

Mental Wellness Task Force Lunch and Learn Series

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When you increase your ability to cope with stress and keep the concentration of your stress hormones low, the following are more likely to occur:

- There is an increase of amount of gray matter in your brain which is associated with more brain cells and better cognitive function
- The risk of depression is decreased as the number of neurons in the hippocampus of the brain are maintained
- The length of your telomeres (the caps on the end of your chromosomes) are longer and associated with better health and longevity
- Your immune system works appropriately
 - reducing your risk of developing infectious disease
 - responding better to immunization, for example, to flu vaccine
 - reducing the likelihood of exacerbation of autoimmune diseases such as ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease, psoriasis, multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis
- Blood pressure is better controlled and may be lower
- There is less accumulation of cholesterol in the walls of the blood vessels of the heart and atherosclerotic heart disease may be reduced
- Control of glucose for individuals with diabetes is easier to manage
- Focusing and thinking clearly is easier

General guidelines for a long and healthy life:

- Children should grow up in a socially stable society having role models that use healthy lifestyle behaviors. Young children do not know what healthy behaviors are. They learn from those they love. If the important adults in a child's life use healthy behaviors, it is more likely that the child will grow up using those behaviors.
- Being part of a social network where you have others to talk to about personal issues, and with whom you engage in pleasurable activities so that your life is meaningful and interesting with goals that can be accomplished. You're never too old and it's never too late to increase your social interactions, and the returns can be significant in terms of life's quality and quantity
- Loneliness and the absence of friends can be stressful and unhealthy, unless you are seeking solitude, and are content with that life style
- Not being critical of others, avoiding arguments, and not always trying to get things your own way, are health enhancing goals to pursue
- Satisfaction with your career and your marital status enhances wellbeing
- Thoughtful planning for the future with a sense of control and accomplishment
- Being conscientious by striving to keep your life organized and productive