

Katie Johnson: Good morning and welcome to Apple A Day, Lake Region Health care's health and wellness segment, where we feature news and information you can use to live a healthier life. I am your host Katie Johnson, and my guest today is Dr. Nicole Welle. She is one of the psychiatrists in Lake region Health care's behavioral health services and our topic expert, subject matter expert for this week's community health challenge featured wellness component, emotional health.

Good morning Dr. Welle.

Dr. Welle: Good morning.

Katie Johnson: Thank you for joining us and shedding a little bit more light on, as I said, our featured component this week, emotional health. For those listeners who might be part of our challenge, they can see or may have seen this definition that we have posted on LRHC.org/wow for the challenge, but I'm going to read just a piece of it to kind of frame our conversation this morning. It says that feelings are the lens through which people view the world, and the ability to be aware of and direct one's feelings helps create balance in life. So emotional wellness then relates to our ability to express our emotions appropriately, to adjust to change, to cope with stress in a healthy way and to enjoy life despite the occasional disappointments and frustrations that might come.

So there's a lot to unpack in that definition, but my question for you is, what rises to the top there in what you see as the biggest challenges to emotional health when you're in your practice and with your patients?

Dr. Welle: Absolutely. So that's a very good definition for emotional health, and one of the biggest obstacles ... We know sometimes what's good for us and it's finding the obstacle with implementing those things. So implementing, getting good sleep or prioritizing physical activity and nutrition, socializing. I would say those are the hardest thing.

Katie Johnson: Sure. We talk about that with physical health a lot that sometimes even just putting on your shoes, tying your shoes, taking that first step of putting on your tennis shoes is that first step of taking action, and it sounds like it's similar with our emotional health.

Dr. Welle: Exactly.

Katie Johnson: I've read that anyone can suffer from mental or emotional health problems, and a number I read was that over a lifetime, most people will have some sort and that one in five of us will suffer from something that's diagnosable as a mental health or emotional health disorder, but despite how common this is, a lot of us, like you just said, don't take any action to change it. We might ignore messages that something's wrong, or we self-medicate ourselves with alcohol or drugs or

other destructive behaviors. We hope no one will notice. We just try and hold it together and think no one will notice, or maybe we just give up and say this is the way life is and there's nothing I can do about it. So what kind of advice do you have? I can see myself or people in my social circle who have done all of those things, so I think all of us need some advice.

Dr. Welle: Mm-hmm (affirmative). For sure. So number one, like you said, is recognizing. And I think a good way of framing that is recognizing I'm doing the absolute best that I can and I'm still not feeling well. I think that's the number one sign. Then there's a lot of stigma around mental health in and of itself, and I think that's another big thing why people tend to avoid it or hope it just goes away, or hesitant to seek help.

So what I would recommend no matter what is, if you're at that point where you feel like I'm just not feeling well despite doing my best, is to come and seek a medical evaluation. And our primary care providers are wonderful. With being able to tell us is this a biological condition, so something that is beyond our control, or if it's not necessary logical, why I'm feeling this way. So that your primary care physician or provider, so someone in internal medicine, family medicine, our OBGYN, women's health, pediatrician can help us understand if this is depression or anxiety and then lead us to the right resources.

Katie Johnson: And I think that's fantastic advice, and I'm glad that you mentioned that stigma. Do you have any advice for what each one of us, individually, can do to help break that down to make it okay to talk about this? That's one of my goals for the community health challenge. That we recognize emotional health is important and it's common and it's okay to talk about.

Dr. Welle: Absolutely, and even just talking about it makes us feel more comfortable addressing it, and when we talk to other people about it, I think you'd be surprised as far as maybe someone else's experiences as well and then we're hesitant to talk about it or knowing a loved one who's also been through a similar situation. Just knowing you're not alone with that.

Katie Johnson: There is certainly power in sharing and knowing we're not alone. Let's take some of the pieces of that definition apart here a little bit. One of them mentioned was expressing emotions appropriately. For example, do you have some resources for what I think is a big component of this teaching our kids how to express their emotions appropriately, or for us grown-ups who might need a little help with it to?

Dr. Welle: Yes, exactly. So I have a couple books that are very good. So the first book is called Man's Search for Meaning by Viktor Frankl. And the second book is called The Feeling Good Handbook by David Burns. And both of these books help kind of talk about human emotion, but then also talk about different ways that we can change a behavior as well. Nowadays, people like using apps like on your phone. So a good app is called Headspace, which can help with mindfulness. So

help us feel like we're in more control of our emotions as well. And this has a good free component, but then you can also pay for additional things on the app.

But another good app, or some good free apps are Calm, or Pacifica, or 10% Happier.

Katie Johnson: Great. We will make sure that we post those books and those apps on the emotional health page of our community health challenge for listeners who might want to refer back to those and take those tools and put them to work. How about coping with stress? That was another component of the definition of emotional health. Certainly there's good stress and bad stress. What kinds of tools do you recommend for balancing and coping when we have stress that's overwhelming or dangerously high.

Dr. Welle: Mm-hmm (affirmative). I would say prioritizing at least ten minutes in a day. Sometimes we think about all the things that we should be doing for ourselves, but we don't feel like we have the time and then we feel overwhelmed and just don't even want to take it on. So if we say, you know what, I have to give myself 10 minutes today and start there. And 10 minutes of doing something that you enjoy. So whether that's going for a walk, or reading, calling or touching base, just communicating with a loved one, and doing that without a screen is best. So a phone call, or if you're at home kind of face to face just sitting down at the table and talking. And even taking the time to have a healthy snack or even just preparing something healthy. Slowing down and giving yourselves that 10 minutes, because you deserve it.

Katie Johnson: Slow down. That's really good. And I know 10 minutes too because that's manageable. When you think about I don't have time for something, but you have 10 minutes. We can make 10 minutes. I like that. I'm also curious what you think about things like sleep, diet, and experience. Social interaction, spirituality, meaning and purpose. You've mentioned some of those things. I'm listing off all those other things that go around our wheel of wellness that we're focusing this community health challenge on. How much of a role did they play in then boosting our emotional health?

Dr. Welle: So I'm glad that you brought up the wheel of wellness because these are the components that we all need as humans just to be well, to have that good balance. So connecting with people, and then spirituality. We know that physical activity is important. We know that nutrition is important, and sleep is also vital. So all of those things are necessary, and they're easy to get out of whack, so it's good visualize a wheel because that means that there is balance, and sometimes just finding where we need to address that in our life makes the most sense.

Katie Johnson: And hopefully that's what people who partake in our community health challenge will at least gain a little bit more awareness of is just stopping to think about, oh yeah, I might be really good at doing physical exercise, for example, but I have really been neglecting X Y and Z, these other components and I should spend some time doing that. What would you leave with our listeners then for

key takeaways as they're thinking about paying attention to an improving the one component we're calling emotional wellness?

Dr. Welle: Yeah, I think the takeaway part is even if you are doing your absolute best and you're trying your hardest and you still feel burnt out, overwhelmed, stressed, sad more than what you would expect in your situation is that then you need to work more on your emotional health.

Katie Johnson: Mm-hmm (affirmative), and don't be afraid to seek medical help.

Dr. Welle: Exactly. We're here.

Katie Johnson: Yeah, exactly that would be a definite takeaway I would add as well. For listeners who haven't joined us on our wheel of wellness 2018 community health challenge, I want to take this chance to invite you to sign up. You can still join the challenge. Just go to [LRHC.org/wow](http://LRHC.org/wow), click sign up, you'll be able to take a little assessment questionnaire that encourages you to think about all eight components and what your current state is and then we'll invite you to explore all kinds of ways to practice in the different components and focusing on one each week. Dr. Welle, thank you for helping us focus on our emotional health and wellness this week, and thanks for all you do for Lake Region Health Care. We're so glad that we have you and the great team of psychiatrists on staff here and working so closely with our primary care department. We're a lucky community.

Dr. Welle: You're very welcome. I'm glad to be here.

Katie Johnson: Dr. Nicole Welle, and Katie Johnson, your guest today on Apple a Day, reminding you there's so much to do here. Stay healthy for it. Have a great day.