
Cultural Daily

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Mitchell Nicolai: “Time for Mental Health”

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Time for Mental Health

by Mitchell Nicolai

I believe that one’s mental health is the most important part of one’s well-being. In quarantine, during Covid, I found myself in a different kind of health battle. I wasn’t sick, but I felt off. There was something wrong even though I showed zero physical signs of being sick or ill. I was extremely sensitive, anxious, and even seemed to be on edge every minute of the day. For the longest time, I thought that avoiding Covid would be the hardest battle during this global pandemic; however, changing my perception of myself and my mental health was the hardest obstacle to overcome. I truly never knew that life could be so great.

Thinking back way before Covid, my life was constantly busy between swimming six days a week, going to school, and occasionally working. With a lifestyle like this, I found little time for myself and my thoughts. At that stage of my life, I was busy but had the perception of being happy, or in my case problem-free. Fast forward to March 2020, schools started to close, my swim team decided to stop holding practices, and my work decided that we needed to close due to the pandemic. Just like that my life halted to a complete stop; I found myself alone, anxious, and for the first time in my 17 years, lost.

Due to my busy lifestyle, I had zero skills when it came to dealing with my overwhelming thoughts and emotions to the point that I felt uncomfortable in my skin. Now that I had all this time to myself, I found myself at the bottom of this deep dark pit. When asked how I was by others, I always answered that I was okay even when I knew I wasn’t and that wasn’t fair to myself. I thought that one day all my problems would just disappear. Unfortunately, that never happens. I never wanted to address those feelings because they caused me extreme discomfort. I now know that avoiding my problems is ineffective, and those feelings just don’t go away. Those thoughts and feelings are a part of me, and I can choose to embrace them or fear them.

One day during quarantine after playing a simple board game (Rummikub) with my family, I completely lashed out at everyone. I felt anger at the game itself. I had gotten so worked up over a simple game, and after that, I knew that there was something wrong. I had hit my breaking point. I define one’s breaking point as when an individual wants to change themselves for the better. After that incident I knew I needed help. I was unaware of how bad I was treating myself and others.

I decided to start seeing a therapist. At first, I was unsure how things were going to work out, but week after week of meeting with this therapist, my day-to-day life started to change. I had finally felt like I had gotten to the light at the end of the tunnel. Each day seemed to be less dark and gloomy, I had finally gotten the answers to why I felt the way I was feeling. With the help of my therapist, I put steps and skills in place when I felt certain emotions. Such steps as using logic when dealing with anxiety. My therapist has five steps when it comes to dealing with overwhelming thoughts. What specifically am I worried about? What is the “worst-case” that could happen if my worry came true? What would I do if the “worst case” happened? What is the likelihood that the “worst-case” will actually happen? Finally, You have gone to the worst-case scenario and you have a plan. With strategies like this from my therapist, I had rewired my brain on how to handle difficult situations, and how to treat myself better.

Since that difficult point in my life, I have been better at controlling my emotions and dealing with difficult situations. I am thankful for speaking out and seeking help in my time of need. My message for all who are reading is that what you feel is okay, but if you’re feeling a certain way ask for help. It is okay to seek advice from others. Someone is probably feeling the same way or has felt the same way you’re feeling. Therefore, I believe that one’s mental health is the most important part of one’s well-being and health.

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