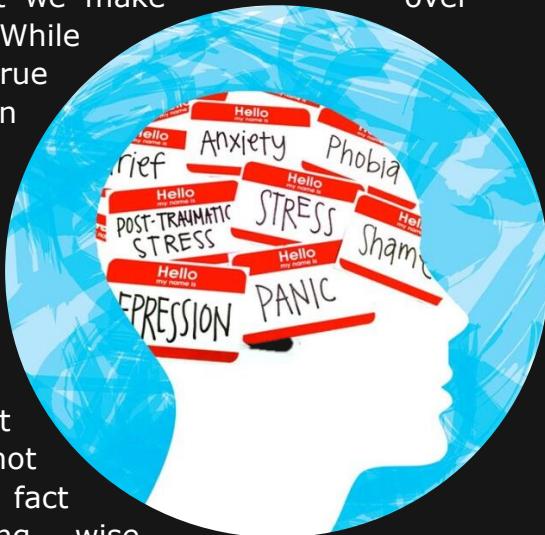


# Caring For Your Mental Health

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Everyone desires to be healthy physically, but good health does not occur overnight or by accident. It is the result of a series of small everyday choices that we make over a lifetime. While it may be true that one can make healthy choices daily and still get sick for one reason or another, it does not negate the fact that making wise daily healthy choices makes a tremendous impact on our quality of life.



What is true of our physical health is also true of our mental health. Small and consistent daily choices contribute to our overall mental health over time. Making good choices contributes to a healthy mind, while consistently making poor choices impairs our mental health.

Below are 14 little things you can do daily to improve and maintain good mental health over time. While they do not guarantee that things will not happen outside your control or that you may never be sad or depressed, they do increase your resiliency, ability to cope and overall mental health. Build these pointers into your daily living for a happier, more peaceful and healthier you. The list is by no means exhaustive, but it is a good place to begin.

## 1. Get Adequate Sleep.



Sleep is vital for brain health and the brain plays a dominant role in good mental health. Sleep deprivation makes us moody and irritable, and impairs brain functions such as memory and decision-making. It also negatively impacts the rest of the body – it impairs the functioning of the immune system, for example, making us more susceptible to infection.

## 2. Eat balanced meals.

A poor diet influences the brain and can increase the risk for mental disorders and neurodegenerative diseases. So to maintain good mental health we should eat healthily.

## 3. Read a good book.

Reading is exercise for the mind. Reading a good book serves as a distraction and provides new perspectives. Poor mental health hygiene often results from getting stuck in the same old patterns of thinking. Reading helps.

## 4. Engage with friends.

Friendships have a huge impact on your mental health and happiness. Good friends relieve stress, provide comfort and joy, and prevent loneliness and isolation. Friends bring more happiness into our

lives than virtually anything else. Developing close friendships can also have a powerful impact on your physical health.

## 5. Exercise regularly.



Few things have been shown to be better for good mental health than 30 minutes of cardiovascular exercise at least three times per week. People who exercise regularly have better mental health and emotional wellbeing, and lower rates of mental illness. Exercise not only boosts our mood, concentration and alertness, but improves our cardiovascular and overall physical health.

Exercise doesn't have to be strenuous, structured or take a long time to have benefits. Moderate intensity exercise is enough to make a difference in terms of your mood and thinking patterns. However, any exercise is better than none. Going for a leisurely walk, or activities like stretching, can also have huge benefits on your mind and body. Even doing housework like sweeping, mopping, or vacuuming can give you a mild work out.

**6. Laugh** – “A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones,” Proverbs 17:22. Have you noticed how good it

feels to laugh hard? It's therapeutic. Laughter is an important part of mental health. We have a hard time bearing up under the demands of everyday life when everything is serious all the time.

## 7. Look for Reasons to Say “Thank You” –

There is a direct correlation between how often you say “thank you” and whether you are focused on the good or hard things in your life. Gratitude may be one of the most significant dispositional qualities that influence our mental health.

## 8. Pray and worship –

What do you do with the hard things? Pray. Gratitude doesn't mean we ignore the hard parts of our life. When we see the good things God is doing in our lives, we are more prone to bring him the hard things with the confidence that comes from knowing He cares. Life is overwhelming. It is easy to be awed by all that is required to live for 80 years. Worship is a time when we are awed by the right things; how much God loves us, God's continual presence, God's greatness as revealed in creation, etc.



**9. Meditate on Scripture** – The content of our thinking has a significant impact on our mental health.

When we meditate on lies and insecurities, it negatively impacts our mental health. When we meditate on the timeless truths and character of God found in the Bible, it positively impacts our mental health.

**10. Forgive** – When we refuse to forgive we insist on carrying the weight of bitterness. Is it fair? No. Unforgiveness is not healthy either. Forgiveness is actually a form of self-care. It means you are committing to release your hurt, fears, bitterness and other emotions and when you do you become a healthier, happier person.

**11. Regularly Attend Church** – People were created for community. In our westernized culture we have too individualized our mental health. Isolation, or only surface relationships, are a negative influence on our mental health. Church is a place for deep fellowship, reinforcing other spiritual habits mentioned above, and being reminded that we are all broken and in need of the same Saviour.

## 12. Get Outside



Spending time outdoors can boost physical and mental health

in a range of ways. You don't have to spend hours at a time outside before those benefits kick in, either. According to a 2019 study, Trusted Source, that included data from 19,806 participants, spending at least 120 minutes in nature per week can significantly boost health and well-being. You can go for a 2-hour chunk all at once, or break it up into smaller daily segments — the benefits still hold. Even without any greenery around, spending time in sunlight and fresh air may help you feel better in mind and body. Get outside in the sunshine. Walk. Experience God's creation.

**13. Improve Your Posture** – The body influences the mind. Facial expressions influence mood. Body posture impacts attitude. Slouched shoulders and droopy demeanor both reveal and cultivate a down mood. A straight back, solid eye contact and intentional movement both reveal and cultivate confidence.

**14. Learn Something New** – A growing mind is healthier than a stagnant mind. Learning is like cardio for the brain; new neural connections are forming and existing connections are being strengthened. As you learn, you also give yourself more fruitful things with which to engage your thought life.