



Mental Health Matters

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Improve Emotional & Physical Well-Being



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What are the benefits of mindfulness?

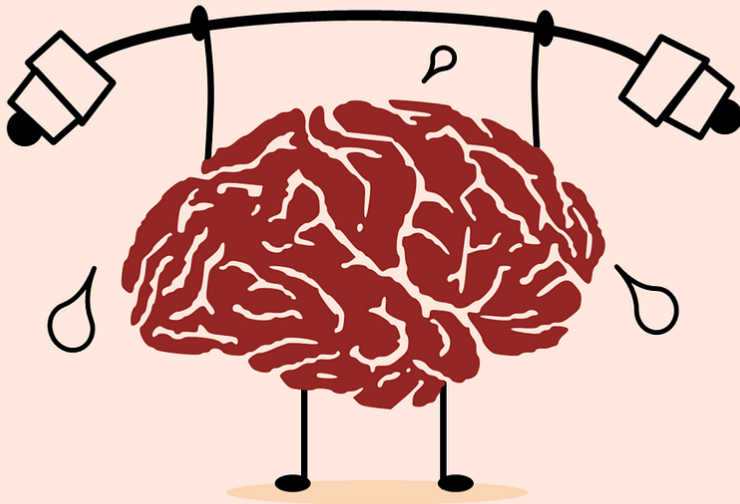
Mindfulness is the practice of purposely focusing your attention on the present moment, and accepting it without judgment. Mindfulness is now being examined scientifically and has been found to be a key element in stress reduction and overall happiness.

Some of the benefits of mindfulness include the following:

- Improves well-being
- Improves physical health
- Improves mental health

Mindfulness can be cultivated through meditation, a systematic method of focusing your attention. You can learn to meditate on your own, following instructions in books or on tapes. However, you may benefit from the support of an instructor or group to answer questions and help you stay motivated. Look for someone using meditation in a way compatible with your goals.

Source: Positive Psychology: Harnessing the Power of Happiness, Personal Strength & Mindfulness; Harvard Health Publications



Building Better Mental Health

Authors: Melinda Smith, M.A.; Robert Segal, M.A.; Lawrence Robinson; Jeanne Segal, Ph.D.

6 Life-Changing Strategies to Boost Mood, Build Resilience, and Increase Happiness

Your mental health influences how you think, feel, and behave in daily life. It also affects your ability to cope with stress, overcome challenges, build relationships, and recover from life's setbacks and hardships. Whether you're looking to cope with a specific mental health problem, handle your emotions better, or simply to feel more positive and energetic, there are plenty of ways to take control of your mental health.

Mental health refers to your overall psychological well-being. It encompasses the way you feel about yourself, the quality of your relationships, and your ability to manage your feelings and deal with difficulties. Being mentally or emotionally healthy is much more than being free of depression, anxiety, or other psychological issues. People who are mentally healthy have a sense of contentment; a zest for living and the ability to laugh and have fun; the ability to deal with stress and bounce back from diversity; a sense of meaning and purpose; the flexibility to learn new skills and adapt to change; a balance between work and play, rest and activity; the ability to

build and maintain fulfilling relationships; and self-confidence and high self esteem.

How to Boost Your Mental Health

There are practices you can adopt to elevate your mood, become more resilient, and enjoy life more. But just as it requires effort to build and maintain physical health, so it is with mental health. Here are some helpful strategies:

- ✓ Make social connection a priority, especially face-to-face
- ✓ Stay active
- ✓ Learn how to keep your stress levels in check
- ✓ Eat a brain-healthy diet
- ✓ Don't skimp on sleep
- ✓ Find purpose and meaning in life

If you've made consistent efforts to improve your mental and emotional health and still aren't functioning optimally at home, work, or in your relationships, it may be time to seek professional help. Following these tips will still be beneficial, though, but input from a caring professional can help motivate us to take better care of ourselves.

The Importance of Kindness

Being kind can strengthen your relationships and sense of satisfaction in life. Kindness is defined as the quality of being friendly, generous, and considerate. Affection, gentleness, warmth, concern, and care are words that are associated with kindness. Being kind often requires courage and strength, and is an interpersonal skill.

Science has shown that devoting resources to others, rather than having more and more for yourself, brings about lasting well-being. Kindness has been found by researchers to be the most important predictor of satisfaction and stability in a marriage. Many colleges, including Harvard, are now emphasizing kindness on applications for admission.

There are different ways to practice kindness. Here are a few:

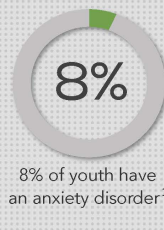
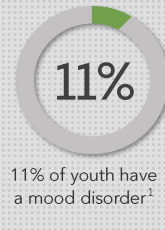
- ✓ Open your eyes and be active when you see people in need
- ✓ Celebrate someone you love
- ✓ Give honest compliments
- ✓ Helping an elderly neighbor
- ✓ Sharing homemade food
- ✓ Refuse to gossip
- ✓ Donate old clothing and items to those in need
- ✓ Tell the truth, but in a gentle way
- ✓ Be kind to yourself

Source:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com>

Mental Health Facts CHILDREN & TEENS

Fact: 1 in 5 children ages 13-18 have, or will have a serious mental illness.¹



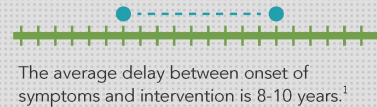
Impact



50%

50% of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14 and 75% by age 24.¹

10 yrs



37%



37% of students with a mental health condition age 14 and older drop out of school—the highest dropout rate of any disability group.¹

70%



70% of youth in state and local juvenile justice systems have a mental illness.¹

Suicide

3rd



Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death in youth ages 10 - 24.¹



90%

90% of those who died by suicide had an underlying mental illness.¹

Warning Signs



Feeling very sad or withdrawn for more than 2 weeks (e.g., crying regularly, feeling fatigued, feeling unmotivated).



Trying to harm or kill oneself or making plans to do so.



Out-of-control, risk-taking behaviors that can cause harm to self or others.



Sudden overwhelming fear for no reason, sometimes with a racing heart, physical discomfort or fast breathing.



Not eating, throwing up or using laxatives to lose weight; significant weight loss or gain.



Severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships.



Repeated use of drugs or alcohol.



Drastic changes in behavior, personality or sleeping habits (e.g., waking up early and acting agitated).



Extreme difficulty in concentrating or staying still that can lead to failure in school.



Intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities like hanging out with friends or going to classes.

4 Things Parents Can Do



Talk with your pediatrician



Get a referral to a mental health specialist



Work with the school



Connect with other families

¹ This document cites statistics provided by the National Institute of Mental Health. www.nimh.nih.gov

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www.nami.org

ANXIETY

Be Aware of Anxiety and Depression

Anxiety

Anxiety is that feeling one sometimes gets when uneasy or distressed about future events. Those with persistent underlying anxiety find they aren't performing everyday tasks as well as they need to. This is more serious than the situational anxiety felt when meeting new people, talking in front of others, or at a job interview. Anxiety disorders do not go away on their own, but they are among the most treatable mental disorders. If untreated they can become chronic. Anxiety disorders can be treated with a combination of psychotherapy and medication. The treatment plan should consider each person's needs and choices. A person should consult a healthcare professional when choosing the right treatment. *Source: www.psychcentral.com*

7 Pink Flags That Could Signal a Behavioral or Emotional Disorder in Your Child

If you have concerns about your child's mental health, start by discussing them with your pediatrician. These are the most common behaviors to look out for:

- ✓ Disordered sleep
- ✓ Tummy trouble
- ✓ Obsessive thoughts or fears
- ✓ Guilty conscience
- ✓ Explosive anger
- ✓ Dark thoughts

Source: www.parents.com

More than half of parents say they have worried about their child's mental health, according to a recent survey by Parents and the Child Mind Institute.

Depression

Depression is a common and serious mental disorder that is more than feeling sad. It is a serious illness that affects a person's thoughts, feelings, behavior and physical health. People with depression may feel sad, hopeless, angry, irritable, and tired. They may have physical symptoms such as stomachaches, headaches, migraines, and muscle pains. They may have suicidal thoughts and attempt suicide. Untreated depression can disrupt relationships with family and friends, and seriously interfere with work, school, and other daily activities. Depression is often ignored or untreated. People may not recognize the symptoms, may be too depressed to seek treatment, or may be afraid to talk with family or friends for fear of appearing weak. As with any mental illness, a person should contact a healthcare professional when choosing the right treatment. If you are having suicidal thoughts or know someone who is, contact the Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255). *Source: www.psychcentral.com*