

Top Tips for Good Mental Health

According to UK national statistics, around one in four people will experience mental health problems at some point in their life. [1] With figures like these, it is important to know what you can do to prevent mental ill health, and the steps you can take if you or someone you know does fall ill.



1. Communicate

By talking to others, you can often get a new perspective on your problems. Sharing your problems and articulating how you feel will help you think more clearly about situations. The person you speak to may have practical suggestions about what you can do, such as breaking down the problem into separate, more manageable pieces or suggesting where you could go for further help or support. If you know someone who is suffering, the best help you can give is simply to encourage them to talk and then listen in a supportive way. Try not to interrupt too much and don't feel that you have to give advice or try to solve their problems for them but do point them in the direction of appropriate help if necessary.

2. Write it Down

As mentioned above, simply putting your problem into words can help you think more clearly about it. However, if you find the thought of speaking to someone a little off-putting, many support organizations offer email helplines so you can write about what is troubling you instead.

3. Connect

Your relationships with other people have a massive impact on how you feel. A phone call, a couple of emails or a few text messages can help you feel connected to others and regular social contact will help lift you if you are feeling depressed. However, the thought of making a telephone call or writing an email can be incredibly hard if you are feeling down. If you know someone is feeling low, a phone call, email or text message from you is a quick and easy way to boost their spirits.

If you want to meet new people but don't know how, think about taking up a new hobby or doing some voluntary work. Research has found that people are often happiest when helping others so volunteering or performing acts of kindness will improve your mood and boost your self-esteem.

4. Watch Your Diet

A healthy and balanced diet, packed with fresh fruit, vegetables, protein and complex carbohydrates is essential for good mental health. Avoid too much alcohol as it can contribute to depression and will also prevent you from getting a good night's sleep. In addition, drinks containing caffeine can cause agitation, making it hard to relax. Try cutting down on tea, coffee, cola and energy drinks to improve your mental health.

5. Exercise Regularly

Exercise does not have to be vigorous – even just half an hour's walk a day can make a difference to your mental wellbeing, as physical activity releases endorphins and other mood-enhancing chemicals into your brain. Find a form of exercise that suits you and build it into your daily routine.

6. Change Your Scenery

If you are feeling anxious or low it is easy to get stuck in a rut. A simple way to improve your mood is to have a change of scenery. Moving to a different room or going out for a walk will help to clear your head and get rid of negative thoughts. Spending time outdoors is calming, and exposure to the full spectrum of light found outdoors during the daytime will help you sleep better and will ward off Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) and the 'winter blues'. If it is difficult for you to spend time outside, consider investing in a light therapy box, which provides the same benefits as being outside in the daylight.

7. Rest and Relax

Sleep deprivation will make you tired, stressed and run down, and prone to mental health problems. Develop a regular sleep routine by going to bed and waking at the same time every day. Aim for at least eight hours sleep every night.

8. Lower Your Personal Stress Levels

If you're not sleeping well or are ill-tempered, have difficulty concentrating, or if you are anxious or worrying a lot then you are probably suffering from stress. Review your responsibilities and decide what you could do to remove or reduce the sources of pressure in your life, such as delegating more of your workload or splitting up goals into more realistic and manageable chunks. Meanwhile, deal with the consequences of stress by devoting more time to relaxing and/or using positive coping techniques such as meditation.

If someone you know is suffering from stress, establish the reasons behind the problem and consider what action you could take to improve the situation, e.g. if they feel overwhelmed by their workload, assign some of their duties to another team member or consider job sharing. If they are spending too much time in the office, consider implementing a flexible or home-working policy.

9. Ask for Help

Everyone feels low, anxious or unable to cope occasionally, it's perfectly normal, so if you need help, don't be afraid to ask for it. Seeking help as soon as you realize that you have a problem is the best thing you can do to prevent it from getting worse. Speak to your GP and/or get in touch with a professional organization and find out as much as you can about the problem and potential solutions, then you'll be able to decide on the best way forward for you.

If someone you know has just been diagnosed with a mental illness you may be unsure about how you can help. Increasing your knowledge by learning more about the illness from books, the internet and from mental health organizations will put you in a better position to support that person.

Further Information

- [Mind](#): 0300 123 3393
- [Samaritans](#): 116 123
- [Sane](#): 0300 304 7000
- [NHS](#): 111

References

[1] Mental Health Foundation, 'Mental Health Statistics - UK and Worldwide'. Available at: www.mentalhealth.org.uk/information/mental-health-overview/statistics/ (accessed 22 June 2022).