

# MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS



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## "Surviving or Thriving"

by Angelique R. Grey

Many persons go through their lives on autopilot, merely surviving the days and not actually living a life of fullness. In times of crisis, such as Covid-19, it becomes even more difficult to experience life as usual. Many can operate in what is called "survival mode". During the normal course of life, a person functions on a foundational system of things like community, morality, physical and emotional wellbeing, productivity, development, emotional regulation and the like. When a person has a lifestyle that operates in survival mode however, these usual systems fall away and such things as the individual's basic needs (food, shelter, safety, etc.) tend to take priority over things such as self-care and self-development. Thus, making it hard to maintain other key systems such as emotional regulation and productivity. This is a state whereby the person is said to be Surviving. Life in survival mode can lead to a range of symptoms and increased health risks because of the stress caused by a prolonged state of anxiety and heightened physiological responses such as "fight or flight".



When we constantly maintain such an anxious way of living, our bodies have little opportunity to relax and maintain its proper balance. Some **common causes** of survival mode are crisis, financial difficulties, relationship challenges, workplace stress, and lack of stability. Thus, resulting in **common symptoms** and challenges such as fatigue, irritability, headaches, difficulty concentrating, rapid or disorganized thoughts, difficulty sleeping, digestive problems, changes in appetite, feeling helpless, a perceived loss of control, low self-esteem, lack of libido, and frequent infections or illness.

## Surviving or Thriving

### COMMON CAUSES & SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

Over an extended period of time, this can lead to more serious physical and mental illnesses such as heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, a weakened immune system, gastrointestinal disorders, sexual dysfunction, skin irritation, autoimmune diseases, respiratory infections, depression, insomnia, burnout, anxiety disorder, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), schizophrenia, suicidal thoughts or even death.[1]

[1] Medical News Today, Aaron Kandola and Timothy J. Legg, October 12, 2018



As we can see, this type of situational survival can be extremely dangerous and is a very present risk to many within our community. If this sounds like you, or you can identify with any of the symptoms mentioned, our desire is to help you move from a state of Surviving to Thriving! Here are some useful ways you can begin to do so as discussed in the article, 20 Ways to Thrive in Life and Not Just Survive, by Don and Nicole Nenninger.[2]

[2] <https://patch.com/new-york/portjefferson/bp--20-ways-to-thrive-in-life-and-not-just-survive>

# 20 Ways To Thrive In Life



## EVERYDAY TIPS TO HELP YOU THRIVE

1. Practice gratitude on a daily basis. Until it becomes a habit, make it a point to think of three things each day that you are grateful for. Each day, think of something new. Eventually as it becomes a habit you will begin to view life looking for the blessings instead of focusing on the negatives.
12. Choose your thoughts carefully. Choose them from a hero or heroine's point of view, not from a victim's.
3. When you catch yourself focusing on negativity, make a conscious effort to think of something positive - quickly. Pay attention to how many times you catch yourself thinking or focusing on things that detract, dis-empower, or do not enhance your way of life.
4. Forgive yourself and others for past "mistakes." These are all learning opportunities. Take the lessons from them and move on. Forgiveness does not mean to forget, but it is a gift to yourself that lifts that heavy anchor from your heart and allows you to move forward.
5. Be yourself. Living authentically is the best way to live an amazing and powerful life.
6. Always keep learning - about yourself and others.
7. Recognize that everyone is probably doing the best they can in their given circumstances. If they knew better, they'd do better.
8. Choose to spend your time with people who lift you up (and who are positive about others, too) instead of putting you down.
9. Make time for fun and relaxation. So many people take life way too seriously! Life is a balance - work and play. Make time for work as well. Something that provides value for others. Having a purpose provides a sense of well-being in your life.
10. Contribute. Give back to the world in a positive manner. You aren't here to only take from the world, but to give back as well. Touch someone's life every day in an extraordinary way, even if it's only through a smile, a simple thank you, or a kind gesture. There are millions of ways to give back, including through the simple act of kindness.

### EVERYDAY TIPS TO HELP YOU THRIVE

11. Look for beauty. Beauty is everywhere, but when you exist in a hurried lifestyle, you tend to miss it. Keep an inspiration journal or a bookmark on your computer just for things that are beautiful to you. What inspires you?



12. Be out in nature. Nature has a way of grounding and centering us. Look up at the night sky and remind yourself of how small and insignificant your problems really are. That sky is a vast universe that is unfathomable to us as far as how big it is and how old it is. You are a tiny speck in the vastness of space. Your problems are small in comparison to the world around you (And, if you insist on comparing, someone always has it worse off than you do. Always).

13. Take care of your body. Your body needs good food and regular exercise no matter how you want to argue about it or ignore it. At 90, you'll be thanking yourself you took good care of it!

14. Do something that you love, whether it's a hobby or finding a job you love. This adds so much more to your life when you are taking part in something that you actually lose track of time when you are doing it, or you look forward to it because it is challenging you to bring out your best.

15. Get rid of the idea of perfection - there's no such thing. Instead, just do your best, and do it with a good attitude. You can't be the best, but you can do your best. That's a huge difference!

16. Pay attention to your limiting beliefs. Your beliefs may feel real and true, but until you examine them, they could be holding you back in life and you may have no idea! What beliefs hold you back? Are you afraid of flying or scared of relationships? How do your beliefs stop you from living an amazingly awesome life?

17. Try something new. Try out new flavors, new ways to work, new vacation spots, new tv shows, new books, new clothing...Spice it up a little! When you get comfortable, life takes on a relaxed feeling, but you also need some things in your life that are different from what you are used to. Push the envelope a little and try something different!

18. Don't take the love in your life for granted. When you do, your actions take on a different meaning. Love is action. Life is too short to be taking each other for granted.

19. Learn how to disagree respectfully. Keep it about yourself, and do not run away from or avoid issues in your life. That only intensifies the reactions and keeps the wound festering instead of healing.

20. Learn to be 100% responsible for your life. Own (admit) your "mistakes" (aka "learning opportunities) and learn from them. Trust that something better will happen because of them.

# Surviving or Thriving

As with any change, it is not easy to instantly adjust our behaviors. Especially, ones that we have developed over a life span. However, as always, we can start somewhere. As it is Mental Health Awareness Month, and we seek to promote a holistic approach to wellness, what better time to do so? Do not let these symptoms scare you or push you into a deeper survival response. Rather, use it to push you to choose a better way. The path to happiness, fulfillment, and ease is intentional. One that can begin by incorporating just a few new steps into your daily life. The choice is yours.



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