Mental Health and the Workplace

For Veterinary Practices
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Let’s Talk Mental Health

Between juggling a high-stress managerial job in health care and spending her off-time supporting her mom as she went through chemotherapy, 35-year-old Sylvie*, had reached her limit. “My body became all tense and I was in physical pain—including knots in my shoulders and heart palpitations. I couldn’t sleep at night either. I went to my doctor to talk to her about it and, out of the blue, had a complete meltdown. She referred me to a psychiatrist and I went to a couple of sessions. I also agreed to go on anti-anxiety medications. They help keep me calm which has allowed my mind to relax and work on re-framing my thoughts.”

Having gotten the support she needed, Sylvie is managing her anxiety much more effectively these days. “I realized that a lot of the stress was coming from work. I had a conversation with my boss about it and began making a conscious effort to create a work/life balance.”

Spotting the differences between everyday emotions and a mental health issue
Everyone deals with emotional ups and downs every day. But how can you tell if that stress, sadness or anxiety is just part of life or something more? It can be easy to tell yourself or someone else to “move on”, “suck it up” or “look on the bright side”; however, for someone dealing with mental health challenges, this can dangerously mask or minimize a serious illness. The stigma attached to mental illness can prevent you or someone you know from seeking help so it’s no surprise that in Canada almost half of those who have experienced depression or anxiety at one time or another have never sought professional help. The more educated you are about mental illness, the greater the chance you will seek the support you need (or encourage a loved one or colleague to get help) before the issue becomes more serious.

Common signs and symptoms of mental illness
So how can you tell the difference between everyday moodiness, sadness or stress and mental illness? Because we know the pattern of our own lives and those of our loved ones, we have the ability to notice changes in behaviour that hint at an underlying mental health issue. Symptoms usually last for many weeks or months (versus a “bad day”) and you may notice changes in mood, habit and diet. Some early “red flags” for common mental illnesses include:

- **Anxiety.** Yes, people get anxious before a big presentation or exam but signs of a more serious issue could be at play when these worries or fears interfere with everyday life. Look for long periods of intense worry, physiological responses like shaking, muscle tension, rapid heart rate, dizziness, perspiration, cold hands and feet, shortness of breath and insomnia. Absences during events where peak performance is needed can also point to an anxiety disorder—the most common mental health challenge out there.

- **Depression.** This isn’t just a case of feeling sad or having the “blues”. If the state of sadness lasts two weeks or more then there is most likely a serious underlying problem. Everyday tasks may become impossible because the person feels completely unmotivated, exhausted (often because they’re having trouble sleeping) or seems to have
lost complete interest in activities they once enjoyed. Other common signs of depression include a change in eating habits and social withdrawal.

- **Bipolar disorder** is a condition of extreme emotional highs and lows that aren’t just passing “mood swings”. Manic or depressed phases can last days or even months. During these extremes of mania (highs) and depression (lows), it’s near impossible to function normally—whether the person is completely withdrawn and won’t leave bed or can’t sleep or sit still because their thoughts are continually racing.

**Supporting someone with a mental health issue**

A friend or family member dealing with a mental illness can also take a toll on your own physical and emotional health. The best way to cope is to arm yourself with knowledge. Ensure you:

- **Stay supportive.** The first reaction of many loved ones is to try to solve the problem or say things like “don’t worry”. You’ll definitely be more helpful by being available and supportive than trying to take away the illness or distress. And minimizing the situation will only slow the recovery down and possibly close off the lines of communication. Instead, focus on listening to what your loved one is really saying, reserve judgment and offer words of empathy and encouragement. If your loved one hasn’t already, suggest they seek help from an objective professional. Doing this can remove some of the stigma associated with mental health support.

- **Educate yourself.** Read books and investigate websites on mental illness so you better understand the situation and can more effectively deal with your own concerns or frustrations. The more you know, the more helpful you’ll be to your loved one.

- **Get help yourself.** The more emotionally and physically healthy you are, the more supportive you’ll be. Build a support system of your own to make sure you can be around for your loved one for as long as they need you. Whether it’s a friend, counsellor or spiritual advisor, find an objective person you can confide in, vent to and glean insights from. Just make sure whoever you do talk to can keep the exchanges confidential and does not pose any potential conflicts of interest with your loved one.

- **Keep it real (and sometimes fun).** No one wants to discuss their problems all the time; we need to laugh, socialize and engage in everyday activities—whether it’s going to lunch, meeting up for a movie or chatting over coffee. Try not to let the illness dominate every conversation or stand in the way of a good time. Let your loved one take the lead—if they want to talk about their illness, listen. But if they just want to hang out and gossip about the latest Hollywood star allow them the freedom to do so.

**Did you know?**

- 20 per cent of Canadians will personally experience a mental illness in their lifetime.
- Approximately eight per cent of adults will experience a major depression at some time in their lives.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) reports major depressive disorder or bipolar disorder as the leading cause of disability in the US and Canada.
- A study of 18,000 British pupils showed providing mental health support within the school system resulted in reduced anger and aggression and improved behaviour outcomes.
Defining Common Mental Health Terms

From news stories, to the latest celebrity gossip, most of us have at least heard of terms like mood disorders, anxiety disorders and addictions. But what do these really mean and what illnesses fall into each category? Read on to find out more about some of the most common terms being used today in mental health.

Defining mental health

According to Health Canada, mental health is “the capacity to feel, think and act in ways that enhance one’s ability to enjoy life and deal with challenges.” A person with good mental health is typically able to handle life’s ups and downs effectively: fully enjoying pleasurable moments, managing stressful times positively, actively exploring interests and goals and connecting with other people in a meaningful way.

A person with mental health challenges, on the other hand, usually has trouble responding appropriately to these kinds of situations, resulting in excessive stress or worrying, anger or frustration, and self-esteem issues amongst other symptoms. The realities of day-to-day living and trying life events (e.g., a layoff, death or break-up), mean that most of us, on occasion, face mental health challenges for short periods of time.

A mental illness or disorder is usually diagnosed when mental health challenges go unresolved over time, or worsen to the point where they significantly interfere with day-to-day functions and interactions—e.g., at work, school or in relationships. The source of the illness/disorder can be either psychologically and/or biologically-based and the sufferer usually benefits from professional treatment. Some disorders or mental illnesses are more cyclical—meaning that a person can have episodes of illness followed by long periods of wellness—while others can drag on for long periods of time.

Common disorders

Over the years, hundreds of different mental health-related disorders have been identified. Some of the most common disorder groups are:

- **Mood disorders** which include depression and bi-polar disorder. Unlike normal sadness, someone suffering from depression will typically stay in a depressed mood—which not only includes extreme sadness, but also a disinterest in normally pleasurable activities—for two or more weeks. People with depression may also have other symptoms like disturbed sleep, low energy, trouble focusing thoughts and making decisions and weight fluctuations.

  People with bipolar disorder (until recently, commonly referred to as manic-depression) usually suffer from extreme mood changes that have nothing to do with life events. Sufferers may swing from a depressed state to extended periods (usually lasting more than a week) of its polar opposite: mania. Common signs of mania include: feelings of...
euphoria, a noticeable increase in energy, a reduced need for sleep or insomnia, irritability and risky behaviours.

- **Anxiety disorders** often go hand-in-hand with depression and are considered the most common group of mental disorders facing North Americans. Anxiety disorders are typically marked by uncontrolled worry that can interfere with sleep, cause physical tension and emotional irritation and create a feeling of being "wound up" or "on edge." Anxiety disorders include: obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), panic disorder, generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) and specific phobias such as fear of heights, animals, flying, etc.

- **Eating disorders.** As the name suggests, eating disorders involve an unhealthy or obsessive relationship with food, eating and body image that can have a negative impact on a person’s relationships, life and health. The most well-known eating disorders are anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa.

  People grappling with anorexia nervosa usually have an extreme fear of gaining weight and often think of themselves as “fat” even if they are severely underweight, usually depriving themselves of food because of this.

  While those suffering from bulimia nervosa may face similar body image issues as people with anorexia, people diagnosed with bulimia nervosa typically have a normal body weight. Bulimia nervosa involves binge eating of excessive amounts of food, followed by a “purge.” Purging can include vomiting, the abuse of diuretics or laxatives and excessive exercise.

- **Substance use disorders.** These disorders are usually talked about as substance abuse and addiction. Substance abuse refers to a behaviour that happens when a person uses and continues to use a chemical substance (e.g., illicit drugs, tobacco, alcohol, prescription medications), while fully understanding the negative impact the use of the substance can have on health, relationships, work, etc.

  Addiction, suggests the person is unable to control substance use—whether because of physical or psychological dependence—and can cause serious physical and/or mental distress if they quit taking the substance or cut back. Recently addiction is also being used to discuss extreme compulsive behaviour issues such as gambling, shopping and sex.

Mental health issues and the terms used to describe them aren’t always straightforward and clear cut: signs and symptoms can vary from person to person and people can often grapple with multiple disorders at the same time. If any of the descriptions above seem familiar in describing you or a loved one, it’s always best to seek support—through your physician or another mental health professional—as soon as possible.
Mental Illness in the Workplace – Recognizing Risk

Safeguarding the psychological health and safety of employees has become increasingly important to organizations across the nation. After all, a healthy mind is essential to an individual's well-being, interpersonal relationships, and ability to perform effectively in the workplace and beyond. In addition, emerging regulations, a growing body of research, and a desire to reduce costs and improve the bottom line are prompting employers to assess their workplaces from a psychological health and safety perspective.

Psychologically healthy and safe workplaces promote the psychological well-being of employees and actively work to prevent harm to their psychological health due to reckless, negligent or intentional acts.

Workplace risk factors

Great Britain is leading the way in improving the psychosocial well-being of workers and is recognized internationally for their best practices. Unlike Canada, workplace health and safety in Great Britain is controlled by a single national regulator – the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), which has established numerous management standards designed to reduce work-related stress contributing to ill health.

According to the HSE, the following are the most common stressors:

- Demands – This includes work patterns, workloads, and the work environment.
- Control – Do individuals have any control over how they do their jobs?
- Support – Are employees supported and encouraged by upper management, direct supervisors, or their peers?
- Relationships – How are conflicts and unacceptable behaviours handled in the workplace?
- Role – Do employees understand their roles? Are there conflicting roles?
- Change – How change is communicated and managed can increase or decrease employees' stress.

The following are the 13 psychosocial factors that have been identified to impact psychological response and potentially cause psychological health problems:

- Psychological support
- Organizational culture
- Clear leadership and expectations
- Civility and respect
- Psychological competencies and requirements
- Growth and development
- Recognition and reward
- Involvement and influence
- Workload management
- Engagement
- Balance
- Psychological protection
- Protection of physical safety

When these factors are absent or limited, there is an increased risk to employee psychological health and organizational psychological safety. When these factors are prevalent, resilience and sustainability are more likely.

**How companies are mobilizing to recognize and respond to risk**

Canada's Healthy Workplace Month, which takes place in October each year, focuses on activities such as risk assessments and action plans designed to minimize risks. For example, managers may seek your input on items such as heavy workloads, conflicting roles, lack of leadership support, fatigue, eldercare or child care problems, financial problems, and other stressors as they seek to identify risk.

As part of its Mental Health Initiative, Bell Canada requires mandatory mental health training of its senior managers. Mental health training can help managers gain a deeper understanding of the mental health issues you may face at some point. It can also improve access to mental information when on the job as well as create a culture of support and understanding.

Another example of mental health awareness at work is the Not Myself Today @ Work campaign which ran from May 9 through to June 6, 2013. This campaign raised funds and awareness for improving mental health in the workplace and brought workplace mental health issues to the forefront. If your employer participated in this campaign, you may have noticed posters, educational resources, stickers, and other materials promoting mental health awareness in your workplace.

Employers throughout Canada are taking a stand against mental health issues and learning to recognize risk. This is good news for employees as you can expect a safer workplace for a more balanced work life.

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Health is not just about being free of illness and injury. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), health “is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

Although a healthy diet and plenty of exercise are important to maintaining our physical health, we can’t neglect our mental well-being. We need to adopt a holistic approach – that is, taking care of the entire body and mind at the same time.

While this may sound complicated and time consuming, it doesn’t have to be. The journey to healthy living begins with a few small lifestyle changes that, even by themselves, can make a difference to your well-being. Try to:

**Eat well.** Don’t diet. Nutritionists suggest following your country’s food guide, which recommends eating plenty of fruits and vegetables, lean meats, nuts and whole grains and, as much as possible, staying away from processed and fast foods. Also try to watch the size of your food portions.

**Don’t skip breakfast.** When you wake up in the morning, you likely haven’t eaten anything for at least eight hours. When you skip breakfast, you’re asking your body to do without food for even longer – so your body is forced to slow down its metabolism in order to conserve energy, which is not helpful for weight management or your mood.

**Practice mindfulness.** Mindfulness is being completely in touch with the present moment. No matter how busy you are, carve out time for yourself each day to relax in a way that suits you. There are many choices, including: meditation, reading, listening to music, or just lying down, closing your eyes and focusing on your breathing.

**Be grateful.** No matter how frantic our day is or how stressed we may feel, there is almost always something for which we can be grateful. Many people find it helpful to keep a gratitude journal in which they write down one or two things they are thankful for every day. Practicing gratitude helps us regain perspective by focussing on the things that really matter in our lives.

**Get moving.** Being active doesn’t have to involve hours in the gym or running a 10-kilometer race. Even a short walk to the end of the block and back is a good start. Once that becomes easy, slowly increase distance and speed. Set your own goals and your own pace. Ask a friend, neighbour or family member to join you. It’s easier – and more fun – when you have someone by your side. Remember: when exercise isn’t about suffering and is more about enjoyment, you’re more likely to make it part of your life.

**Sleep.** Without enough good quality sleep, our bodies can’t repair or restore themselves and our delicate metabolic balance can be thrown off kilter; we can get tired, cranky and forgetful! Develop a bedtime ritual that tells your mind that it’s time to sleep – take a warm bath,
meditate, listen to soft music, read – and reduce the amount of light in your home as bedtime nears.

**Build loving relationships.** The World Health Organization cites good social health as a vital component of overall health. Loving relationships with your partner, family and friends prevent you from feeling lonely- or isolated and create an important sense of connectivity with others. Friends and family who care about you also have your best interests at heart and are important supports for facing life’s challenges. If you need to cultivate new friendships, try volunteering, signing up for classes to learn a new sport or skill, or joining an online meet-up group.

**Laugh – and cry.** Nothing works faster or more dependably to bring your mind and body back into balance than a good laugh. Laughter triggers the release of endorphins, the body’s feel-good chemicals, which give you a sense of well-being and can even temporarily relieve pain. Laughter also decreases stress hormones and increases blood flow. If you can’t laugh, cry. After all, laughing and crying are physiologically related (just think of laughing so hard you cry, or vice-versa). So crying also helps decrease stress hormones while reducing muscle tension and blood pressure.

**Be kind to yourself.** Many of us are not as healthy as we should be because we’re overly self-critical or have even given up on ourselves. Tell yourself that you’re worth looking after, and indulge yourself occasionally with a ‘treat’, which could be as simple as a new book or your favourite meal with a friend. The emotional lift these small kindnesses will give you can be a powerful motivator to make more small positive changes to improve your health and well-being – and lift your spirits and self-esteem.

If you’re having trouble getting to start, or staying on course, contact your Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP). They have a wide range of resources and tools that can provide access to fitness, nutritional or psychological counselling. The key is to not give up. Everyone has bad days or even bad weeks. If you wander off track from your goals, try to understand why you slipped up, put it behind you and take action to get right back on track. After all, there is no straight road to any destination.
Mind Body Connection

While your mother undergoes a major operation, you can feel the knot in your stomach. When your partner forgets (for the tenth time!) to take out the garbage, your blood boils. You have to make the speech at your best friend's wedding and, not only does your heart pound, but you also get a lump in your throat. These catch phrases express a natural, almost intuitive need to link the mind, or emotions, with the effect that they have on the body.

For thousands of years, cultures have not only understood the link between mental and physical health, they've honoured and cultivated this relationship. Practices such as yoga, tai chi and meditation are all founded on the notion that the health of the mind is fundamentally connected with the health of the body. Though modern medicine has taken a little longer to acknowledge this relationship, more and more scientific studies are drawing the same conclusion as their ancient counterparts: mental health can have a significant impact on physical health.

This recognition signifies a turning point in the way that both the medical world and the population at large approach and cope with mental and physical illness. Rather than dealing with the mind and body as two separate and distinct worlds, more and more people, including doctors, realize that these two spheres depend on each other.

And as this interest in the mind-body correlation grows, so too does the field of psychoneuroimmunology (PNI)—or the brand of science, which explores the link between the mind and the immune system.

While science of the past believed the immune system operated independently from brain function, more and more studies are uncovering a built-in connection. Chemicals released in the brain in reaction to elevated stress levels, for instance, can influence the immune cells' response. Though PNI was met with scepticism when first introduced, a number of in-depth programs and studies offered by reputable universities have helped it gain acceptance within mainstream medicine including Harvard’s Mind Body Medical Institute. Its website, http://www.mbmi.org/, offers a detailed explanation of this science and plenty of tips on maintaining mind-body balance.

The Physical Impact of Mental Strain and Illness

Signs of Depression

Emotional Signs

- Feelings of despair or deep sadness
- Lack of emotion or interest in once enjoyable activities
- Crying more easily than usual
- Overwhelmed by negative thoughts
- Thinking or talking about suicide or death
- Feelings of guilt or worthlessness

**Physical Signs**

- Noticeable change in appetite or weight
- Fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Trouble falling asleep or sleeping too much

When your mental or emotional well-being is compromised, you're likely to feel its negative effects on your body. This may create a complex vicious cycle that can strain you mentally and physically. Because depression is a very prevalent condition, much of the research on the mind-body connection centres on the physical influence depression has on the body and the immune system.

Several studies suggest that if you suffer from depression, it can increase your risk for physical conditions. However, because the physical symptoms of depression—including ulcers, fatigue and back pain—are more obvious and easier to read, they often camouflage the underlying source of the physical ailment: the depression itself. The result is that the symptoms are treated while the true cause is ignored.

People who suffer from conditions, such as depression or anxiety, are more likely to develop:

- hypertension;
- type 2 adult onset diabetes;
- certain types of cancer;
- heart disease; or
- more frequent asthma attacks (if asthmatic).

Although the exact cause for these links is not always clear, their meaning is: neglecting the importance of mental well-being can threaten your physical health and undermine the balance between the two.

**Making the Connection: Tactics for a Healthy Mind and Body**

While it's impossible to have total control over your body and mind, there are several techniques and tactics that can help you nourish this vital relationship, maintain its delicate balance, and live at your mental and physical best.

**Physical Activity**

Whether you're feeling anxious about the projects piling up at work or down in the dumps after a relationship has ended, exercise is one of the most effective ways to improve your mood, enhance your immune system and of course, keep your body in optimal condition.
Countless studies show that physical activity releases natural endorphins in the brain, not only increasing your physical energy but also boosting your spirits, concentration and memory. Exercise allows you to work off excess stress—which reduces strain on the heart and the immune system—and helps you cope better with life's daily challenges.

It also encourages you to keep the lines of mind-body communication open, giving you the chance to not only 'clear your mind,' but also to 'listen' to your body, its strengths, limitations and needs. Harvard's Mind Body Medical Institute recommends a varied exercise plan that incorporates a minimum of 30 minutes of physical activity (which can be broken down into three 10-minute blocks) almost every day.

Physical activity doesn't have to be gruelling. Gardening, going for a stroll around the block and housework can all be put towards your daily tally. The added benefits of participating in team and social sporting activities are twofold: they help you stay active and connected with your community—an important ingredient in keeping the mind and the body balanced.

**Food Supporters***

- Vegetables
- Oil rich fish
- Fruit
- Whole grains
- Water
- Fibre
- Nuts and seeds
- Protein

**Food 'Stressors'*

- Alcohol
- Additives
- Caffeine
- Saturated Fats
- Sugar
- Chocolate

* From the Food and Mood Project, MIND, 2000

**Eat Supportive Foods**

Most people know that a well-balanced diet, plenty of water and sufficient rest are important ingredients for good physical health. Fewer realize, however, the significant impact these elements can also have on mental health.

A recent group study and survey conducted by British mental health group MIND found that 88 per cent of participants who were asked to eat a diet that avoided 'food stressors' (such as sugar...
and caffeine) and was rich in 'food supporters,' (including water, fruits and vegetables) believed that the new eating regime had greatly improved their mental health.

**Avoid Alcohol**

While alcohol, in small amounts, has been shown to have some physical benefits to the heart, using it as a tool to mask physical and/or emotional pain is a dangerous, slippery slope.

In the short term, people who drink heavily may suffer more minor effects including fatigue, headaches and poor concentration.

Over longer periods of time, though, the physical complications can be much more serious: the risk of liver damage, high blood pressure, certain cancers and stroke all significantly increase in heavy drinkers.

The effects of alcohol overuse on the mind are equally as damaging. Though many people drink to 'lift their spirits,' or 'feel happy,' alcohol actually works as a depressant. So while you may 'drink to forget' your problems and anxieties, the sober reality is that you're left feeling more down or more anxious the next day. Limit alcohol consumption and, if you're being treated for depression, leave it out entirely.

**Stock Up on Sleep**

Sleep can also play a significant role in the mind-body balance. Try to get a minimum of seven hours of sleep every night. If this isn't possible, recharge your body and your mind with a brief afternoon nap (20 minutes is considered ideal). Getting a good night's sleep regularly helps keep moodiness at bay, mental focus in check, and allows the body (and its immune system) to rejuvenate.

**Sometimes, You Just Have to Laugh**

Building a healthy lifestyle means taking every opportunity to laugh off your stress. Laughter is some of the best and most enjoyable medicine around for maintaining the health of the mind and the body.

When you laugh, it triggers a series of positive physiological responses: your heart rate goes up, blood circulation to the brain and body improves and muscles become more relaxed. It also signals your brain to release more endorphins—chemicals which boost your mood and act as natural painkillers—into your body, helping you feel more positive and calm.

**Build a Support System**

Taking a proactive approach to mind-body health is one of the best ways to ensure you maintain balance. Building and communicating regularly with a trusted network of people—whether a close family member, friend, doctor, counsellor, support group or all of the above—helps you maintain an essential and emotionally 'nutritious' social circle.
This group can act as a sounding board during troubled times, provide an objective perspective, and encourage you to remain socially connected—an integral factor of good mental and physical health.

Remember, if you suspect you or a loved one is suffering from a mental illness, it's vital to seek out the advice of a medical doctor and/or counsellor as soon as possible.

**Explore Spiritual Balance**

Whether it's attending a traditional place of worship or getting involved at your local food bank; people who connect with a 'greater' purpose or a higher meaning in their lives report better physical and mental health than their less spiritual counterparts. You don't have to be religious to explore your spirituality: it's more of a personal journey to clarify your own thoughts, opinions and beliefs and understand how they connect to the world around you.

Tapping into your spiritual side can be as simple as reading poetry, attending a religious service or going for a hike in the woods. Mind-body activities like meditation and yoga are excellent starting points for this journey as they allow you to slow down, breathe and 'take the world in.'

**Meditation**

Though Eastern cultures have used meditation as a tool to clear the mind and rid the body of stress since ancient times, modern medicine is just beginning to understand its positive effects on these two spheres. While there are a variety of relaxation and meditation techniques, the most common involves the repetition of a single word or thought, such as "peace" or "balance."

In a quiet space, and in a comfortable position, the meditator closes his or her eyes and focuses on the word, saying it over and over again in his or her mind. When other thoughts float in, they're passively pushed aside as the meditator continues repeating the word for 10 to 30 minutes. By focusing on a single idea, the mind achieves calm and rids itself of unimportant details.

Various studies have revealed that this simple action performed daily can lower blood cortisol (the chemical released as a response to stress) and blood pressure levels, reduce chronic pain and ease anxiety. Other mind-body focused activities like yoga and tai chi—which concentrate on synchronizing breathing exercises with movement—as well as imagery have also produced similar health benefits.

**Achieving Mind-Body Balance**

Most people are not surprised to discover that science is finally uncovering concrete evidence that suggests mental health impacts physical well-being and vice versa. And yet many continue to ignore the signals the body and mind send when they're over-stressed, over-tired or overwhelmed.

Instead of recognizing these as signs to slow down and take a mental break, they instead shut out the nagging voice of the knot in their shoulder and appease that overbearing tension.
headache with a couple of aspirin. Neglecting these signs as they arise, however, could come at a high cost further down the line: your mental and physical well-being.

Take the time to really listen to your body and mind. Learn to recognize their distinct voices and work to find long-term solutions rather than quick band-aid fixes that don't really address or appreciate the delicate balance between mental health and physical health.

Though it may be impossible to be the 'master' of your body and mind, with education, support and a concerted effort, you may actually learn to become best friends.