

HEALTHY LIVING AND LIFESTYLE MODIFICATION

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INTRODUCTION:

Due to the rising incidence of non communicable diseases, otherwise referred to as lifestyle diseases, it has become necessary to consistently find avenues to modify our lifestyle with a view to improving our health. There are broadly two kinds of diseases – communicable and non communicable diseases.

DEFINITION OF TERMS:

- **HEALTH** -WHO defined health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (WHO, n.d.)
- **HEALTHY LIVING:** Healthy living emphasizes leading lifestyles which involve activities and habits that encourage the development and maintenance of total physical, social and mental fitness. Healthy activities and habits include: regular exercise, balanced diet, adequate sleep and relaxation, abstaining from smoking and moderating intake of alcohol. Healthy living is achieved by active participation and not by mere wish.
- **LIFESTYLE:** Is defined as the way in which a group of people live and work (Oxford Leaner's Dictionary, n.d).It involves all our daily activities and routine.
- **COMMUNICABLE DISEASE:** Are those diseases or illnesses that are caused by infectious agents or their toxins and are transmitted by individuals or animals to a susceptible host. Some of them are: Typhoid fever, malaria, tuberculosis, measles, chicken pox, HIV/AIDs, rabies, COVID etc.
- **NON COMMUNICABLE DISEASES:** are diseases that are not passed from person to person and do not have a specific causative agent rather they are a result of a combination of genetic, physiological, environmental and behavioral factors. Some promoters of non communicable diseases are unhealthy lifestyle, ageing, rapid unplanned urbanization and globalization. Examples of this group are: stroke, chronic lung disease, diabetes,

hypertension, heart diseases, cancers, and obesity etc. According to WHO (2023) these diseases account for 74% of annual global death.

TIPS FOR LIFESTYLE MODIFICATION:

The acronym developed by the National President, Society of Lifestyle Medicine of Nigeria and the pioneer President of the World Lifestyle Medicine Organization (WLMO), Dr. Ifeoma Monye referred to as DR₃EAM₃S is a very good guide towards lifestyle modification (Tribune, 2023).

D stands for diets and healthy nutrition-

- Food which contains different kinds of nutrients like carbohydrate, protein, fats, vitamins, minerals, and water is recommended. The makeup of balanced diet differs from country to country depending on availability of food, social and cultural habits, economic status, age, sex, and physical activity.
- With increased age, eat food with lots of nutrients with reduced calories e.g. Fruits and vegetables, whole grains, like oatmeal, whole-wheat bread, and brown rice, fat-free or low-fat milk and cheese, or soy or rice, milk that has added vitamin D and calcium, Seafood, lean meats, beans, nuts, and seeds. Increase water intake to avoid dehydration .
- Note to eat in moderation, right quantity and quality at the right time.

R₁ stands for relationships-

People who have friendly family, social, and work environment including supportive bosses and colleagues tend to have better overall health than those in negative work conditions.

R₂ stands for rest-

Rest means to cease work or movement in order to relax, sleep, or recover strength (Merriam-webster, n.d.).One of the ways to create time to rest is by delegating responsibilities, training subordinates, avoiding unnecessary time wasters. Taking your leave and vacation is a good way of getting some rest.

R₃ stands for relaxation-

People are said to relax when they do things that reduce tension and anxiety which calms them. Different individuals have different things that relax them. Some of the examples are watching movies, watching sports, gardening, reading, playing games, listening to music, visiting friends etc.

E stands for exercise –

Exercise is organized regular, recurring physical activity. The World Health Organization defines physical activity as any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure (WHO, 2021).30 minutes of moderate daily aerobic activity or 10,000 steps daily is ideal. This includes activities like brisk walking, swimming, dancing, mowing the lawn, sweeping etc. Exercise should be prescribed relative to individual abilities, age and circumstance. It can also be staggered in smaller bits. What is most important is to increase physical activities as much as possible.

We must be intentional if we want to engage in exercise to avoid sedentary lifestyle. As people grow in their jobs, tendency to live sedentary life increases due to several privileges that come with their senior roles. So, it is advised that we make conscious efforts to sit less. We sit to eat in the morning, sit in the car as we go to work, sit in the office to work, sit in meetings, sit at home to watch television, sit on the bed, then sleep.

A stands for **A**voidance of psychoactive substances such as alcohol, tobacco, smoking (directly and indirectly) and unprescribed drugs.

M stands for mental well being and stress management-

Watch out for some early warning signs of deteriorating mental health e.g.

- Reduced or too much eating or sleeping
- Sudden withdrawal from people and otherwise regular activities
- Reduced energy in normal routines
- Persistent unexplained aches
- Feeling of hopelessness
- Sudden excessive alcohol intake and smoking
- Increased negative emotions like anger, worry, easily upset, scared
- Mood swings
- Hallucination
- Inability to perform otherwise basic daily tasks
- Suicidal ideas

Take note of some stress management tips too:

Social and emotional support, ability to resolve personal conflicts, effective time management, avoid chatty colleagues, inclusion of rest in our daily routine, taking a vacation, improve efficiency at work, exercise, play therapy, ventilation therapy, quiet tear therapy, prayer, meditation, deep breathing, explore nature, massage, drugs.

M stands for medical attention-

Comprehensive routine medical checkup is advised. Regular blood pressure and blood sugar tests. Breast examination, prostate specific antigen test for prostate cancer, pap smear for cervical cancer, yearly eye examination, yearly dental check up, blood pressure and blood sugar tests, liver and kidney function tests, full blood counts, urinalysis etc. Get health insurance.

M stands for Medication-

Take only medications that are prescribed by qualified practitioners. Do not alter drug routines, dosage, or change them completely on your own.

S stands for sleep-

Recommended number of sleep hours for individuals between 18-65 years is 7-8 hours (Rausch-Phung & Singh, 2023). Sleep can be staggered and must not be achieved at a stretch. Dinner should be eaten at least 2 hours before sleep because some of the food we eat can cause heart burns, make us uncomfortable and prevent sleep.

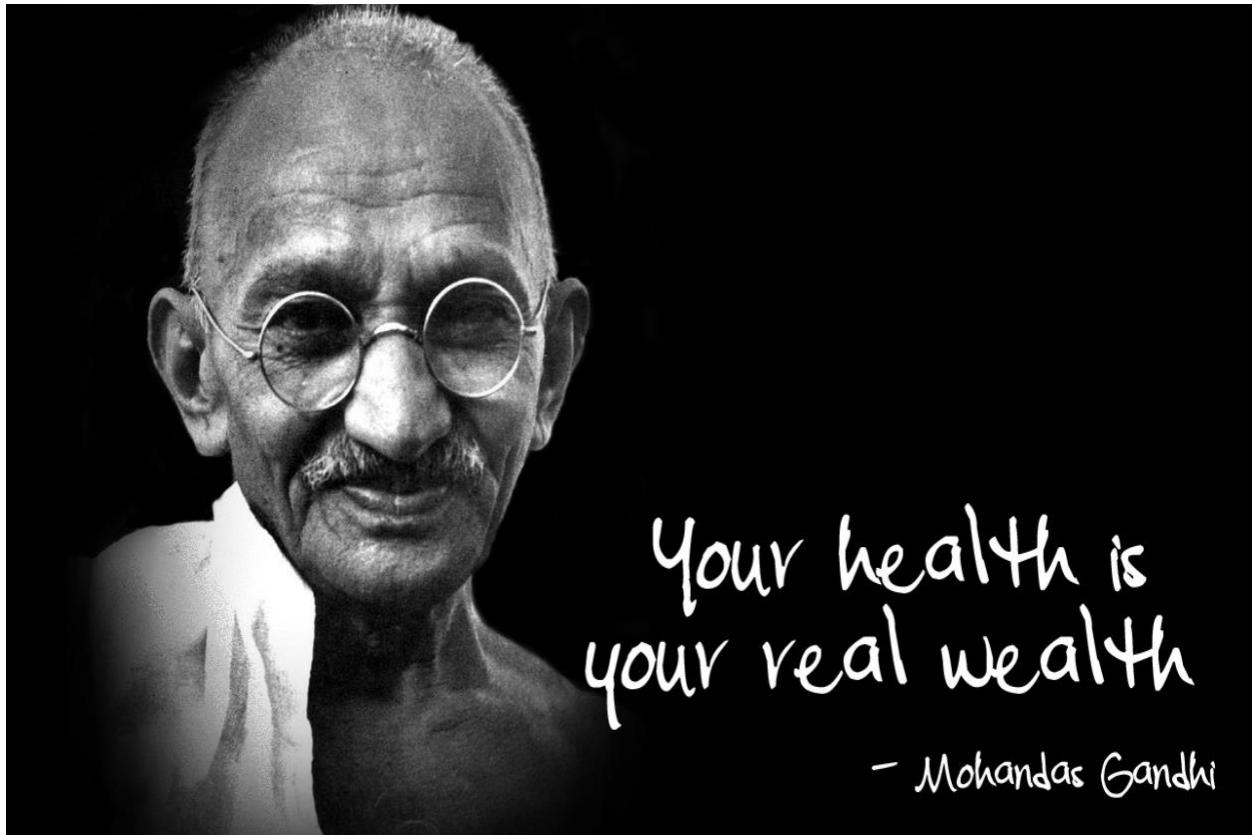
Decide a routine for sleep like time of sleep, reading a book, taking bath, switching off lights, listening to music or certain sounds etc.

Shut down everything including your biological system when it is time to sleep.

Make your environment conducive for sleep.

Conclusion

Adherence to the recommendations in the acronym- DR₃EAM₃S has been proven to improve health and lifestyle.



Your health is
your real wealth

- Mohandas Gandhi

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING.

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