

Editorial Submission- June 26th

Despite the variety of definitions of mental health, I still prefer to describe it in two ways: maintaining a positive attitude and maintaining a balance in life.

Just as physical fitness helps our bodies to stay strong, mental fitness helps us to achieve and sustain a state of good mental health. In the final analysis, physical fitness and mental fitness are interdependent. By taking care of our health, we take care of our mind.

Peter, a 45 year-old, married man, with two teenagers, peaked in his career and became a senior manager in his company. Just as he began to feel comfortable and secure in his job, his company was sold to a larger organization. As a result of "right sizing", he lost his job. He was bitter and angry. He filed a law suite against his employer. Stresses related to being unemployed, a legal battle and financial hardship eventually led him to depression. His self image decreased and he began to have doubts in his skills and professionalism. To meet with the financial pressures, he began to do odd jobs. Gradually, he began to adopt a different lifestyle which included overeating, smoking, drinking and vegetating in front of his television. His new behaviours would lead to arguments with his wife and the two teenagers, which would end up in him drinking more, smoking more and eating more junk food. Currently, Peter is not gainfully employed, suffers from depression, is entangled in family conflicts, he's losing his friends, gaining weight and risking his health.

Peter's end result could have been different if he had followed Rebecca's path.

Rebecca, a 35 year-old registered nurse worked at a hospital in her community. She, her husband and their two children felt that life was good, until she was told about the cutbacks at the hospital. She too was disappointed and angry but she wasn't going to waste her time.

She and her husband had a dream - a dream to operate their own private homecare business. For them, the time was right. Rebecca would use her severance package to start her own business. After an initial struggle and some mistakes, her business started to stabilize. She and her husband were learning from their mistakes. Today, they enjoy the fruits of their hard work - a successful business, more personal and professional satisfaction, better finances, better home and social life.

Looking at Peter and Rebecca, I am convinced more than ever, that by maintaining a positive attitude and by maintaining a balanced lifestyle, we can be physically and mentally healthy. Good physical and mental health obviously lead to better relationships and a life filled with meaning and purpose. Ultimately, the choices we make determine the outcomes in our lives. We all have the choices to maintain a balance in our lives.

To learn more about maintaining a positive outlook or balance in your life, or to support our work, through your time, talent, and donations, please contact the Canadian Mental Health Association Kawartha Lakes Branch at 705.328.2704.

Sincerely submitted,

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Board Member