***WellCats:* Creating Routine Amongst Chaos**
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It is natural to want to control things. Being in control means certainty, security, and safety. However, amongst the chaos we are currently experiencing, we quickly realize that this situation is beyond our control. As a result, many of us are feeling anxious, stressed, and fearful of the unknown. While we can't control the situation itself, we have the power to control *how* we react to it by shifting our paradigms to create a new structure and routine to our daily lives.

Creating routine creates a sense of normalcy in our lives and helps us cope with change. Marty Nemko, a career coach and writer, says that routine is "Something you know you can do well which can be comforting during tough times. Modern life, increasingly defined by unpredictability, can be anxiety-provoking, and routines provide an anchor of predictability." When we are organized, it is easier to counteract any negative thoughts of the unknown, reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression. Additionally, while it is easy to get caught up in the madness, making a routine allows you to carve out time for hobbies and self-care activities that can positively impact your mental health. Self-care is vital to our mental health and overall well-being as it promotes rest and relaxation and gives us a sense of purpose by participating in the things we love to do. Below you will find ways you can create routine starting today!

1. Set an alarm, get dressed, and make your bed
    a. Wake up around the same time every day. Changing out of your PJs and making your bed will make you feel like you've accomplished something right when you wake up!

2. Make a to-do list
    a. Outline your goals for the day and create a block schedule of the things you wish to accomplish, delegating a certain amount of time for each activity. This will hold you accountable and make your work day feel more normal. Even on those days when your schedule is disrupted or totally blown up, it will help to create a schedule and try to stick to it.

3. Eat a nutritious breakfast
    a. Eating nutritious whole foods such as fruits and vegetables with natural antioxidants help to boost our immunity! Some immune boosting foods

include ginger, fresh spinach, turmeric, citrus fruits, papaya, almonds, and green tea.

4. Get movement
    a. Regular physical activity decreases stress and anxiety, improves mood, increases energy and stamina, improves sleep, and increases circulation which helps with mental alertness. Making physical activity a part of your daily routine will help to improve you and your family member's overall mental health and well-being.

5. Block out time to do work in a quiet and clean space
    a. Designate specific time for uninterrupted work. Try to mimic your at home work environment to your real office as much as possible. Tidying up your room will also help to declutter your mind.

6. Schedule time for self-care
    a. Find moments throughout the day to weave in time for the things you enjoy. Allow yourself to take time to relax. Some examples of self-care include meditating, stretching and deep breathing, reading or journaling, walking outside to soak up some vitamin D, cooking a new recipe, or getting crafty!

References:

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2. Sharma A, Madaan V, Petty FD. Exercise for mental health. *Prim Care Companion J Clin Psychiatry.* 2006;8(2):106.