

## Ten Golden Tips for Emotional Wellness

Emotional wellness is a priceless commodity. We spend countless hours doing the things we believe will make us feel happy. Some look outwardly, filling the “black hole” with drugs, alcohol, food, relationships, or material possessions. Some develop rich spiritual lives and inwardly seek happiness.

The loss of loved ones, natural disasters ...so many things in life that affect our well-being are not in our control. The good news is this: we can greatly influence our own mental and emotional health by learning to adopt habits and attitudes that foster wellness.

- 1. Keep expectations of yourself and others realistic.** Unrealistic expectations lead to disappointment and feelings of failure. A friend, Dana, has a mother-in-law, Kate, who frequently demeans her. Kate will seemingly stop at nothing to hurt Dana, even ridiculing Dana’s children, her own grandchildren. Dana obliges by being outraged and devastated at each attack. What she expects is love and acceptance from someone incapable of that much selflessness and so each time Kate releases her venom, Dana feels the sting as sharply as the first time. Her other unrealistic expectation is of herself – she believes that somehow she can do or say the right thing that will make Kate stop her shenanigans. Hopefully, Dana will adjust her expectations of herself and her mother-in-law to accommodate reality.
- 2. Develop realistic goals and set out to achieve them, one day at a time.** Good self-esteem doesn’t come from others telling you how wonderful you are. It comes from trusting yourself and your ability to accomplish what you set out to do. It comes from doing the next right thing in front of you to do that will lead you to where you want to be. Feeling good about yourself requires action on your part.

- 3. Learn to accept the changes in your life.** Change is inevitable and provides invaluable opportunities for growth. Resisting change takes a lot of energy and can leave you feeling frustrated and sad.
- 4. Release the anger and the resentments.** This doesn't mean you are saying that it is okay that people have hurt you; it simply means you are willing to acknowledge that you are not in charge of others' behaviors nor their punishment, that you are willing to love yourself enough to let go of the toxic waste of anger and resentment that is poisoning your mind, spirit, and probably your body, as well. Remember the things for which you have been forgiven and how precious that gift is.
- 5. Surround yourself with positive thoughts and positive people.** Gravitate toward people who are uplifting and supportive and away from those who operate in negativity. And resist seeing people and situations in the worst possible light. Sort out what is reality and what is negativity.
- 6. Take responsibility for yourself.** People and things can be enjoyable, but resist relinquishing responsibility for your happiness to them. Likewise, resist blaming others for your unhappiness. Background and circumstances may influence who you are, but you are responsible for who you become.
- 7. Choose to be a good friend to yourself.** It is self-defeating to dwell on your mistakes and imperfections. Be as kind, comforting, understanding, and forgiving with yourself as you would be with the people you love the very most.
- 8. Learn to laugh, especially at yourself.** Research shows that laughter can boost your immune system, ease pain, relax your body, and reduce stress. It is said that angels can fly because they take themselves lightly.

- 9. Take good care of your body.** We cannot separate the health of the mind from the health of the body. Just as emotional difficulty can contribute to physical illness, many physical problems contribute to emotional distress and can be avoided by a healthy diet, exercise, and good sleeping habits.
- 10. If you are experiencing emotional difficulty, talk to someone.** Feeling depressed or anxious is not shameful, but it is a shame to refuse to get help. Treatment is effective. People can recover from mental disorders and lead full, productive lives.