

Boost Your Mental Health



WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we feel, think, and act.

At times, you may experience mental health problems that influence your thinking, mood, and behavior. Many factors can lead to mental health problems including:

- Biology and physical health
- Family history
- Social and financial circumstances
- Lifestyle choices such as diet, exercise, sleep, and other daily habits
- Life experiences such as trauma or abuse

ASSESS YOUR OWN MENTAL HEALTH

Check in with yourself to assess your needs and figure out steps you can take to be at your best. Do this at least once a day!



5 STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE YOUR MENTAL HEALTH



Once you check in with yourself, you can use the following tools to lift your mood and improve your well-being

(see next pages)

1

REFRAME YOUR THOUGHTS



You can't always control what happens to you but you can control how you respond and interpret it. This means that YOU have the power to change negative thoughts into useful lessons or put a positive spin on them.

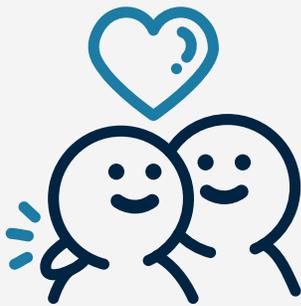
- Take notice when negative thoughts or feelings come.
- Pause for a moment, pay attention to and acknowledge the thought or feeling, take a deep breath... and
- Ask yourself questions like “Is there another way to look at this situation?” or “What are some other possible reasons this could have happened?”

By asking yourself these questions, you can start to see things from another point of view that is optimistic, accurate, and still fits the facts of your situation.

CONNECT WITH OTHERS

2

Humans have a natural need to be connected other people. Social relationships give us a sense of belonging, support, and purpose.



Some ideas for cultivating connections:

- Join a new club or try out a group activity
- Reach out to an old friend you've lost touch with
- Volunteer for a cause you care about
- Eat in a place with other people
- Introduce yourself to your neighbors
- Ask someone for help when you need it
- Do a random act of kindness

3

TAKE CARE OF YOUR PHYSICAL HEALTH

Our bodies and minds are closely interconnected. Improving your physical health can drastically improve your mental health.

Some ways to develop and maintain your physical health:

- Get enough sleep
- Avoid drugs and alcohol
- Exercise regularly
- Eat healthy meals



TRY RELAXATION TECHNIQUES



When you think of relaxation, you might picture yourself spread out on the couch to watch TV or scroll through your phone. But this does little to challenge the effects of stress and may actually make things worse. Instead, you need to **activate your body's natural "relaxation response"** - a state of deep rest that brings your body and mind into balance.

Try out these techniques to activate your relaxation response:

(1) Deep breathing

- Sit comfortably with your back straight. Put one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach.
- Breathe in through your nose. The hand on your stomach should rise. The hand on your chest should move very little.
- Exhale through your mouth, pushing out as much air as you can.
- Repeat at least 5 times



(2) Body scan

Focus on one part of your body at a time starting down at your feet and working your way up to your face. Focus on how each part of your body feels and move around to release any tension you feel there.

(3) Mindfulness meditation

Rather than worrying about the future or dwelling on the past, mindfulness shifts your focus to what's happening right now, allowing you to be fully engaged in the present moment.

Cultivate mindfulness through meditation:

- Find a quiet place where you won't be interrupted or distracted.
- Sit on a comfortable chair with your back straight.
- Close your eyes and find a point of focus, such as your breathing—the feeling of air flowing into your nostrils and out of your mouth or your belly rising and falling—or a meaningful word that you repeat throughout the meditation.
- Don't worry about distracting thoughts that go through your mind or about how well you're doing. If thoughts come into your relaxation session, don't fight them, just gently turn your attention back to your point of focus, without judgment.



**“Your present
circumstances don’t
determine where you
can go; they merely
determine where you
start.”**

Sources

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