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Mental Health

01

Getting Past the Mental Health Stigma

Public perception about mental health has become much more positive in recent years, but some people still feel uncertain about seeking help. Whether you want to see a professional yourself, just have a few questions or are worried about attending an upcoming appointment, here are a few ways to put your mind at ease.

1 Know What to Expect

Don't fear the unknown! Speak with a friend who has sought help or do a little research on your own to understand what will happen at your first appointment.

2 Research Your Options

If you want to seek in-person help but don't know where to begin, simply search for mental health professionals near you or call your insurance provider. Next, eliminate anyone with an unrelated specialty until you have a list of professionals well-versed in your area of need. Finally, take the remaining names and look for online reviews that can point you in the right direction.

3 Check with Your Health Insurance

Your provider may offer affordable coverage for local assistance. Check your policy and see what's covered and available to you.

4 Join a Support Group

Support groups are a safe space to share your problems and a reminder that you aren't alone. If you need extra encouragement in a specific area, see if there's a group near you.

5 Call an Anonymous Help Line

Suicide help lines are the most well-known phone service for mental health, but there are additional help lines that focus on other topics. Call in and ask a few questions in a safe, stress-free space.



Monthly Activity

Find Your Purpose

What makes you feel happy and fulfilled? Are there goals you can set and changes you can make to feel that way more often?





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Mental Health Assistance

02

Finding In-Person and Online Mental Health Resources

Specific mental health assistance depends on your age, unique situation and personal and medical history. However, there are a number of terrific in-person and online resources that can point you in the right direction or help you learn more.

- Visit your family doctor. If you're comfortable sharing your troubles with your family doctor, they can help determine if there is a medical cause for your troubles and refer you to a specialist as necessary.
- Check your insurance policy and compile a list of eligible providers.
- Research local providers using the method described in the previous article.
- Call a help line. A good general resource is the Treatment Referral Helpline from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) at 1-800-662-HELP. The SAMHSA help line is a confidential, free, 24-hour-a-day, information service offered in English and Spanish. It is available to anyone facing mental and/or substance use disorders and provides referrals to local treatment facilities, support groups and community-based organizations. Callers can also order free publications and other information.



Psychologists and Psychiatrists and Therapists, Oh My

There are several different titles for mental health professionals. Here's what they mean:

Therapist

Therapist is a broad, general term that can apply to a counselor, psychologist or psychiatrist or other mental health worker.

Psychologists

Psychologists have advanced degrees in psychology (a PhD or PsyD) but do not have a medical degree. They are highly qualified to provide counseling but cannot prescribe medication in most states.

Psychiatrists

Psychiatrists have a medical degree and can prescribe medication. If counseling/therapy is also required, they may provide this themselves or refer you to a psychologist.

Licensed Mental Health Counselors

Licensed Mental Health Counselors have a master's degree in psychology, counseling or a related field. They must also have an additional two years of experience working with a qualified mental health professional after graduate school.

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Benefits of Yoga and Exercise on Your Health

03

The Big Health Benefits of Yoga

You shouldn't only worry about your mental health when you're in a state of crisis. Because it incorporates physical activity, breathing techniques and meditation, yoga is the perfect way to reduce your stress level while you get a little exercise!

Physical Health Benefits

- Increased flexibility
- Improved respiratory health and posture
- A decrease in chronic pain issues, such as lower back pain, arthritis, headaches and carpal tunnel syndrome
- Stronger muscles



Mental Health Benefits

- Reduced stress
- Improved focus and concentration
- Deeper sleep
- Slower, deeper rate of breathing (which creates a sense of calm)
- Raises self-awareness about your own body, leading to an increased focus on self-care





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Importance of Being Active Every Day

04

Sitting Down: It's an Epidemic

No matter what your intentions are, it can be difficult to avoid sitting. We sit during morning and evening commutes, while attending meetings and sending emails, and at home to relax or socialize. But even if your job keeps you tied to a desk most of the day, it's important to keep moving—a sedentary lifestyle has been linked to heart disease, diabetes, obesity, poor circulation, loss of muscle and hypertension and other health risks. Even worse, people who sit the majority of each day are at increased risk even if they exercise in the evening!

Monthly Activity

Get Active with Milestone Goals

Set incremental goals, track your progress and motivate yourself to become more active.



But that all sounds a little bleak. Let's stay motivated by focusing on the positive. You'll see huge health benefits when consistent activity is part of your daily routine!

1. **Exercise reduces stress** by increasing the amount of norepinephrine in your body, a chemical that helps moderate your brain's response to stress and difficult situations. (It's also a hard word to say three times really fast.)
2. **Exercise makes you less grouchy** by releasing mood-enhancing endorphins into your bloodstream.
3. **You boost your energy level all day long** by sending more oxygen and nutrients to your muscle tissues and enhancing your cardiovascular endurance.
4. **You sharpen your focus and improve your memory.** Exercise sends more oxygen to your brain than sitting around. In turn, that oxygen boosts production of cells in the hippocampus, aiding your ability to retain information.
5. **Lose weight** by simply adding steps or activity minutes to your day. Frequent short walks are a great complement to a balanced diet and high-intensity workouts, which can be more sporadic.





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Getting Family Involved

05

Keep Good Health in the Family

No matter what “family” means for you, spending time with people you care about—and who care about you in return—does wonders for your emotional health. Trust and companionship have been shown to boost happiness, provide a sense of purpose and discourage unhealthy lifestyle habits.

This feeling of togetherness is even more vital for children, who are still developing emotionally. Use time with your kids to keep them active, explore new interests, boost their social skills and teach them about some of your favorite things.

Unfortunately, daily life can be so busy it gets difficult to carve out time together. Use the tips below to follow through and spend more time with your family!

Step Away from the Screen

Watching a favorite show together is a healthy way to bond, but it's not the only way. Turn off the TV and video games and make a list of active ways to occupy your time together. Or you can simply play card games and enjoy each other's company—it's a lot easier to have a great conversation when you talk longer than the length of a commercial break.

Don't Make It a Spectacle

Family night will quickly become a stressful affair if you feel like you need to spend a lot of money or keep topping yourself. The time you spend together is the important thing, so search for free or inexpensive activities around town, or make use of games, toys and other items that you already own.

Make Specific Plans

“Let's do that sometime” means it's not likely to happen. Set concrete plans at specific times to get everyone involved and make sure family night happens on a regular basis. It's also a good idea to have a backup plan in case of poor weather or other unexpected complications.

Take Turns and Try New Things

Let everyone take turns picking games and activities. Your kids will develop their imagination and you all might discover a few new hobbies to enjoy!



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Stress Eating

06

Five Tips to Reduce Stress Eating

Busy schedules often lead to excess calories. It's easy to grab the most convenient option when you're running two hours behind schedule, but a little planning and focus can help you avoid binge eating:

1 Don't skip meals

Eat three meals every day. Between each meal, eat a healthy snack (fruit, cheese, almonds and/or vegetables) to maintain your energy and curb your appetite.

2 Eat until you are satisfied, not stuffed

Don't use stress as an excuse to overeat. Instead, use meal time as an opportunity to relax. Sit down, get comfortable, eat slowly and enjoy.

3 Plan your exercise schedule

Moderate to intense daily exercise reduces your stress level and sticking to a schedule helps you feel in control of your day. Even when you're at your busiest, plan ahead and find time for at least 10 to 15 minutes of activity each day.

4 Avoid high-calorie beverages

Alcoholic drinks and sugary sodas, juices and teas are high in calories and low in nutrition. Instead, try sparkling water or still water infused with your favorite fruits.

5 Don't revolve everything around food

Whenever you're in charge of planning an event with family and friends, try games and activities that aren't all about food.



Monthly Activity

Reduce Your Stress, Monitor Your Weight

Practice daily meditative breathing and weigh yourself each week.





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Plan Your Finances

07

Plan Ahead and Avoid Financial Stress

It's easy to let spending get out of hand when you're running from one place to another. But many of those extra costs—eating out, impulse buys, comfort purchases—can be reduced by planning ahead.

Plan Meals in Advance

Make sure you always have a quick, affordable homemade meal at the ready. Use a slow cooker, rely on healthy favorites like eggs and whole-wheat sandwiches, or freeze meals, soups and casseroles in advance to save yourself time and money!

Plan Your Daily Spending

Find time to quickly list all of your planned expenses each morning, then check your list against your actual expenses at night. If you are consistently off track, find out why and make a change to your routine.

Discover New Ways to Relax and Watch Your Entertainment Budget

It doesn't matter if you're buying clothes, music, a movie ticket or an in-app purchase—when you're stressed, spending money releases endorphins that make you feel good. Unfortunately, this impulse works against your budget. Instead of buying something new, make a list of free ways to relax. You could take a walk, watch or listen to something you already own, spend time with friends and family or check out a book from the library.

Let a Few Things Go

Reduce your stress by focusing on priorities that save you money. If you only have time to cook a homemade meal or tidy up the house, let the mess slide for a day and avoid the expense of ordering delivery. You can fold blankets and vacuum when you have more time!





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Over-Scheduling

08

How to Avoid Over-Scheduling

Rest might not be an “active” activity, but it’s just as important for your mental and emotional health. Use these tips to safeguard the downtime in your day.

Keep your calendar in your pocket.

Keep your calendar up to date in Gmail, Outlook or another calendar app you prefer to use and avoid accidentally double-booking yourself.

Build in “buffer time.”

Leave a little wiggle room in case things don’t go as planned. If you pack your schedule too tight and face heavy traffic in the morning, you may get behind and feel stressed all day long.

Be honest with yourself.

Do you really want to take on an additional task or responsibility, or do you just feel guilty about saying no?

Find a polite way to say no.

Sometimes you want to say no, but you’re not quite sure how. Practice a few quick, polite ways to decline an offer so you don’t say “yes” when you’re caught off guard.

Do a great job on one task instead of a mediocre job on three or four.

Avoid a multitasking meltdown.

Make sure you leave yourself enough time to properly focus on each task at hand. Do a great job on one task instead of a mediocre job on three or four.





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Recipe

09

Walnut Blueberry Energy Bites

Get a boost when you're on the go.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup lightly-toasted walnuts, chopped
- 1 cup whole-wheat pastry flour
- 1 cup uncooked oatmeal, regular or quick-cooking (not instant)
- ½ cup unsweetened shredded coconut
- ⅓ cup maple sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ⅛ teaspoon ground cardamom
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup dried blueberries
- ¼ cup maple syrup
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 2 teaspoons boiling water

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a large mixing bowl, combine the walnuts, flour, oatmeal, coconut, maple sugar, cinnamon, cardamom and salt. Stir with a fork or whisk until completely mixed. Add the blueberries and stir to combine. Set aside.
2. Heat two tablespoons of water to boiling in a pan. As the water boils, combine the maple syrup, olive oil and butter in a small saucepan. Place over medium heat and stir until the butter melts.
3. While the butter is melting, combine the baking soda and boiling water in a small bowl. Once dissolved, pour the contents of the bowl into the syrup mixture and stir to blend; it will become very bubbly.
4. Pour the mixture into the dry ingredients and stir vigorously to combine.
5. Using a tablespoon and your hands, scoop up pieces of dough and press them into walnut-sized balls. Place about 2 inches apart on cookie sheets lined with parchment paper. With your fingers or the palm of your hand, flatten each ball slightly into a puck shape.
6. Bake 10-12 minutes at 350 degrees F., until the cookies have spread slightly and are golden brown around the edges. Cool five minutes on the pan; then transfer the cookies to a rack to cool completely. Store in an airtight container.

Total Time (Cook and Prep):

35 minutes

Servings: 24



NUTRITION INFO

(per serving)

294 calories

12 g fat

107 mg cholesterol

539 mg sodium

8 g carbohydrates

3 g fiber

41 g protein