**Managing Your Mental Health**

***By: Sydney Chasteen***

It is important for everyone to be knowledgeable about and aware of their mental health. This applies whether or not a person has other disabilities. It's especially important however for individuals who may already be dealing with executive dysfunction, as in the case of people with Spina Bifida. Maintaining good mental health can look different for everyone, depending on individual needs, and can be achieved using a variety of methods.

Depending on the needs of the individual and the severity of the issues they are experiencing, a person's regular physician may suggest that they see a therapist to discuss their mental health difficulties more in depth. Speaking with someone who is a licensed professional in helping others with their mental health issues can be very beneficial. However, in some cases it may not be feasible to visit an entirely different doctor and office. In that case there are now several non-face to face options available. There are therapists available for consult online and via texting services. These often offer discounted prices depending on your income level and type of insurance.

If however it is decided that therapy alone will not be successful your physician or therapist may suggest medication. This may be in place of therapy sessions or in conjunction with them. Regardless, taking medication to treat a mental illness is in no way different from medication used to treat any other health issues and should be treated as such. Mental health issues stem from the brain, just as other health issues stem from other organs. All should be taken care of and treated with equal weight.

Whether it is decided that therapy, medication or a combination of both are required to give you the best quality of mental health, there is one more component that should not be overlooked. Your physical health plays an equal role in affecting your mental health, and vice versa, so it is important to give equal attention to both. To accomplish this, begin a regimen of self-care. Self-care can encompass tasks related to physical health such as hygiene and healthy eating, and tasks related to mental health such as relaxation and meditation. By striking a balance between the two you ensure that both your mental and physical health are being taken care of.

It may not always be easy, and beginning the process can seem daunting, but beginning to work toward achieving and maintaining your best mental health will benefit you in the long run. By taking the first step and talking to your doctor you are already well on your way to achieving your goal of increased mental health. Take action that will benefit you and allow you to be your best self.