Live Well, Work Well

May 2025

Boosting Your Mental Health Daily

Risk Strategy Solutions

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.
- **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.

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.
- 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.

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

Preparations

1. Peel and pit the mango. Dice ¾ of the mango and ¾ of the strawberries; place in a large bowl with feta cheese. Put the remaining fruit, ¼ 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.

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

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