If you are like me, the new year always starts out a little slow. After having a break for the holidays, it can be difficult to jump back into a routine or start a new one to help accomplish my new year goals. I do however, love coming back to a schedule. Having a routine helps keep me on track mentally and physically which in turn makes my day seem more positive. Whatever your personal situation may be as we start back into this new year, having a routine can be beneficial to your mental health. According to Mental Health America, having a routine is a tool used to improve mental health (Hou et al., 2020). One way that routines help improve mental health is by organizing the overwhelming everyday tasks into a pattern that seems easier to accomplish (Creating Healthy Routines, 2022). If you are struggling with your routine, especially when it comes to creating a routine, here are some small things you can do to help.

1. Personalize your routine. Although it can be hard not to compare yourself to others, especially when you can view the highlights of their lives on social media, having a routine that is personalized to you, can make it easier for you to stick and keep to.

2. Keep it simple. There are so many ways to set a routine, and it can feel like you need to do a whole lot at the same time, but if you focus on one small thing to change each month, by the end of the year, your routine can look like you envision it!

3. Stack your habits. This is something dentists often recommend when it comes to flossing. Instead of trying to remember to floss at a certain time each day, you can stack the habit of flossing with something else you do already such as watch tv in the evenings to relax, etc. Adding one new habit onto something you already do can make it easier to change your routine in the long run.

4. Add something in for you. Especially during the pandemic, the need for self-care practices has increased. With more anxiety about sickness, more responsibilities due to quarantines, and more unknowns in the world, taking time out of your day to do something for you is important. Personalizing this to your life and your situation is also important. For some, there may be more time devoted to self-care, while others may only be able to find a few minutes, whatever your situation may be, make sure to find a way to put yourself first in the day to re-charge and be your best self.

5. Recognize that not everyday will be perfect, and that is okay! No matter how well we plan or how perfectly timed out our routine is, there will always be things that throw it off. Although having a routine is important, make sure that you recognize that plans may change, small things can throw off the day, and give yourself permission to not have a perfect routine each day.

Routines are important to keeping our bodies and minds healthy. Things like eating at regular times, exercising daily, and getting the right amount of sleep can help you feel better and be healthier. Additionally, knowing what your schedule is can reduce anxiety, keep the winter blues at bay, and help you feel more accomplished in a day (Hou et al., 2020).

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