

April 2020

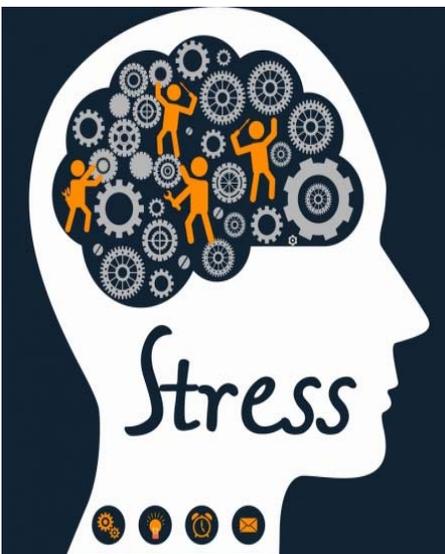
I.T.S. Wellness Newsletter

What is mindfulness?



Mindfulness is a term that's becoming increasingly popular in discussions about therapeutic practices and holistic wellness. Mindfulness is far from a trendy buzzword, rather it is an ancient practice that has spans across many cultures. Mindfulness can be defined as an active awareness to the present. It involves increasing one's attention to their physical, emotional, and cognitive state while observing these conditions without judgement. With observation, many of us find that we spend most of our mental energy worrying about the future, lamenting the past, focusing on the problems around us, or engaging in repetitive self-judgement. With all this attention and energy being dedicated to these draining thought processes, we can become disconnected from our bodies, and physical health problems can go unnoticed. Though traditional seated meditation is a common way to practice mindfulness, it can be practiced by simply scanning sensations in your body & observing your thoughts & feelings during everyday activities. Guided meditation & deep breathing exercises provide structure for people new to mindfulness. Setting aside time each day to practice can have many benefits to wellness including stress relief, improved sleep, and mood regulation.

Stress Awareness Month



April 16th is Stress Awareness Day. Though stress typically has a negative connotation, it is an important part of survival. Long-term stress, however can be detrimental to physical and mental health. When we experience stress, our body exhibits symptoms known as "fight or flight," the natural defense system that enables us to confront or evade danger. Symptoms of stress including a weakened immune system, elevated blood pressure, muscle pain, and decreased sexual functioning. Increased stress can also lead to depression, irritability, concentration and memory issues which can take a toll on relationships, job performance, and our sense of general well-being. Though we can't always control the circumstances that bring us stress, there are things that can help us manage the effects. Physical activity can help by releasing endorphins, reducing muscle tension, and increasing blood flow. A balanced diet with reduced processed foods and sugar can help the body fight stress, as can the reduction of caffeine, alcohol, and drugs. Many find stress relief through relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing, meditation, massage or yoga. Finally, finding support through friends, family, community support groups or psychotherapy can help you manage stressors and feel an overall improved sense of well-being.