

May: Mental Health Awareness Month

Becoming Mentally Healthy: A Guide for Older Adults

While there are many possible definitions, mentally healthy people can face challenges in a positive way, recover from setbacks, create and maintain good relationships, and find meaning in their lives. It is just as important for someone in their 70s to have good mental health as it is for someone in their 30s. Being older does not diminish the need for well being. Here are some steps to consider:

Take Care of Your Body

Your mental health and physical health are linked. For example, if you have cardiovascular disease or recently had heart surgery, you have an increased risk of depression. Depression itself has been associated with a number of medical conditions, including coronary artery disease (CAD).

So how can you help your body and mind? You can begin by looking at your sleep schedule. Your goal should be to get eight hours of shut-eye each night. If you are having any sleep problems, like difficulty falling asleep or not feeling refreshed when you wake up, talk to your doctor. Exercise is another important ingredient in your healthy lifestyle. Haven't exercised in a long time? Make an appointment with your doctor to find out what types of exercises are safe for you.

Healthy meals give your body the fuel it needs to function properly. You will not have the energy to exercise if you have a poor diet! The United States Department of Agriculture's *Choose MyPlate* recommends fruits and veggies, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, and low-sodium foods. If you are under- or overweight and need help with your diet, ask your doctor for a referral to a registered dietician. She can create a meal plan just for you.

Take Care of Your Mind

Your mind enjoys exercise too! You can challenge yourself by learning a new computer program, taking a watercolor class, or reading a classic novel. Explore your interests! If there is something you have always wanted to tackle, maybe now is a good time to try it.

Take Care of Your Relationships

Humans are meant to socialize. That does not change with age! Make time for your close family members and friends. While the moments you share can be as simple as getting a coffee together or taking a stroll in the park, the caring and support you provide each other make your life more meaningful.

Take Care of You

While your life may feel busy, try hard to set aside time to do activities that give you pleasure. If you are not sure how to fit in "you" time because of a packed schedule, remember that it is okay to decline an invitation, especially if you feel that you need some solitude and relaxation.

What If You Need Help?

If you ever feel concerned about your mental health, know that there is help available. It is a positive step for you to take care of yourself! Many people start by talking with their primary care doctor, who can make a referral to a therapist. There are also organizations online, like the Geriatric Mental Health Foundation, which provide contact information for therapists in your area.

Source: Rebecca J. Stahl, MA
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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: The Mental Health Center

Did you know that The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers a centralized point of access for mental health information and resources? Articles, statistics, blogs, podcasts, and general information on various mental health topics are available to the public. For more information navigate to the web link listed below.



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
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<http://cdc.gov/mentalhealth/>



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Mental Health Practitioners: Who's Who?

Psychiatrist (MD)

Psychiatrists are medical doctors who have specialized training to diagnosis and treat mental illnesses. They understand the body's functions and the complex relationship between emotional illness and other medical illnesses. Although they may sometimes practice some type of psychotherapy, particularly if they are in private practice, at the present time, most psychiatrists focus largely on prescribing medication for the treatment of mental disorders. A psychiatrist's training includes a bachelors degree, medical school, and four years of residency training in the field of psychiatry. Many psychiatrists get additional training so that they can specialize in areas such as child and adolescent psychiatry, geriatric psychiatry, and forensic psychiatry

Psychologist (PhD or PsyD)

Psychologists are mental health professionals who work in a variety of settings including clinics, hospitals, private practice, schools, and universities. Psychologists had a doctorate degree in psychology. Depending on their training and specialization, psychologists may assess and counsel people who have serious mental illnesses, assess and counsel people who are experiencing life transitions such as divorce, teach in a college or university, or conduct research on mental health issues.

Mental Health Counselor (MA, MS, NCC, CCMC)

Mental health counselors are therapists who are trained to diagnose and provide individual and group counseling. They often provide general psychotherapy. They work in community mental health centers, in group or private practices, or other settings. Mental health counselors have a masters degree (usually in clinical or counseling psychology) and several years of supervised clinical work experience.

Clinical Social Worker (CSW, MSW, LSW, LCSW)

Licensed social workers are mental health providers that deal with issues such as life events, family conflicts, violence, substance abuse, and disabilities. They not only offer psychotherapy, but also help patients find community care. Social workers have an advanced degree in social work that they obtain after they get a bachelors degree. They may practice in many areas such as community mental health centers, family services agencies, child welfare agencies, hospitals, schools, businesses, nursing homes, and private practice.

Source: Amy Scholten, MPH
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Mental Health Resources Online

There is plenty of content online for consumers to access to learn more about mental health. Many of these sites have information that can be downloaded and printed. The following organizations are good resources to visit:

- American Psychological Association - www.apa.org
- American Psychiatric Association - www.psych.org
- Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance - www.ndmda.org
- National Institute of Mental Health - www.nimh.nih.gov
- Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration <http://www.samhsa.gov/>
- National Alliance of Mental Illness - <http://www.nami.org/>
- International Mental Health Research Organization - <https://www.imhro.org/>
- Mental Health America - <http://www.nmha.org/>

Healthy Recipe: Pumpkin Spice Muffins

These tasty, low-fat muffins are a great snack idea.

Ingredients:

- 2 cups whole wheat flour or whole wheat pastry flour
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 Tbsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- ½ tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. cinnamon
- ¼ tsp. nutmeg
- 1 15-ounce can solid-pack pumpkin
- ½ cup raisins

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 375 F. Mix flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, and nutmeg in a large bowl. Add pumpkin, ½ cup of water, and raisins. Stir until just mixed. Spoon batter into oil-sprayed muffin cups, filling to just below the tops. Bake 25 to 30 minutes, until tops of muffins bounce back when pressed lightly. Remove from oven and let stand 5 minutes. Remove muffins from pan and cool on a rack. Store cooled muffins in an airtight container.

Nutrition Facts:

Serving Size 1 muffin. Yield is 10-12 servings.

Amount Per Serving

Calories 131	Calories from Fat 0.5 g
Sodium 236 mg	Carbohydrate 31 g
Protein 3 g	Fiber 4 g

Source: Healthways, Inc.
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