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HEALTHLINE

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“Keep Going.

Your hardest times often lead to the greatest moments of your life. Keep going. Tough situations build strong people in the end.”

- Roy T. Bennett, *The Light in the Heart*



AIDS Awareness

Mindful Eating

**Addressing Grief
and Healing**

**Boost Cognitive
Function**

World AIDS Awareness Day

It was on December 1st, 1988 when the first World AIDS Awareness Day was observed. Even today, after years of struggling with this virus, there is no treatment for it. It is a global public health issue that has claimed almost 33 million lives so far.



Each year, organisations around the world come together to bring awareness around this epidemic through various campaigns and activities.

Risk factors that put people in high risk of contracting the disease:

- Unprotected anal or vaginal sex
- Sharing contaminated syringes/needles
- Medical procedures that may involve unsterilised cutting or piercing
- Having a history of STIs (Sexually Transmitted Infections) like syphilis, herpes, bacterial Vaginosis, gonorrhoea, chlamydia
- Accidental needle stick injuries



Some facts to know about HIV:

- While there is no cure to this disease, over the years, researchers and doctors have come up with treatments to help manage this disease which allows HIV positive patients to lead a long and healthy life.
- Good news is that the coverage of services received to HIV patients is increasing thanks to the support by everyone around the world.
- Antiretroviral therapy is what helps keep the virus in control and help prevent it from being transmitted to other healthy individuals.
- Due to the international support for this cause, about 85% of the pregnant and breastfeeding women who are HIV positive have received antiretroviral therapy. This keeps them and their newborns safe.
- However, there is some gap in services and more effort and awareness is key in treating people back to health.
- About two thirds of all the people living with this disease are living in the WHO African Region.
- Over 25.4 million people have access to antiretroviral therapy.

Addressing grief and healing



With a year like this, it is only understandable if people have felt emotionally distressed. Some more than others. While this is totally normal, it is also important to know healthy ways to deal with grief, loss and stress. There is no right or wrong way to grieve but we can definitely look at some coping mechanisms that will help some of us to move forward with a normal lifestyle.

Addressing some myths and facts about grief first.

Myth: Ignoring it will make it better

Fact: Trying to ignore the pain will only make it last longer. For healing to take place, it is important to face grief and actively deal with it.

Myth: "Being strong" should be the motto

Fact: There is no need to put on a brave face for anyone. In fact, showing true feelings will only help you, your family and loved ones. It is completely normal to feel sad, frightened or lonely.

Myth: You have to cry to mourn a loss

Fact: Crying sure is a normal response for many but it is important to know it is not the only response. Simply because someone is unable to cry does not mean they are not saddened or in pain. They have other ways of showing it.

Tips to cope

Friends and family: It is important to seek the support of your loved ones. Accepting assistance can be difficult but is always advisable as comfort and familiarity will make grieving manageable. Sometimes they will not know what to say or do to make you feel better, but their presence itself can be helpful, so do not shy away from asking for that. In fact, if there's anything specific you need, be vocal about it and allow them to provide you with that.

Join a support group: This is helpful as sometimes connecting with those who have gone through a similar situation as yours will come the closest to understanding how you feel. Listening to strangers speak about their experiences and their coping mechanism will help you move forward. You can contact your local hospital or counselling centres nearby to know if there are any such support groups.

Seek therapy: A mental health professional is recommended when going through such difficult times. Simply because they have the best tools to help you cope with loss and grief. Confiding into a professional whom you do not know personally can be cathartic for your healing. They will also be able to help you find the best professionally designed techniques to get back to your normal self.

Take care of yourself:

Mindful Eating

This is a technique which helps an individual gain a healthy control over their eating habits. With mindful eating one can aid weight loss, reduce binge eating and achieve a good balance of nutrients to lead a healthy life.

This concept is based on the idea of mindfulness, which is promoted a lot by Buddhism. In simple terms, mindfulness is just a form of meditation that helps one recognise their emotions and physical sensations and find healthy and sustainable ways to cope with this awareness. This technique is used to manage many conditions like eating disorders, anxiety, depression and other food related behaviours.

So, what does mindful eating involve?

Eating slowly and without distraction

Appreciating your food

Learning to cope with guilt and anxiety about food

Differentiating between hunger and non-hunger related triggers

Listening to physical hunger cues and eating enough

Consuming to maintain overall health and well-being

Noticing the effects of food on your emotions

Engaging all senses when eating



How mindful eating and weight loss work

Most weight loss programs are only short term and hence not sustainable at all. With mindful eating, you can address your food choices and lifestyle in a healthy manner and take mindful decisions to do better each day.

With this technique, you are forced to change the way you think about food. The negative feelings that may be associated with your eating pattern are replaced with awareness, self-control and positive emotions. Thanks to this, your chance of long-term weight loss success are much higher than any other diet program.

- *Addressing unhealthy eating behaviours.*
- *Mindful eating reduces emotional eating and external eating.*
- *Emotional eating: The act of eating in response to certain emotions.*
- *External eating: When you eat in response to environmental, food-related cues like sight or smell of food.*

It's a slow process of transition as it focuses on long term goals and a change in lifestyle so be patient with yourself through this process. Have an accountability buddy with whom you can confide in and share your small wins every day. Consult your doctor before making any drastic lifestyle changes.

Boost Cognitive Function

Mental decline is one of the many common concerns ageing people have and rightly so. Cognitive weakness is something that happens due to old age and while it is inevitable, there are ways to boost your cognitive function before this decline.

Here are some tips:

1. Good mental stimulation

Any kind of mental exercise works wonders for your brain. Activities like reading, solving word puzzles or math problems, taking courses and studying will help keep your brain busy and working sharp.



2. Physical exercise

Apart from mental exercise, physical activity ensures that oxygen carrying blood reaches the tiny blood vessels in the brain.



3. Nutritious diet

Including vegetables, fruits, and more plant based protein in your diet will help keep you healthy. According to Harvard Health, the Mediterranean style diet emphasises on this and includes fish, nuts and unsaturated oils like olive oil.



4. Cholesterol in check

Studies show that high levels of bad cholesterol increase the risk of dementia in individuals. It is important to keep the cholesterol in check through right diet and exercise.



5. Blood sugar

Those suffering from diabetes are also at higher risk of dementia. Improve your blood sugar by ensuring right diet. Exercise too is important in regulating blood sugar in the body.



6. Blood pressure

High blood pressure puts an individual at cognitive impairment risk. Make sure you are eating right and not taking on too much stress.



7. Avoid alcohol and tobacco

Avoiding these two completely will work wonders for your body! However, if you do drink some times, keep it to two drinks a day. Tobacco should be avoided at all costs!

