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October 2023

The Journey to Mental Wellness

Effective Strategies for Overcoming Life's Daily Challenges

Over the past few years, we've seen plenty of turmoil that has left a lasting impression on us. When you turn on the news, you see constant reports about the rising political tensions in our country and worldwide, global conflicts resulting in warlike behavior, and the ever-growing fear of a looming recession. Even without watching or reading the news, our daily routines can become overwhelming, causing our mental health to suffer. The world has gotten so crazy that I think even the people who have sound mental health could use a tune-up from time to time.

Over the years, I've developed a handful of tactics to help me maintain strong mental health. It's not always easy, and I do struggle to stick with these strategies on some days. However, once I take action to fix my mindset, I feel almost-instant relief and my mental health stabilizes.

One strategy that has worked well for me is carrying around a pen and notebook wherever I go. It's not exclusively for mental health reasons, but I've found that it's nice to have a pen and paper to write stuff down and get it out of my head. If I had a long day, I'll sit down before bed and write out all of my thoughts. Sometimes, just releasing those thoughts from our minds helps put things in perspective and reframe our state of mind.

In addition to my notebook, I also use a gratitude journal on a regular basis. Years ago, someone gifted me a Five-Minute Journal, but I never even picked it up until the pandemic started. You'll find various versions of the Five-Minute Journal, but most encourage you to start your day by writing down three things you're grateful for and actions you can take to ensure the day is a success. At the end of the day, you write down a few things you're grateful for that happened that day as well as some lessons you learned. Whenever I use my gratitude journal, I feel more centered and in tune with the world around me.

It's amazing how much a positive mindset can change how we feel about ourselves. I recently listened to a podcast featuring Dr. Daniel Amen, where he discussed different ways to improve your mindset. When Dr. Amen wakes up in the morning, he announces that it's going to be a great day. When he goes to



sleep, he audibly talks about how great of a day he had. The subconscious picks up on our words to help us stay in a positive mindset through the night and into the morning.

Books are another great way to bring more positivity into your life. At any point in time, I am actively reading a fiction book, a biography, and a business book. If I'm feeling stressed, I'll pop open a fiction book, which allows me to lose myself in another world.

You can use endless strategies to improve your mental health, from visiting a therapist to getting outside more often and exercising. If your work is continually stressing you out, make sure you take your vacation days. Find a strategy that works for you and your unique situation, and stick with it when the times get tough. Through effort, dedication, and perseverance, you can develop a positive mindset and boost your mental health.

- Andrew M. Ayers

FROM APPLICANT TO ARRESTED:

The Fugitive Who Applied for a Police Job

Even most criminals need traditional employment to pay the bills, but Zyeama Johnson looked for work in all the wrong places. Perhaps Johnson imagined her previous experience with law enforcement would give her a leg up in her application to the Hudson County Sheriff's Office in New Jersey in 2022. But unfortunately for her, all of Johnson's past and future involvement with the police would be on the wrong side of the law.

Johnson was looking for a legal way to earn a living when she applied for a job as a security guard at the sheriff's office. But her past money-making ventures allegedly involved fraud, and she had failed to appear in a Pennsylvania court on the charges. Presumably, Johnson did not realize a police station would perform a background

check before hiring — or that this office specializes in resolving outstanding warrants.

When processing her application, the Hudson County Sheriff's Office discovered the active bench warrant in Pennsylvania. The routine investigation also found 10 additional active bench warrants in Jersey City, New Jersey; Johnson had allegedly failed to appear on traffic charges.

Most employers in this situation would probably move on to the next applicant, but the sheriff's department decided to call Johnson in for an "interview" instead. Unsurprisingly, they had no intention of hiring her and arrested the fugitive on the spot. It gave the standard interview

question, "Where do you see yourself in five years?" a new meaning.

After taking Johnson into custody, the police proceeded to search her property. Incredibly, they found two credit cards in her possession they believed were stolen. Police added credit card theft charges to Johnson's already considerable rap sheet. To make matters worse for her, the sheriff's office also contacted Johnson's former employer, the United States Postal Service, which launched its own investigation into her conduct.

As of October 2022, Johnson was being held in a Hudson County jail awaiting extradition to Pennsylvania for the most serious charge against her. It's unclear why she thought applying for a law enforcement position with outstanding warrants was a wise career move, but at least she made her would-be coworkers' jobs easy that day.



Unlock the Secrets of a Calming Bedtime Routine

Does it always seem like your kids get a burst of energy right before bedtime? After a jam-packed day, your child's pent-up stress and energy will likely spike when it's time to head to bed. The key is implementing a consistent bedtime routine to help them transition into sleep mode. Try therapeutic techniques to soothe your child for a full night of shut-eye.

Squeeze 'em tight (add pressure).

Just like you would swaddle a baby, you should wrap your kids up like tiny burritos! When you add pressure that squeezes them tight, your child's tactile and proprioceptive senses are activated, which creates a sense of calm and relaxation. You can also do this with weighted blankets, tight cuddles, or by tucking them in nice and snug with pillows placed around them to add more pressure.

Get them warm and cozy.

Warmth is another element that can increase calm and signal bedtime! Put their

blankets in the dryer so they'll have them nice and warm when it's time to lie down. Additionally, you can give them a warm drink with a straw, as the warmth not only relaxes them but the straw also encourages sucking motions, which are incredibly soothing for children.

Create gentle movements.

Repetitive and rhythmic movements like rocking back and forth generate vestibular input for the nervous system. This will help your children feel comfortable and ready to sleep! You can try these motions by rocking them on a yoga ball for a few minutes, reading a bedtime story in a rocking chair, or sitting with them in a porch swing or hammock right before bed.

Turn the screens off.

We already know that looking at screens harms our sleep, so why would that be any different for children? Decrease screen time as the day advances and completely turn off any screens at least two hours



before bedtime. Not only do you want to cut these harsh lights, but you should also add comforting ones! Unwind in dim lighting as the day ends, and place lava lamps or a night light in your children's rooms to help soothe them. Also, adding a white noise machine or playing calm music can do wonders!

Combine these therapeutic methods to create the perfect bedtime routine that will have your energetic kiddos in bed without a hitch.

TAKE A **BREAK**



THE REVENGE OF THE RONIN

Unveiling the Historic Massacre of Kira Yoshinaka

Never has there been a tale of revenge so blood-filled and epic as the 47 Ronin. Honorable and loyal to the end, these samurai warriors proved their dedication to their master in an incident that would become immortalized in Japanese literature, theater, and film. So, what led these samurai on a vengeful rampage?

It started in April 1701, when nobleman Asano Naganori, also known as the lord of Ako, was treated with complete disrespect and arrogance by Kira Yoshinaka, a court official. After holding back his anger, Asano finally snapped. Asano revealed his sword and attacked Kira in the middle of the palace's main hall. Although Kira lived to tell the tale, Asano broke court rules and was ordered to kill himself. Following the court's ruling, Asano ended his life on April 21, 1701.

After his demise, Asano left behind his faithful 47 samurai, whose status was lowered to ronin (samurai with no leader). Crushed by his death, the ruthless men created a plan. The 47 Ronin laid low for two years by dispersing and living in "retirement." The years passed, and the men were able to lower Kira's guard. At this point, one of the ronin had reached his 80s and could not participate in the vengeful plan. However, the remaining 46 men raided Kira's estate on an early January morning in 1703. They fearlessly battled Kira's samurai and decapitated Kira. The ronin then carried his head in a basket for miles to their deceased lord's grave.

Authorities were intensely conflicted on how to treat the vengeful massacre. While it broke the shogun's rules, the act followed the respected samurai warrior code. Yet, in the end, all 46 men were ordered to

kill themselves via self-disembowelment, *hara-kiri*. The ronin ranged in age from 15 to 77 years old. After their deaths, the ronin became legends and were buried alongside their master, Asano Naganori. You can visit this famous site at Sengakuji Temple in Tokyo.



HOMEMADE PUMPKIN SPICE LATTE

Inspired by AmbitiousKitchen.com

Save money this October with this delicious homemade pumpkin spice latte that will taste better than any store-bought coffee.

Ingredients

- 2 shots espresso (or 1/2 cup freshly brewed coffee)
- 1 cup milk of choice
- 3 tbsp pumpkin purée
- 1–2 tbsp maple syrup
- 1 tsp pumpkin pie spice
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- Whipped cream for topping (optional)

Directions

1. In a small pot on medium heat, heat milk until simmering but not boiling.
2. Make your espresso (or coffee) and pour into a large mug or Mason jar. Add pumpkin purée, maple syrup, pumpkin pie spice, and vanilla and stir until well combined.
3. With a milk frother, froth the heated milk until foamy. Then, pour into your pumpkin espresso mixture and top with whipped cream. For decoration, you can sprinkle more cinnamon or pumpkin spice on top!



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THE SHOCKING TRUTH BEHIND SHERRI'S KIDNAPPING REVEALED

Sherri Papini vanished out of thin air in November 2016. The day she went missing, her husband, Keith Papini, came home expecting to see his wife and kids but found the residence eerily empty. Keith called the children's day care to ask when his wife picked them up, but they informed him she never did. While the kids were safe, Sherri was missing.

Three weeks passed before Sherri was finally found alone on a freeway nearly 146 miles from her home on Thanksgiving Day. She was cut and bruised, her long hair chopped short, and her back branded with a Bible verse.

When the police questioned Sherri, she was hesitant and frightened. She claimed two Hispanic women abducted her, took her to an unknown location, chained her up, and tortured her before planning to traffic her. The story horrified

the community and made many Hispanic women fear wrongful persecution.

At the time, male DNA was found on Sherri's clothing, despite her insistence no men were involved in her kidnapping. Years later, in 2020, the authorities used genetic DNA technology to track down the man, Sherri's ex-boyfriend, James Reyes. This was when Sherri's tale began to fall apart. Reyes was questioned by police, who exposed the truth about Sherri's vanishing act.

He revealed that Sherri told him her husband, Keith, was abusing her, and she needed his help to escape. She convinced him to brand her, but all her other injuries were self-inflicted. Reyes had no idea about Sherri's fabricated story involving two Hispanic kidnapers. At first, Sherri stuck with her story when questioned again but eventually admitted it was all a hoax.

In 2023, Sherri Papini was charged with false statements and mail fraud and sentenced to 18 months in prison for her long-winded lies that wasted police resources and federal financial assistance. Her story resulted in numerous innocent Hispanic women being wrongly questioned by authorities. But now, these women can rest easy knowing the case is finally closed.

