



Live Well, Work Well

May 2025

Boosting Your Mental Health Daily

Mental Health Awareness Month is observed every May to help break the stigma and support people living with mental health conditions. Mental illness refers to a range of diagnosed conditions that affect a person's mood, behavior, feelings, thinking and, ultimately, ability to function in daily life. Millions of Americans live with serious mental disorders, such as anxiety, major depression and bipolar disorder.

Half of people in the United States will be diagnosed with a mental disorder at some point in their lifetime.

Mental health plays a huge role in your overall health and well-being. It affects everything, including how you think, feel and act, and helps determine how you make healthy choices and cope with stress. Mental health is always there; your state continually changes depending on resources and challenges. Focusing on maintaining or improving your mental health is important, so here are five ways to boost your mental health on a daily basis:

1. **Express gratitude.** Taking five minutes daily to write down the things you are grateful for has been proven to lower stress levels and help you achieve a more positive mindset.

2. **Be kind.** Helping others and being kind not only helps the recipient but can also benefit your mental health. Simply holding the door for someone or giving a compliment can go a long way.
3. **Get moving.** Exercising regularly can benefit your brain function, reduce anxiety and improve your self-image.
4. **Get a good night's sleep.** Fatigued individuals typically experience drowsiness, mood changes, loss of energy and appetite, headaches, and a lack of motivation, concentration and alertness. Strive for seven to eight hours of quality sleep a night.
5. **Spend time outdoors.** Getting outside, especially when it's sunny, can greatly improve your mood and ability to focus.

Seek help from your primary care doctor or a mental health professional if you're concerned about your mental health. If you need mental health-related crisis support or are worried about someone else, the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline is available by calling or texting 988 and chatting online at 988lifeline.org.

Spring Clean Your Routine

Spring isn't just for cleaning out your closet. It's also a great time to refresh your mind and body. It's important to check in on yourself regularly; a routine refresh can help you avoid illness, reduce stress and feel in control. Consider the following ways to freshen up your daily routine this spring:

- **Assess your current routine.** The first step in spring cleaning your routine is to take stock of your current habits and activities. Are there tasks or commitments that no longer serve you? Are there areas where you feel overwhelmed or stressed?
- **Declutter your home.** No clothing, equipment or other belongings are off-limits, so get rid of items you don't use anymore.
- **Create space for self-care.** Prioritize self-care activities or take a few moments each day to relax and recharge. You can better manage stress and improve your overall well-being by carving out time for the activities you enjoy.

Reducing Processed Food in Your Diet

Processed foods have become a staple in American diets due to their convenience, taste, affordability and long shelf life. Yet, an increasing number of health experts are warning of the concerning impacts of these foods. A diet largely consisting of processed food can lead to chronic diseases, mental health issues and even early death.

Consider the following tips to remove ultra-processed food from your diet:

- Read the label, checking for high amounts of additives, preservatives, sulfites, saturated and trans fats, and added sugar and salt.

- **Reset your recipes with seasonal produce and other ingredients.** Spring produce includes vegetables like asparagus, artichokes, radishes, rhubarb and peas, as well as fruits like strawberries. In-season produce is picked at the peak of their freshness and nutritional value, packed with essential vitamins, minerals and antioxidants that boost the immune system.
- **Establish healthy habits.** For example, you could commit to a regular sleep schedule or incorporate more movement into your day.

Refreshing your routine can have a profound impact on your mental health. It can help you reduce stress, increase feelings of control and improve overall well-being. Start spring cleaning your routine today to create one that supports your mental health and enables you to thrive in spring and beyond.

- Shop the perimeter of the grocery store and buy whole foods like fruits and vegetables.
- Have healthy snacks on hand.
- Swap refined grains—such as white pasta, rice and bread—for whole-grain options.
- Cook meals at home and prep ahead of time.
- Avoid processed meat (e.g., sausage, hot dogs and lunch meat).

Cutting highly processed items out entirely can be difficult, so start with these small steps. Before making dietary changes, consult your doctor.

Recipe of the Month

Strawberry Mango Feta Toast Points

Makes: 4 servings

Ingredients

- 1 mango, ripe (divided)
- 2 cups strawberries (divided)
- ½ cup fat-free feta cheese crumbles
- 2 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar
- 1 cup basil leaves (plus 2 Tbsp. for topping)
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 4 slices whole wheat bread

Nutritional Information

(per serving)

Total calories	240
Total fat	8 g
Protein	17 g
Sodium	390 mg
Carbohydrate	33 g
Dietary fiber	5 g
Saturated fat	2 g
Total sugars	17 g

Source: MyPlate

Preparations

1. Peel and pit the mango. Dice $\frac{3}{4}$ of the mango and $\frac{3}{4}$ of the strawberries; place in a large bowl with feta cheese. Put the remaining fruit, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup basil, vinegar and oil in a blender and blend.
2. Pour the blended vinaigrette over the fruit-feta mix and toss gently.
3. Chop the remaining basil leaves.
4. Toast the bread slices and cut each slice diagonally.
5. Top the toast points with the dressed fruit-feta mix and chopped basil.



MENTAL HEALTH MINUTE

MAY 2025

It's OK Not to Be OK

Mental Health Awareness Month, observed every May, serves as a crucial reminder that mental health is just as important as physical health. This national health observance is meant to raise awareness, reduce stigma and encourage individuals to seek help when needed.

More than half of adults in the United States will experience mental illness—which refers to a variety of diagnosed conditions that affect one's mood, behavior, feelings or thinking—at some point in their lives. Mental illnesses can occur occasionally, while others are chronic. The most common mental illnesses include anxiety disorder, major depression and bipolar disorder. However, roughly half of adults with mental illness in the United States don't receive the treatment they need.

Common barriers to receiving treatment include the high costs of and difficulty accessing mental health care, mental health professional shortages, and the stigma associated with mental health. When left untreated, mental health conditions can affect a person's ability to manage both work and personal responsibilities.

You Are Not Alone

Mental health conditions are common, real and often treatable. Seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness, so consider the following ways to gain mental health support:

- **Talk to someone you trust**—a friend, mentor or family member—and share your feelings.
- **Use confidential 24/7 hotlines** for immediate support. The SAMHSA's National Helpline (1-800-662-HELP [4357]) is a treatment referral and information service. You can also call or text 988 for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline for yourself or others experiencing a mental health crisis.
- **Join support groups** to gain a sense of community and understanding.
- **Practice self-care activities**, such as exercise, healthy eating, quality sleep, mindfulness and hobbies.
- **Seek professional help** from therapists, psychologists and psychiatrists to navigate mental health challenges.

Most people experience mental health challenges at some point, and seeking help is a courageous—and critical—step toward recovery.

4 Reasons Why Reading Is Good For Your Brain

Reading is often considered a leisurely activity, but its benefits extend beyond entertainment. Daily reading can significantly impact mental health by enhancing cognitive function, reducing stress and fostering emotional well-being. Some health practitioners even pursue bibliotherapy—books used as a therapeutic tool—to support and treat individuals living with anxiety, depression and grief.

Here are four reasons why incorporating reading into your daily routine helps your brain:

1. **Cognitive stimulation**—Regular readers are more likely to maintain their cognitive ability as they age.
2. **Stress reduction**—Reading for as little as six minutes can reduce stress by 68%. It can also be a healthy escape from daily stressors. You immerse yourself in a new world and, without visuals, can invent or visualize it yourself.
3. **Improved focus**—Reading requires concentration and attention to detail, which can improve one's general ability to focus on tasks.
4. **Social skill development**—Frequent fiction readers often have better social ability and can easily empathize with others.

While it's clear that reading is beneficial, mental illness may impact one's ability to read. If that's the case, here are some tips for improving your relationship with reading:

- **Listen to audiobooks.** Yes, listening to a book counts. Many people find it easier to process auditory words versus written words.
- **Select books you like.** Don't give in to pressure to read classic or new releases that people are talking about. Read the genres you actually enjoy. This can also keep you motivated.
- **Read short formats.** If an entire book feels intimidating, opt for short stories, magazines or even interesting articles. Experiment with different formats to find what you like best.
- **Don't pressure yourself.** If your identity feels tied to reading or you're worried about reading goals, let that self-imposed pressure go and focus on other hobbies that bring you joy.

Making reading a daily habit can yield many cognitive and emotional benefits. For further guidance, contact a mental health professional.



Take Charge of Your Health



Practice Cozy Self-care

Maintaining your mental health is an essential component of overall good health. One of the best ways to take care of your mental health is to practice self-care, which includes taking time to do things that bring you happiness and improve your mood. The latest self-care trend is cozy maximalism, or “cozymaxxing,” which focuses on relaxing and comforting rituals to promote stress relief. Cozymaxxing can help you feel in control and give you something to look forward to.

While self-care looks different for everyone, here are a few tips to get started with cozymaxxing:



Create a cozy space. Designate a spot in your home where you can unwind. Add soft blankets, plush pillows and layered lighting to make it inviting. Personal touches like photos, artwork or sentimental items can help make the space feel uniquely yours.



Wear comfortable clothing. Choose soft, loose-fitting clothes like pajamas, sweatpants and cozy socks. Flannel and fleece materials can also encourage relaxation.



Indulge in comfort food. Treat yourself to your favorite comfort foods—homemade or takeout—and pair them with your favorite beverage. If you’d rather relax with a warm mug in your hands, fill it with coffee, tea or hot chocolate.



Engage in relaxing activities. Read a book, do a puzzle, watch your TV shows, listen to music or practice hobbies that you find relaxing. Mindfulness activities, such as meditation and deep breathing exercises, can also help you stay present and relaxed.



Use aromatherapy. Scented candles, incense and essential oils can create a soothing atmosphere. Try to incorporate calming scents like vanilla, lavender or cedarwood.