

How to look after your mental health

It's important to take care of yourself and get the most from life. Below are 10 practical ways to look after your mental health. Making simple changes to how you live doesn't need to cost a fortune or take up loads of time. Anyone can follow this advice. Why not start today?

1. Talk about your feelings

Talking about your feelings can help you stay in good mental health and deal with times when you feel troubled.

2. Keep active

Regular exercise can boost your self-esteem and can help you concentrate, sleep, and feel better. Exercise keeps the brain and your other vital organs healthy, and is also a significant benefit towards improving your mental health.

3. Eat well

Your brain needs a mix of nutrients in order to stay healthy and function well, just like the other organs in your body. A diet that's good for your physical health is also good for your mental health.

4. Drink sensibly

We often drink alcohol to change our mood. Some people drink to deal with fear or loneliness, but the effect is only temporary. When the drink wears off, you feel worse because of the way the alcohol has affected your brain and the rest of your body. Drinking is not a good way to manage difficult feelings.

5. Keep in touch

There's nothing better than catching up with someone face to face, but that's not always possible. You can also give them a call, drop them a note, or chat to them online instead. Keep the lines of communication open: it's good for you!

6. Ask for help

None of us are superhuman. We all sometimes get tired or overwhelmed by how we feel or when things don't go to plan. If things are getting too much for you and you feel you can't cope, ask for help. Your family or friends may be able to offer practical help or a listening ear. Local services are there to help you.

7. Take a break

A change of scene or a change of pace is good for your mental health.

It could be a five-minute pause from cleaning your kitchen, a half-hour lunch break at work, or a weekend exploring somewhere new. A few minutes can be enough to de-stress you. Give yourself some 'me time'.

8. Do something you're good at

What do you love doing? What activities can you lose yourself in? What did you love doing in the past? Enjoying yourself can help beat stress. Doing an activity you enjoy probably means you're good at it, and achieving something boosts your self-esteem.

9. Accept who you are

We're all different. It's much healthier to accept that you're unique than to wish you were more like someone else. Feeling good about yourself boosts your confidence to learn new skills, visit new places and make new friends. Good self-esteem helps you cope when life takes a difficult turn.

10. Care for others

'Friends are really important... We help each other whenever we can, so it's a two-way street, and supporting them uplifts me.'

Caring for others is often an important part of keeping up relationships with people close to you. It can even bring you closer together.

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/how-to-mental-health>



Mental Health Conditions

A mental illness is a condition that affects a person's thinking, feeling, behavior or mood. These conditions deeply impact day-to-day living and may also affect the ability to relate to others. If you have — or think you might have — a mental illness, the first thing you must know is that you are not alone. Mental health conditions are far more common than you think, mainly because people don't like to, or are scared to, talk about them. However:

- 1 in 5 U.S. adults experience mental illness each year
- 1 in 20 U.S. adults experience serious mental illness each year
- 1 in 6 U.S. youth aged 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year
- 50% of all lifetime mental illness begins by age 14, and 75% by age 24

A mental health condition isn't the result of one event. Research suggests multiple, linking causes. Genetics, environment and lifestyle influence whether someone develops a mental health condition. A stressful job or home life makes some people more susceptible, as do traumatic life events. Biochemical processes and circuits and basic brain structure may play a role, too.

None of this means that you're broken or that you, or your family, did something "wrong." Mental illness is no one's fault. And for many people, recovery — including meaningful roles in social life, school and work — is possible, especially when you start treatment early and play a strong role in your own recovery process.

Conditions

Anxiety Disorders - Everyone can experience anxiety, but when symptoms are overwhelming and constant — often impacting everyday living — it may be an anxiety disorder.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) - ADHD is a developmental disorder defined by inattention (trouble staying on task, listening); disorganization (losing materials); and hyperactivity-impulsivity (fidgeting, difficulty staying seated or waiting).

Bipolar Disorder - Bipolar disorder causes dramatic shifts in a person's mood, energy and ability to think clearly. Individuals with this disorder experience extreme high and low moods, known as mania and depression. Some people can be symptom-free for many years between episodes.

Borderline Personality Disorder - BPD is characterized by a pattern of instability in emotions (commonly referred to as dysregulation), interpersonal relationships and self-image. Individuals with BPD can also struggle with impulsivity and self-harm.

Depression - Depression involves recurrent, severe periods of clear-cut changes in mood, thought processes and motivation lasting for a minimum of two weeks. Changes in thought processes typically include negative thoughts and hopelessness. Depression also involves affects sleep/energy, appetite or weight.



Dissociative Disorders - Dissociative disorders, which are frequently associated with trauma, disrupt every area of psychological functioning: consciousness, memory, identity, emotion, motor control and behavior.

Eating Disorders - Eating disorders are characterized by the intentional changing of food consumption to the point where physical health or social behaviors are affected.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder - OCD involves persistent, intrusive thoughts (obsessions) and repetitive behaviors that a person feels driven to perform (compulsions) in response to those thoughts.

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder - PTSD involves a set of physiological and psychological responses. It can occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event such as a natural disaster, a serious accident, a terrorist act, rape, war/combat or something similar.

Psychosis - Psychosis is characterized as disruptions to a person's thoughts and perceptions that make it difficult for them to recognize what is real and what isn't.

Schizoaffective Disorder

Schizoaffective disorder involves symptoms of schizophrenia, such as hallucinations or delusions, and symptoms of a mood disorder, such as depressive or manic episodes.

Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia interferes with a person's ability to think clearly, manage emotions, make decisions and relate to others. It also causes people to lose touch with reality, often in the form of hallucinations and delusions.

<https://www.nami.org/About-Mental-Illness/Mental-Health-Conditions>



Pets and mental health: benefits of owning pets

Caring for a pet comes with great benefits to your mental health. We speak with a vet and a psychotherapist to learn how.

Owning a pet is a rewarding experience. But it can also provide some great benefits to your mental health. We spoke with registered psychotherapist **Hanit Isakovan** and veterinarian Dr. Sarah Machell of **Vetster** to learn more about it.

How can a pet help our mental health?

Isakovan says that there is strong evidence that pets improve our mental health. "There is a reduction in stress-related hormones, like cortisol, after interacting with a pet," she explains. "Interacting with a pet can also help naturally elevate happy hormones, like serotonin and dopamine." This helps to relax the nervous system and lower blood pressure. Isakovan reminds us that it's not only dog or cat owners that experience mental health benefits. "Watching fish in a tank or aquarium can be relaxing," she says.

With increased stress around the pandemic, pet ownership can be even more beneficial. According to a survey conducted by Vetster, 71.4% of respondents said their pet helps lower their stress levels. 86% said that being a pet owner reduces feelings of loneliness. And 86% said their pet has helped provide them with emotional support since the pandemic specifically.

When might someone consider a pet to improve their mental health?

Anyone that likes animals can consider getting a pet, according to Isakovan. But certain populations can really benefit from pet interactions. Isakovan says that her child and youth clients experience a boost in self-esteem and confidence from being around pets. Youth with ADHD, autism and learning challenges can also benefit from time with a pet. "It helps them learn how to better interact and connect with others," Isakovan says. "It increases their attention and focus to complete daily tasks." Adults with Alzheimer's and dementia can also experience a decrease in aggressive behaviours after spending time with a pet.

What do we know about the human-animal bond and our health?

Isakovan refers to the human-animal bond as the "pet effect". "It's a mutually beneficial relationship between a pet and their owner," she says. "It enhances the quality of life for both." The loyalty and unconditional love that a pet provides can also reduce feelings of fear and loneliness. "Our pets are not going to let us down — they're not going to turn on us," explains Isakovan. Bonding with a pet enhances feelings of connectedness and also helps pet owners feel accepted. "They don't judge you," she says. "They accept you the way you are."

What are some of the reasons we might benefit from pet ownership?

Aside from the mental health benefits, pet owners can also benefit from other lifestyle changes. For dog owners especially, going out for daily walks can be beneficial to our physical health. Caring for pets reminds us to take care of ourselves. "We find ourselves impulsively caring for them," Isakovan says. "We follow a consistent daily routine of feeding and exercise. This, in turn, helps both pets and their owners to maintain balance and calm in their lives."

Which pets can help lower stress?

Dogs and cats may be the most popular pets. But veterinarian Dr. Sarah Machell reminds us that animal companions come in all sizes and forms. "In Singapore, the most popular pets are actually birds," she explains. "Pocket pets," such as chinchillas and rabbits, can also be great companions and offer similar stress-reducing effects. It's important to consider your available space and lifestyle before getting a pet. Otherwise, owning a high-maintenance animal could add more stress to our life. "If you're not able to get outside as much, a cat or bird is more suitable," Dr. Machell explains.

What are some ways to ensure you bond with your pet?

"Pets are so routine-oriented," Dr. Machell says. "Setting and following a routine helps to make them comfortable and reduces pets' anxiety." That routine can involve the time you both wake up, eat and go to bed. But the most important thing is to spend quality time with your pet and increase positive interactions. "Whether it's walking, petting, grooming or playing, doing that on a regular basis can be really helpful."

Mental health benefits of owning a cat

Dr. Machell describes the relationships of cat owners as being "quite profound." "There's a really deep connection there," she says. "Cats are not just small dogs. They're very unique. And they offer a really intimate sort of relationship." Cats can be selective about who they bond and connect with. People benefit from owning a cat by developing and growing their relationship with their cat. "Gaining that trust and building that bond is a really special thing," Dr. Machell explains.

Mental health benefits of owning a dog

Taking a dog out for regular walks has obvious benefits for our physical health. But Dr. Machell says that dogs can also help increase our social interactions by meeting our neighbors. "Your dog is your easiest way to meet people," she says. "You go for a walk and dogs are not shy, for the most part."

Dog owners also benefit from the excitement and energy that their pets show when owners arrive home. "Every moment is new for a dog," says Dr. Machell. "You might be gone for a minute to take the garbage out, but it's like you've been gone for hours. It's always the same wonderful feeling of reception."

Spending time with an animal is one of many strategies you can use to **cope during challenging times**. But if you need support, don't wait to **find a mental health professional** and book an appointment.

https://luminohhealth.sunlife.ca/s/article/The-mental-health-benefits-of-pet-ownership?language=en_US



Did You Know?



KNOWING WHERE TO GO FOR HEALTH CARE MAY **SAVE YOU TIME AND MONEY**

In an emergency, visiting the hospital emergency room (ER) is usually the right choice. But what about when it's not an emergency? Knowing your options may make a big difference in cost and time. If it's not an emergency, here are some ways you can get help:

- Contact your regular doctor, or visit an alternate care facility, such as a retail health clinic or urgent care center.
- Call 24/7 Nurseline at the number on the back of your ID card. A registered nurse can help you decide where to go.*

Learn the Difference Between Urgent Care Centers and Freestanding ERs — It Can Save You Money

Urgent care centers and freestanding ERs may be hard to tell apart. But freestanding ERs' costs may be higher, just as if you went to the ER at a hospital. Here are some ways to know if you are at a freestanding ER.

Freestanding ERs:

- Have 'Emergency' in their name
- Are not located at a hospital
- Can look like an urgent care center
- Are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- May charge the same copay as a hospital ER

For serious, life-threatening conditions, you need emergency care. Go to the nearest treatment facility or call 911 or your local emergency services.

Last Month's Events:

"National Pet Day Winner"

Sujei Rodriguez - \$25 Petco Gift Card



"Stress Awareness Seminar"

"Stress Awareness"
Last Month's Winner:

- Desi Olivarez – City of Mission Umbrella
- Kelly Smith – \$10.00 Target Gift Card

Upcoming Events:

Walking Program

Tuesdays and Thursdays
4:30PM at your designated facility

CPR Training

Wednesday, May 18, 2022
8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Central Fire Station

Health & Wellness Seminar

"Mental Health Awareness"

Thursday, May 19, 2022
2:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Via Zoom:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9904662781?pwd=SGVI L3JZRFVRdENzWXI5VUxFT1ZUQT09>

Let's Get Moving

LEVEL I 3 sets LEVEL II 5 sets LEVEL III 7 sets REST up to 2 minutes



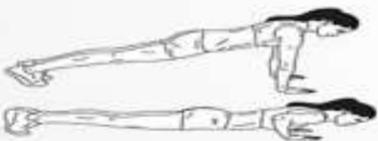
30 turning kicks



10 squats



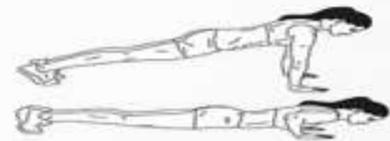
30 turning kicks



10 push-ups



30 punches



10 push-ups



10 crunch kicks



10 sit-up punches



10 sitting punches