

10 tips to stay mentally healthy

Enjoying mental health means having a sense of wellbeing, being able to function during everyday life and feeling confident to rise to a challenge when the opportunity arises. Just like your physical health, there are actions you can take to increase your mental health. Boost your wellbeing and stay mentally healthy by following a few simple steps.

1. **Connect with others.** Develop and maintain strong relationships with people around you who will support and enrich your life. The quality of our personal relationships has a great effect on our wellbeing. Putting time and effort into building strong relationships can bring great rewards.
2. **Take time to enjoy.** Set aside time for activities, hobbies and projects you enjoy. Let yourself be spontaneous and creative when the urge takes you. Do a crossword; take a walk in your local park; read a book; sew a quilt; draw pictures with your kids; play with your pets – whatever takes your fancy.
3. **Participate and share interests.** Join a club or group of people who share your interests. Being part of a group of people with a common interest provides a sense of belonging and is good for your mental health. Join a sports club; a band; an evening walking group; a dance class; a theatre or choir group; a book or car club.
4. **Contribute to your community.** Volunteer your time for a cause or issue that you care about. Help out a neighbour, work in a community garden or do something nice for a friend. There are many great ways to contribute that can help you feel good about yourself and your place in the world. An effort to improve the lives of others is sure to improve your life too.
5. **Take care of yourself.** Be active and eat well – these help maintain a healthy body. Physical and mental health are closely linked; it's easier to feel good about life if your body feels good. You don't have to go to the gym to exercise – gardening, vacuuming, dancing and bushwalking all count. Combine physical activity with a balanced diet to nourish your body and mind and keep you feeling good, inside and out.
6. **Challenge yourself.** Learn a new skill or take on a challenge to meet a goal. You could take on something different at work; commit to a fitness goal or learn to cook a new recipe. Learning improves your mental fitness, while striving to meet your own goals builds skills and confidence and gives you a sense of progress and achievement.
7. **Deal with stress.** Be aware of what triggers your stress and how you react. You may be able to avoid some of the triggers and learn to prepare for or manage others. Stress is a part of life and affects people in different ways. It only becomes a problem when it makes you feel uncomfortable or distressed. A balanced lifestyle can help you manage stress better. If you have trouble winding down, you may find that relaxation breathing, yoga or meditation can help.
8. **Rest and refresh.** Get plenty of sleep. Go to bed at a regular time each day and practice good habits to get better sleep. Sleep restores both your mind and body. However, feelings of fatigue can still set in if you feel constantly rushed and overwhelmed when you are awake. Allow yourself some unfocussed time each day to refresh; for example, let your mind wander, daydream or simply watch the clouds go by for a while. It's OK to add 'do nothing' to your to-do list!

9. **Notice the here and now.** Take a moment to notice each of your senses each day. Simply 'be' in the moment – feel the sun and wind on your face and notice the air you are breathing. It's easy to be caught up thinking about the past or planning for the future instead of experiencing the present. Practising mindfulness, by focusing your attention on being in the moment, is a good way to do this. Making a conscious effort to be aware of your inner and outer world is important for your mental health.
10. **Ask for help.** This can be as simple as asking a friend to babysit while you have some time out or speaking to your doctor (GP) about where to find a counsellor or community mental health service. The perfect, worry-free life does not exist. Everyone's life journey has bumpy bits and the people around you can help. If you don't get the help you need first off, keep asking until you do.

If at any time you are worried about your mental health or the mental health of a loved one call Lifeline 13 11 14.

To find a mental health service, search under 'mental health' in the Better Health Channel's Health Services Directory.

For information about volunteering, go to Victoria's Volunteering Portal.

This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:

DH - HSP&A - Mental Health

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