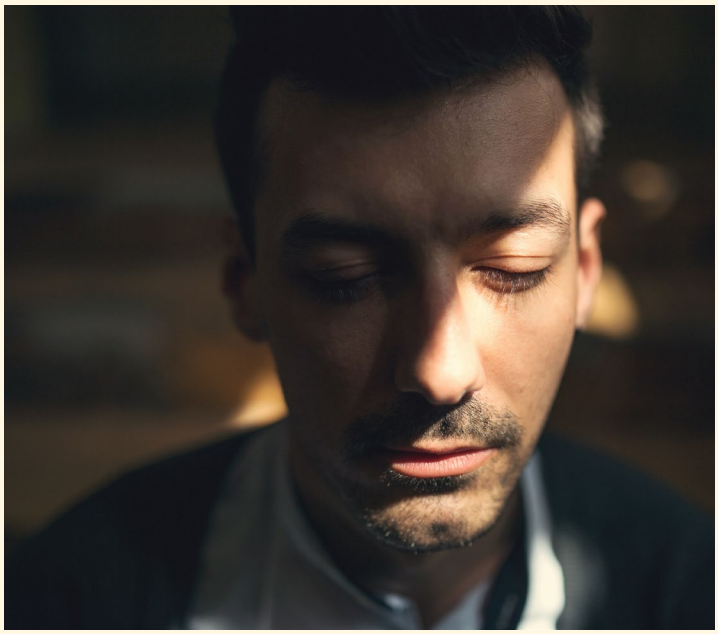
Taking care of your mental health: What you need to know

Mental health challenges are common in the United States with an estimated 52.9 million—or 1 in 5—of Americans aged 18 or older living with a mental health problem.[1]

What is mental health?

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Our mental health can affect our overall health and quality of life including the way we act, how we think or feel, handle everyday stresses, and make choices.

We all fall somewhere within in the below spectrum, and at times will find our reserve, resiliency, and coping skills tested by difficult events like a new medical diagnosis, death of a loved one, accumulation of stress, or relationship conflict. Investing in yourself on a regular basis beyond a weekend recharge will benefit you, and your loved ones, over the coming seasons of life. It is also important to recognize when that may not be enough, and it's time to seek additional support.



Healthy: Normal functioning

Mental Distress: Common and reversible distress

Mental Health Problem: Significant functional impairment

In Crisis or Illness: Severe or persistent functional impairment

Source: Mental Health Models. https://opentextbc.ca/capacitytoconnect/chapter/mental-health-models/. Retrieved March 2, 2023

Warning signs of a mental health problem

Experiencing a mental health issue at some point in our lifetime is not unusual. Some warning signs that you or a loved one may be experiencing a mental health issue can be:

- Feeling sad
- Trouble concentrating
- Difficulty sleeping, chronic fatigue or low energy
- Changes in appetite that cause unwanted weight gain or loss
- Increased use of alcohol, drugs, or tobacco
- Pulling away from, or arguing with, family and friends
- Loss of interest in hobbies, or things your find enjoyable
- Inability to cope with daily life, or getting out of bed
- Thoughts of harming yourself, or someone else

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, you should seek professional help if you have been experiencing severe symptoms for two weeks or more;

Of course, you don't have to be in crisis to seek help. If problems you are facing are affecting your mental health or overall well-being, seeking professional help can make a difference.

For more information on warning signs of a mental health issue, visit MentalHealth.gov.

Ways self-care can support your mental health

Self-care can play a pivotal role in helping you maintain your mental health or assist in your treatment and recovery if you are living with a mental illness. Practicing self-care includes any steps you take to nurture your physical and emotional health, to the best of your ability. Check out the suggestions below for ways to practice self-care.



How to practice self-care

Connect with family and friends. Positive, healthy relationships are import to our mental and physical well-being. Make time to call, text or meet up with loved ones.

Exercise regularly. Even just a daily walk outside can help improve your mood and health.

Eat a healthy diet. Maintaining a balanced diet will help energy levels and ability to focus.

Relax. Try a wellness app like Calm, meditate, or practice yoga.

Get good sleep. Make your sleep schedule a priority and limit electronic device use before bed.

Have a routine. Setting a schedule for work, rest, self-care, etc. will help with efficient time management, and feelings of stability.

Practice gratitude. Write down things you are grateful for and remind yourself of them daily.

Find a hobby. Making time for things you enjoy, like reading, dancing, or painting can boost your mood.



What's the difference between mental health specialists?

There are different types of mental health professionals who can help you cope or recover from your mental health problem, depending on your situation. Mental health professionals work in both inpatient facility settings, like hospitals or psychiatric facilities, as well as in an outpatient capacity, like private practice. Mental health professionals include:

- Psychologists
- Therapists and counselors
- Clinical social workers
- Psychiatrists

Choosing the right professional for your needs can be easier when you understand the difference between the types of providers. To learn more about the different types of mental health professionals visit the Types of Mental Health Professionals webpage at NAMI.org.

Though it is best to work with a mental health professional for a mental health issue, your primary care physician (PCP) can be a good place to start when seeking treatment. Your PCP and mental health professional can work together to help determine your treatment plan.

Source: Types of Mental Health Professionals. https://www.nami.org/About-Mental-Illness/Treatments/Types-of-Mental-Health-Professionals. Retrieved March 3, 2023.

Source: What Are the Different Types of Mental Health Professionals? https://psychcentral.com/lib/types-of-mental-health-professionals. Retrieved March 3, 2023.



If you are facing a mental health problem or have been diagnosed with a mental health illness it's important to know you have benefits that can help. Health Navigator, powered by PinnacleCare, can help you locate a mental health professional, facilitate appointments for evaluation and treatment, and answer any questions you may have regarding your situation.

Contact a Health Navigator Care Advisor for support for your mental health care or any other health-related need.

Visit **sunlife.com/healthnav**, or call **888-352-4969**. Representatives are available Monday – Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. (ET)

1. Statistics. https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness. Retrieved March 2, 2023.

2. The Most Common Mental Illnesses in the United States. https://advancedpsychiatryassociates.com/resources/blog/most-common-mental-illnesses/. Retrieved March 3, 2023

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