - Author Unknown



Despite the challenges we are all facing now due to COVID-19, we can still find purpose in our lives and be supportive of one another.

When faced with a difficult situation, focus on what you can change, accept matters that are beyond your control and always strive to live by your values.

#MentalHealth #COVID19 #coronavirus



Sources: <https://bit.ly/3iVAiq7>

EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

How Taking Time Off Can Benefit Your Health

The correlation between stress, and physical, and mental health is well known. We know that stress is a strong contributor to high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, decreased immune defenses, and stomach and sleep problems.

A number of studies have shown that taking time away from the job can have physical and psychological health benefits. Taking a vacation is an important way to practice self-care, whether you're planning a long trip abroad or a three-day staycation. People who take vacations have lower stress, less risk of heart disease, a better outlook on life, more motivation to achieve goals and are happier overall.

Take the time off to relax and unwind, so you can come back to work feeling refreshed and ready to perform at your best.

Benefits of taking vacation:

- **Stress Reduction**- Vacation helps to reduce stress by removing people from the activities and environments that they associate with stress and anxiety.
- **Vacation Can Cut Your Risk for Heart Attack**- Taking an opportunity to de-stress and spend time with loved ones can lower the risk of heart attack.
- **Better Sleep**- Researchers say that vacations can help interrupt the habits that disrupt sleep, like working late into the night or watching a backlit screen before bed.
- **Improved Productivity**- Time away helps to mentally recharge in order to stay sharp and engaged on the job.
- **Decreased Burnout**- Employees who take regular time to relax are less likely to experience burnout, making them more creative and productive than their overworked, under-rested counterparts.
- **Improved Familial Relationships**- Spending time enjoying life with loved ones can keep relationships strong.

Taking time away from the stresses of work and daily life can improve our health, motivation, relationships, job performance, and perspective and give us the break we need to return to our lives and jobs refreshed and better equipped to handle whatever comes.

Akeem Dewar
Regional Sports Coordinator

The Healthy Benefits of Taking a Vacation

Reduces Instances of Heart Attacks



Promotes Brain Health and Improves Mood



Reduces Stress



Gives a New Perspective on Problems



Gives a Break from Daily Routines



Allows to Spend Quality Time with Family



WOMEN WHO TAKE A VACATION



2X a yr ↓ have a lower risk of heart attack or coronary disease-related death
every **6yrs** or less ↑ have greater risk of heart attack

86% of those who Travel are satisfied with their life 😊
75% of those who don't are dissatisfied 😞

Sources: <https://bit.ly/3xxtxFo>