

FOREWARD

Welcome to our 69th Mental Health Month! I hope you enjoy and share widely our brand-new 2018 Mental Health Month toolkit.

Launched in 1949 by Mental Health America, *May is Mental Health Month* is the most highly recognized mental health awareness event in the nation. While many organizations create their own mental health month materials, many thousands more choose to use our official *May is Mental Health Month* materials. They reach millions of people with messages of health, wellness, prevention, and recovery.

This year, our theme is *Fitness #4Mind4Body*. It tracks closely with the *Fit for the Future* theme of our June 2018 conference. During the month of May, we'll focus on what we as individuals can do to be fit for our own futures – no matter where we happen to be on our own personal journeys to health and wellness.

In this year's toolkit, you will find a range of materials, including:

- Fact sheets on mental health is affected by diet, sleep, stress, gut health, and exercise;
- Worksheets on making life changes;
- A promotional poster, sample social media posts with images, and web banners;
- A sample press release and a drop-in article; and a sample proclamation for public officials to recognize May as Mental Health Month and the work of local mental health advocates.

When we talk about health, we can't just focus on heart health, or liver health, or brain health, and not whole health. You have to see the whole person, and make use of the tools and resources that benefit minds and bodies together. That's why this toolkit for everyone, whether or not they have a mental health concern. And if they do, it will give them tools to enhance recovery at any stage of the disease process – and, most especially, before Stage 4.

These tools connect to other MHA resources, too. If you are taking steps to live a healthy lifestyle but still feel like you are struggling with your mental health, visit www.mhascreening.org to check your symptoms. It's free, confidential, and anonymous. Once you have your results, we now give you customized information especially for you, to help you find tools and resources to feel better.

Also, join MHA this May as we challenge ourselves each day to make small changes – both physically and mentally – to create huge gains for our overall fitness. Visit www.bit.ly/MHACHallenge or follow us on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram for the challenge of the day and share your successes with us by posting with #4mind4body!

Finally, let us know what you think. We listen to your feedback, and are always looking for ways to make our *May is Mental Health Month* materials as impactful as possible.



Paul Gionfriddo
President and CEO



INTRODUCTION

The theme for May is Mental Health Month in 2018 is Fitness #4Mind4Body. Information will focus on increasing understanding of how the body's various systems impact mental health based on recent research. From food to fitness to gut flora, we will be diving into the elements that make up personal wellness.

This May, MHA is calling on individuals to join us as we challenge ourselves to make small changes - both mentally and physically - to create huge gains for our overall health. A daily challenge will be posted online on MHA's website and across our social media networks. We're asking for people to share their participation and progress by posting on social media with #4mind4body.

By using the toolkit materials, you will help members of your community:

- Understand how the health of the body impacts the health of the mind and vice versa;
- Start talking about mental health B4Stage4;
- Assess their own mental health through use of MHA's screening tools; and
- Take actions to improve their overall health through the #4mind4body Challenge by tagging social media posts with #4mind4body, or uploading content directly to MHA's website.

This year's toolkit includes:

Media Materials

- Key Messages
- Sample Press Release
- Drop-In Article
- May is Mental Health Month Proclamation

Social Media and Web Components

- Sample Facebook and Twitter Posts
- Facebook Profile, Cover, and Shareable Images
- Twitter Profile, Header, and Shareable Images
- Instagram Profile and Shareable Images
- Call to Action Buttons for Screening and the #4mind4body Challenge
- Horizontal Banner Image
- Vertical Banner Image

Fact Sheets and Handouts

- Fact Sheet: Diet and Nutrition
- Fact Sheet: Exercise
- Fact Sheet: The Gut-Brain Connection
- Fact Sheet: Sleep
- Fact Sheet: Stress
- May is Mental Health Month #4mind4body ChallengePoster
- Worksheets to help guide lifestyle changes

QUESTIONS?

If you have further questions about Mental Health Month, please contact Danielle Fritze, Senior Director of Public Education and Visual Communications at dfritze@mentalhealthamerica.net.

KEY MESSAGES

- Mental health is essential to everyone's overall health and well-being, and mental illnesses are common and treatable.
- So much of what we do physically impacts us mentally. Paying attention to both your physical health and your mental health can help you achieve overall wellness and set you on a path to recovery.
- A healthy lifestyle can help to prevent the onset or worsening of mental health conditions, as well as heart disease, diabetes, obesity and other chronic health problems. It can also help people recover from these conditions. Taking good care of your body is part of a Before Stage Four approach to mental health.
- Eating healthy foods, managing stress, exercising, and getting enough sleep can go a long way in making you both physically and mentally healthy.
- Getting the appropriate amount of exercise benefits nearly all aspects of a person's health. Not only does exercise help control weight, it also improves mental health, and chances of living longer and healthier.
- Recent research is connecting your gut health with your mental health. So, when it comes to diet and nutrition, it's all about finding the right balance of nutrients to benefit both the mind and body.
- Sleep plays a role in all aspects of our life and overall health. Getting a good night's sleep is important to having enough physical and mental energy to take on daily responsibilities.
- Stress has a huge impact on our lives and can make even day-to-day life difficult. Research shows that stress is closely linked to high blood pressure, heart disease and obesity. It also shows that people who feel depressed or chronically stressed may have a greater risk of physical illnesses.
- Living a healthy lifestyle may not be easy but can be achieved by gradually making small changes and building on those successes.
- By looking at your overall health every day – both physically and mentally – you can go a long way in ensuring that you focus on your *Fitness #4Mind4Body*.

Feel free to supplement these key messages with the assortment of statistics, quotes and tips included in the fact sheets.

PRESS RELEASE

This May is Mental Health Month

Fitness #4Mind4Body Theme Highlights Importance of Physical Health in Achieving Balanced Mental Health

Contact: [NAME, PHONE, EMAIL]

[CITY, STATE] (DATE)—When you or someone you love is dealing with a mental health concern, sometimes it's a lot to handle. It's important to remember that mental health is essential to everyone's overall health and well-being, and mental illnesses are common and treatable.

So much of what we do physically impacts us mentally. That is why this year's theme for *May is Mental Health Month – Fitness #4Mind4Body* – is a call to pay attention to both your physical health and your mental health, which can help achieve overall wellness and set you on a path to recovery.

May is Mental Health Month was started 69 years ago by [AFFILIATE's] national organization, Mental Health America, to raise awareness about mental health conditions and the importance of good mental health for everyone. Last year, Mental Health Month materials were seen and used by over 230 million people, with more than 10,000 entities downloading MHA's tool kit.

This *May is Mental Health Month*, we are focused on how a healthy lifestyle may help prevent the onset or worsening of mental health conditions, as well as heart disease, diabetes, obesity and other chronic health problems. It can also help people recover from these conditions. Eating healthy foods, managing stress, exercising, and getting enough sleep can go a long way in making you both physically and mentally healthy.

"It is important to really look at your overall health, both physically and mentally, to achieve wellness," said [NAME] [TITLE] of [AFFILIATE]. "Getting the appropriate amount of exercise, eating healthy foods that can impact your gut health, getting enough sleep and reducing stress – it's all about finding the right balance to benefit both the mind and body."

MHA has developed a series of fact sheets (available at www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may) on the importance of exercise, diet and nutrition, gut health, sleep, and stress management. Also new this year is the **#4Mind4Body Challenge**, where we call on everyone to join us in completing a small task each day during the month of May – and tell us about it on social media using #4Mind4Body. Learn more here: www.mentalhealthamerica.net/challenge.

"We know that living a healthy lifestyle is not always easy, but it can be achieved by gradually making small changes and building on those successes," concluded [NAME]. "By looking at your overall health every day – both physically and mentally – you can go a long way in ensuring that you focus on your *Fitness #4Mind4Body*."

For more information on *May is Mental Health Month*, visit Mental Health America's website at www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may.

[BOILERPLATE]



DROP-IN ARTICLE

Do You Focus on Fitness #4Mind4Body?

Mental health is essential to everyone's overall health and well-being, and mental illnesses are common and treatable. So much of what we do physically impacts us mentally –it's important to pay attention to both your physical health and your mental health, which can help you achieve overall wellness and set you on a path to recovery.

This *May is Mental Health Month*; [ORGANIZATION NAME] is raising awareness about the connection between physical health and mental health, through the theme *Fitness #4Mind4Body*. The campaign is meant to educate and inform individuals about how eating healthy foods, gut health, managing stress, exercising, and getting enough sleep can go a long way in making you healthy all around.

A healthy lifestyle can help to prevent the onset or worsening of mental health conditions like depression and anxiety, as well as heart disease, diabetes, obesity and other chronic health problems. It can also play a big role in helping people recover from these conditions. Taking good care of your body is part of a before Stage Four approach to mental health.

Getting the appropriate amount of exercise can help control weight, improve mental health, and help you live longer and healthier. Recent research is also connecting your nutrition and gut health with your mental health. Sleep also plays a critical role in all aspects of our life and overall health. Getting a good night's sleep is important to having enough physical and mental energy to take on daily responsibilities. And we all know that stress can have a huge impact on all aspects of our health, so it's important to take time to focus on stress-reducing activities like meditation or yoga.

[ORGANIZATION] wants everyone to know that mental illnesses are real, and recovery is always the goal. Living a healthy lifestyle may not be easy, but by looking at your overall health every day – both physically and mentally – you can go a long way in ensuring that you focus on your *Fitness #4Mind4Body*.

For more information, visit www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may.



PROCLAMATION

Encourage your local public officials to go on the record in support of mental health. Below, please find a sample proclamation that designates May as Mental Health Month. An official signing of a proclamation is a perfect occasion for a news event, photo opportunity or other activity.

*Mental Health Month 2018
"Fitness #4Mind4Body"*

WHEREAS, mental health is essential to everyone's overall health and well-being; and

WHEREAS, all Americans experience times of difficulty and stress in their lives; and

WHEREAS, prevention is an effective way to reduce the burden of mental health conditions; and

WHEREAS, there is a strong research that diet, exercise, sleep, and stress management can help all Americans protect their health and well-being; and

WHEREAS, mental health conditions are real and prevalent in our nation; and

WHEREAS, with effective treatment, those individuals with mental health conditions can recover and lead full, productive lives; and

WHEREAS, each business, school, government agency, healthcare provider, organization and citizen shares the burden of mental health problems and has a responsibility to promote mental wellness and support prevention efforts.

THEREFORE, I [NAME OF PUBLIC OFFICIAL], do hereby proclaim May 2018 as Mental Health Month in [STATE OR COMMUNITY]. As the [TITLE OF LOCAL OFFICIAL], I also call upon the citizens, government agencies, public and private institutions, businesses and schools in [STATE OR COMMUNITY] to recommit our community to increasing awareness and understanding of mental health, the steps our citizens can take to protect their mental health, and the need for appropriate and accessible services for all people with mental health conditions before Stage Four.



SOCIAL POSTS

TWITTER

DOWNLOAD THE TOOLKIT:

- Celebrate Mental Health Month! Download the #4mind4body toolkit and share to spread awareness bit.ly/MayMH #MHM2018
- It's Mental Health Month! Download this year's toolkit & share with others to spread awareness about #mentalhealth: bit.ly/MayMH #MHM2018 #4mind4body

FACTS/LEARN MORE:

- Sleep plays a role in all aspects of our life and overall health. Sleep disturbances can also be a sign of a #mentalhealth condition. Help us raise awareness this #mentalhealthmonth by sharing your #4mind4body sleep tips: bit.ly/MayMH #MHM2018
- Recent research is connecting your gut health with your #mentalhealth. Learn more about how your gut may be more important than you think: bit.ly/MayMH #MHM2018 #4mind4body
- Did you know #health and #mentalillness are linked? Learn more about the connection between your body and your mind this #mentalhealthmonth #4body4mind: bit.ly/MayMH #MHM2018
- Paying attention to both your physical and mental health can help you achieve overall wellness and set you on a path to recovery. Learn more about the brain-body connection #4mind4body: bit.ly/MayMH #MHM2018
- Eating healthy foods, managing stress, exercising, and getting enough sleep can go a long way in making you both physically and mentally healthy. Learn more about the brain-body connection #4mind4body: bit.ly/MayMH #MHM2018
- #DYK that yoga is one of the most effective forms of exercise for people with #schizophrenia? Learn more about the brain-body connection #4mind4body this month! [Bit.ly/MayMH](http://bit.ly/MayMH) #MHM2018
- #Sleep problems affect 50-80% of people under the care of a psychiatrist compared to 10-18% of the general population. Learn more about the brain-body connection #4mind4body: bit.ly/MayMH #MHM2018

TAKE THE CHALLENGE:

- I'm doing the #4body4mind challenge for #mentalhealthmonth. Will you?: bit.ly/MHACHallenge #MHM2018
- Living a healthy lifestyle may not be easy but can be achieved by gradually making small changes and building on those successes. Take the #4mind4body challenge for #mentalhealthmonth to start your road to wellness: bit.ly/MHACHallenge #MHM2018
- Do you have the guts to take on the #4body4mind challenge for #MentalHealthmonth? Learn more about how you can use these small changes to improve your overall mental health and well-being! bit.ly/MHACHallenge #MHM2018
- Take the #4mind4body challenge to increase your mental and physical wellness in celebration of #MentalHealthMonth! bit.ly/MHACHallenge #MHM2018 #4mind4body
- Don't sleep on it! Take the #4mind4body challenge to improve your overall #wellness through physical and mental health exercises at bit.ly/MHACHallenge #MHM2018

FACEBOOK/INSTAGRAM

DOWNLOAD THE TOOLKIT:

- Join @Mentalhealthamerica during Mental Health Month in increasing awareness of the connection between physical and mental health. Download the complete toolkit, featuring facts sheets with infographics, social media images, and more from bit.ly/MayMH #MHM2018 #4mind4body
- We need to speak up early and educate people about physical health and its connection to mental illness—and do so in a compassionate, judgement-free way. Download the #MHM2018 toolkit: bit.ly/MayMH #4mind4body #b4stage4

- Did you know that there are links between physical health conditions like heart disease and #mentalhealth problems? Download the #4mind4body toolkit and learn more! bit.ly/MayMH #MHM2018

FACTS/LEARN MORE:

- What does your gut have to do with #mentalhealth? A lot, actually! Studies show that the bacteria found in your gastrointestinal tract can be a huge mood influencer. Learn more about #4body4mind this #mentalhealthmonth: bit.ly/MayMH #MHM2018
- Why talk about #sleep during Mental Health Month? It's important to educate ourselves and others about habits and behaviors that increase the risk of developing or exacerbating mental illnesses, or how these could be signs of mental health problems themselves. Learn more about how you can take care of your "fitness" #4body4mind: bit.ly/MayMH #MHM2018
- Health and wellness are hot topics, but did you know a healthy lifestyle can help to prevent the onset or worsening of depression, anxiety and other mental health conditions, as well as heart disease, diabetes, obesity and other chronic health problems? It can also help people recover from these conditions. Learn about the mind-body connection with this year's #MHM2018 fact sheets: bit.ly/MayMH
- Getting the appropriate amount of exercise benefits nearly all aspects of a person's health. Not only does exercise help control weight, it also improves mental health, and chances of living longer and healthier. Prevention and early identification for #mentalhealth conditions also includes caring for your physical health. Learn more about how you can take care of your "fitness" #4body4mind: bit.ly/MayMH #MHM2018
- Sleep plays a role in all aspects of our life and overall health. Getting a good night's sleep is important to having enough physical and mental energy to take on daily responsibilities. Sleep disturbances can also be a sign of a #mentalhealth condition. Help us raise awareness this #mentalhealthmonth by sharing your #4mind4body sleep tips: bit.ly/MayMH #MHM2018
- #B4Stage4 means advocating for prevention strategies like screening and integrated health care to address mental health before it gets to the point of crisis. Mental health is essential to everyone's overall health and well-being, and mental illnesses are common and treatable. Learn more about how caring for your physical health contributes to overall improved mental health: bit.ly/MayMH #MHM2018 #4body4mind

TAKE THE CHALLENGE:

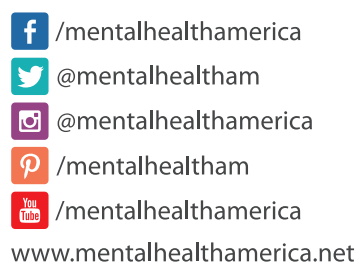
- I'm doing the #4body4mind challenge for #mentalhealthmonth. Will you?: bit.ly/MHACHallenge #MHM2018
- We know that change sucks. It's hard and sometimes it can feel like an uphill battle when you are dealing with a #mentalillness. But living a healthy lifestyle can be achieved by gradually making small changes and building on those successes. Take the #4body4mind challenge to raise awareness about mental and physical health for #MHM2018!: bit.ly/MHACHallenge
- Take the #4mind4body challenge to increase your mental and physical wellness in celebration of #MentalHealthMonth! bit.ly/MHACHallenge #MHM2018 #4mind4body

HASHTAGS

- #MHM2018
- #4mind4body
- #mentalhealthmonth

LINKS

- bit.ly/MayMH
- bit.ly/MHACHallenge



IMAGES

Download and save the images provided for use on your social media platforms or websites. All images can be downloaded by visiting www.mentalhealthamerica.net/mental-health-month-2018-toolkit-download, then right-clicking on the image and selecting "save picture as."

Calls to Action



**FITNESS
#4MIND4BODY**

TAKE THE CHALLENGE
by visiting bit.ly/MHChallenge.

SHARE YOUR PROGRESS
by posting with #4mind4body.

If you are taking steps to live a healthy lifestyle but still feel like you are struggling with your mental health, visit www.mhascreening.org to check your symptoms.



FREE. CONFIDENTIAL. ANONYMOUS

Once you have your results, we'll give you information and help you find tools and resources to feel better.

Facebook Profile Twitter Profile Instagram Profile

**MAY IS 2
MENTAL 0
HEALTH 1
MONTH 8**

#4mind4body

Facebook Cover and Twitter Header



MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH 2018

**FITNESS
#4MIND4BODY**

MHA
Mental Health America
B4Stage4

Learn more at bit.ly/MayMH

Vertical Banner

**MAY IS 2
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#4mind4body

TAKE THE CHALLENGE

SHARE YOUR PROGRESS

LEARN MORE
bit.ly/MayMH

Facebook Sharable Twitter Sharable

TAKE THE #4MIND4BODY CHALLENGE!

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#4mind4body

Join us this May as we challenge ourselves each day to make small changes - both physically and mentally - to create huge gains for our overall health. Visit bit.ly/MHChallenge or follow Mental Health America on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram for the challenge of the day. Share your progress by posting with #4mind4body.

LEARN MORE AT MENTALHEALTHAMERICA.NET/MAY

Instagram Sharable

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LEARN MORE AT MENTALHEALTHAMERICA.NET/MAY

Horizontal Banner

**MAY IS 2
MENTAL 0
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by visiting bit.ly/MHChallenge.

SHARE YOUR PROGRESS
by posting with #4mind4body.

LEARN MORE AT
mentalhealthamerica.net/may.

OUTREACH IDEAS

HOW THE #4MIND4BODY CHALLENGE WORKS

Each day during the month of May, Mental Health America will post a challenge on our website at www.mentalhealthamerica.net/challenge and on our Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts. Each daily challenge will be designed to take relatively little time, and be accessible to individuals no matter their level of physical fitness or where they are on their mental health journey. We are asking individuals who participate in the challenge to share their progress and successes by posting on social media with #4mind4body.

MHA will have a page on our website at www.mentalhealthamerica.net/4mind4body where special software will collect Tweets, Pins (Pinterest), and posts from Instagram with #4mind4body. Individuals who don't use social media will be able to post directly to www.mentalhealthamerica.net/4mind4body. This collection of tagged posts will allow people to see what others are doing as part of the #4mind4body Challenge and act as a source of inspiration in the future for those looking to improve their overall health and wellness.

Unfortunately, Facebook and Youtube posts that use #4mind4body will not automatically be collected on the page due to the privacy restrictions of these social media platforms.

- Use the challenge to guide wellness activities at public events. Take photos and video to post at www.mentalhealthamerica.net/4mind4body or on your own social media pages.
- Post the challenge of the day to your organization's social media networks: Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, Facebook, etc. each day to raise awareness of May as Mental Health Month activities. Make sure to tag Mental Health America's profile using the account information below so we can see it!

 /mentalhealthamerica

 /mentalhealtham

 @mentalhealtham

 /mentalhealthamerica

 @mentalhealthamerica

Here are some other ideas to help you plan for outreach activities during the month of May:

- Ask your governor, mayor or other local official to declare May as Mental Health Month using the sample proclamation that is part of the toolkit.
- Organize a community run or walk for mental health. Reach out to your local media for assistance in promoting the event. Email all of your partners, family members and friends, donors, and local officials inviting them to participate.
- Host a mental health screening or other educational event at a local venue (e.g., town hall, firehouse, church, mall or library). Have computers or tablets available for people to go to mhascreening.org. Make sure to have a printer so people can print their results.
- Plan a day at your state Capitol. Invite advocates, consumers, concerned citizens and community and business leaders to visit each policymaker to discuss your community's mental health needs.
- Host a meet-and-greet with local leaders in mental health and the community they serve at the local town square. Ask a consumer and local community leader to share why mental health is so important to them personally.

We'll be reaching out in mid-June to ask about your outreach and impact. Make sure to keep track of your efforts by doing things like:

- Counting how many handouts you distribute;
- Tracking media hits and impressions;
- Keeping tally of likes, shares and retweets of your Mental Health Month posts on social media networks
- If you do a screening event or health fair, keep count of how many people visit your booth and/or take a screen; and
- Conducting a pre/post survey to see how you've increased knowledge about mental health issues among those you reach. Set up a quick survey of up to 10 questions for free online using [SurveyMonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com).

LET US KNOW WHAT YOU'VE GOT PLANNED!

Tell us about your events so we can post them on MHA's Web Calendar, and help you get the word out. Contact Laqwanda Roberts-Buckley at lrbuckley@mentalhealthamerica.net with the following information:

Name of Event
Date
Location
Brief Description
Registration/Sign-Up Instructions
Contact Person

LIKE OUR MATERIALS? WANT MORE?

Brochures on assorted topics and B4Stage4 merchandise are available through the Mental Health America store to supplement the information provided in the 2018 *May is Mental Health Month* toolkit.

Visit the Mental Health America store by clicking the "Store" link on the dark blue menu bar at the top of the Mental Health America's website, www.mentalhealthamerica.net.

***MHA Affiliates** – One of the benefits of being an affiliate is getting a discount on printed materials at the MHA store. Contact Laqwanda Roberts-Buckley at lrbuckley@mentalhealthamerica.net if you need help getting your affiliate discount code. There will also be extra May is Mental Health Month tools for you ("Affiliate Exclusives") on the Education and Outreach section of the Affiliate Only Site.





DIET AND NUTRITION

The quality of the food you eat can impact your overall physical and mental health. Eating nutritious foods can go a long way toward achieving a healthy lifestyle, so make every bite count.

TWO MAJOR ISSUES

POOR DIET

Unhealthy diets lead to major health problems like diabetes, heart disease, obesity, and cancer. Because of this, poor diet is the main cause of early death in developed countries. Nearly 20% of all deaths worldwide can be linked to unhealthy eating habits.¹



MENTAL ILLNESS

At the same time, mental illnesses are the biggest cause of disability and illness in the world. Depression alone is one of the top five leading causes of disability across the planet.²

BETTER DIET, BETTER MENTAL HEALTH

A healthy diet includes a full range of vegetables, fruits, legumes (lentils, chickpeas, beans), fish, whole grains (rice, quinoa, oats, breads, etc.), nuts, avocados and olive oil to support a healthy brain. Sweet and fatty foods should be special treats, not the staples of your diet.



People who eat a diet high in whole foods such as fruits, vegetables, nuts, whole grains, legumes, fish and unsaturated fats (like olive oil) are up to 35% less likely to develop depression than people who eat less of these foods.^{3,4}



Highly processed, fried and sugary foods have little nutritional value and should be avoided. Research shows that a diet that regularly includes these kinds of foods can increase the risk of developing depression by as much as 60%.^{5,6}

CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Good nutrition starts in the womb. The children of women who eat diets high in processed, fried and sugary foods during pregnancy have more emotional problems in childhood. Similarly, diets low in whole, nutrient-dense foods and diets higher in junk and processed foods during the first years of life are linked to more emotional problems in children.^{7,8}



Studies have found that young people with the healthiest diets are about **HALF AS LIKELY** to have depression.

VS

Those with the diet highest in junk and processed foods are **80% MORE LIKELY** to have depression.^{9,10}

FOOD CAN CHANGE YOUR BRAIN

Diet is linked to the hippocampus, a key area of the brain involved in learning, memory, and mental health. People with healthy diets have more hippocampal volume than those with unhealthy diets.¹¹



Eating more fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes, fish, olive oil, and other healthy foods while eating less unhealthy junk and processed foods can be an effective treatment strategy for depression.

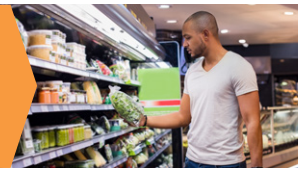


One study found that

1/3 OF PARTICIPANTS WITH DEPRESSION EXPERIENCED FULL RELIEF OF THEIR SYMPTOMS after improving their diet. The more people improved their diets, the more their depression improved.^{12,13}

A HEALTHY DIET DOESN'T HAVE TO BE EXPENSIVE

A healthy diet can actually be cheaper than junk and processed food.^{14,15} Save money by choosing canned or frozen vegetables and fish, and dried fruits and beans. These are nutritionally similar to fresh foods, stay good longer, and are usually less expensive!



NUTRIENTS TO KEEP IN MIND

OMEGA 3 FATTY ACIDS

Omega 3 fatty acids are essential to brain health and reduce inflammation and risk of heart disease.

Oily fish like salmon, trout, mackerel, anchovies and sardines are the most highly recommended sources of Omega 3 fatty acids, and the American Heart Association suggests eating these types of fish at least twice a week. Omega 3s can also be found in albacore tuna, walnuts, flax seeds, chia seeds, and dark green leafy vegetables like brussels sprouts, kale and spinach.

People who eat diets rich with Omega 3 fatty acids have up to 30% reduced risk of depression.¹⁶

Fish oil supplements that are high in the EPA type of Omega 3 fatty acids can help mental health. Studies show they can benefit some people with depression as much as anti-depressants.¹⁷

B GROUP VITAMINS

B-group vitamins help to regulate neurotransmitters, immune function, and amino acids – the building blocks of proteins in the body.

Folate and folic acid are part of the B family of vitamins and can be found in green leafy vegetables, legumes, and whole grains.

People who eat foods rich in folate have a lower risk of depression.¹⁸

Fish (salmon, trout, tuna), beef, lamb, clams, poultry (chicken and turkey), eggs, and milk are natural sources of vitamin B12. Breakfast cereals with vitamin B12 added are a good option for vegetarians.

People with a lack of vitamin B12 may be at increased risk for depression, especially if they are older.¹⁹

VITAMIN D

Vitamin D is important for optimal brain functioning, including mood and critical thinking.

Fatty fish like salmon and tuna have the most naturally occurring vitamin D. Some vitamin D can also be found in eggs, other dairy foods, and fortified beverages and breakfast cereals. Cod liver oil supplements are high in vitamins A and D and have some omega 3 fatty acids as well.

Sunlight is a major source of vitamin D. Five to thirty minutes of sun exposure twice a week generally produces enough vitamin D in the body. Lighter-skinned people require less time in the sun than those with darker skin.

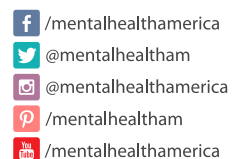
Low levels of vitamin D are linked to depression,²⁰ in particular seasonal depression, which happens with reduced sunlight during winter.

TAKE THE #4MIND4BODY CHALLENGE!

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EXERCISE

Staying active can benefit so many aspects of your health and can even prevent physical and mental health symptoms from worsening. It's important to incorporate exercise daily to ensure your body and your mind are healthy.

EXERCISING BENEFITS NEARLY ALL ASPECTS OF A PERSON'S HEALTH

In addition to helping control weight, it can improve the chances of living longer, the strength of bones and muscles, and your mental health.¹



WHEN A PERSON DOESN'T GET ENOUGH EXERCISE, THEY ARE AT INCREASED RISK FOR HEALTH PROBLEMS

These include cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, some cancers, and metabolic syndrome.²



EXERCISE INCREASES A VARIETY OF SUBSTANCES THAT PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN BRAIN FUNCTION

BDNF

BDNF (brain derived neurotrophic factor) is a protein that creates and protects neurons (nerve cells) in the brain, helps these cells to transmit messages more efficiently, and regulates depression-like behaviors.^{3,4}

ENDORPHINS

Endorphins are a type of chemical messenger (neurotransmitter) that is released when we experience stress or pain to reduce their negative effects and increase pleasure throughout the body.⁵ Endorphins are also responsible for the euphoric feeling known as a "runner's high" that happens after long periods of intense exercise.

SEROTONIN

Serotonin is another neurotransmitter that increases during exercise. It plays a role in sending messages about appetite, sleep, and mood.⁶ It is the target of a medications known as SSRIs or SNRIs, which are used to treat anxiety and depression.

DOPAMINE

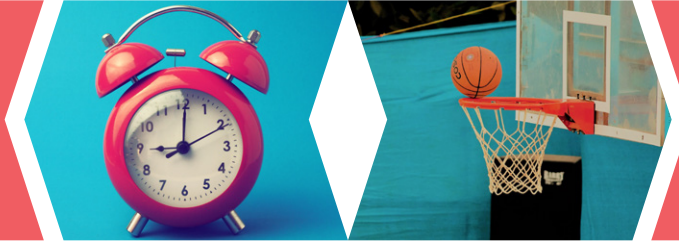
Dopamine is involved in controlling movement and the body's reward response system. Due to its role in how the body perceives rewards, it is heavily involved with addictions. When amounts of this chemical messenger are low, it is linked to mental health conditions including depression, schizophrenia, and psychosis.⁷

GLUTAMATE & GABA

Glutamate and GABA (Gamma-amino butyric acid) both act to regulate the activity of nerve cells in the parts of the brain that process visual information, determine heart rate, and affect emotions and the ability to think clearly.⁸ Low levels of GABA have been linked to depression, anxiety, PTSD, and mood disorders.⁹

EXERCISE CAN HELP PREVENT MENTAL ILLNESSES AND IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF TREATMENT

Just 1 hour of exercise a week is related to lower levels of mood, anxiety and substance use disorders.¹⁰



Among people in the U.S., those who make regular physical activity a part of their routines are less likely to have depression, panic disorder, and phobias (extreme fears).¹¹

One study found that for people with anxiety, exercise had similar effects to cognitive behavioral therapy in reducing symptoms.¹²



For people with schizophrenia, yoga is the most effective form of exercise for reducing positive and negative symptoms associated with the disorder.¹³

HOW MUCH EXERCISE SHOULD YOU BE GETTING?



Exercise doesn't have to be done for hours on end. Ten minutes of moderate or vigorous activity at a time, fifteen times a week will get you to the recommended amount.

Muscle strengthening activities should be incorporated into your exercise routine twice a week. This includes yoga, lifting weights, resistance band exercises, and things like push-ups and sit-ups. Your muscles should be tired by the time you are finished with your exercises, but make sure you aren't trying to lift too much too soon or you could injure yourself.



You don't have to have a gym membership to make exercise a part of your life! Picking physical activities that are easy to incorporate into things you already do and having a strong social support system are important in incorporating exercise into your routine.



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THE GUT-BRAIN CONNECTION

That gut-wrenching feeling in the pit of your stomach is all too real – your gut is sensitive to emotions like anger, anxiety, sadness, and joy – and your brain can react to signals from your stomach. All the more reason to eat a balanced and nutritious diet – so that your gut and your brain can be healthy.

WHAT IS “THE GUT”?

The gut includes every organ involved in digesting food and processing it into waste. The lining of your gut is often called “the second brain.”

ESOPHAGUS & STOMACH



SMALL & LARGE INTESTINES



GALLBLADDER



LIVER



PANCREAS

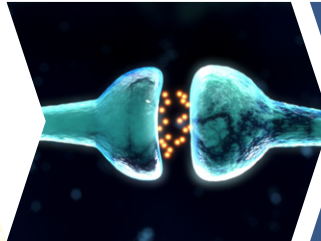


HOW IS THE GUT CONNECTED TO THE BRAIN?

The gut or “second brain” can operate on its own and communicates back and forth with your actual brain. They are connected in two main ways:

PHYSICALLY

The vagus nerve, which controls messages to the gut as well as the heart, lungs, and other vital organs is the gut’s direct connection to the brain.

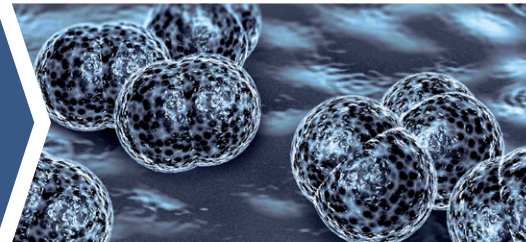
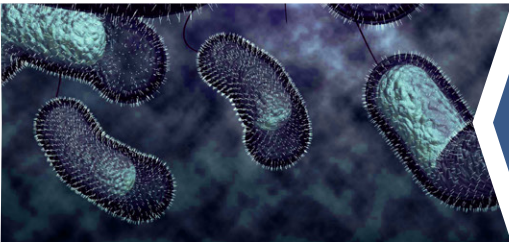


CHEMICALLY

The gut also connects with the brain through chemicals like hormones and neurotransmitters that send messages.

The chemical messages that pass between the gut and the brain can be affected by the bacteria, viruses, and fungi that live in the gut called the “gut microbiome.”

The bacteria, viruses, and fungi that live in the gut may be beneficial, harmless, or harmful.



HOW IS THE GUT MICROBIOME RELATED TO MENTAL HEALTH?

There is a strong relationship between having mental health problems and having gastrointestinal symptoms like heartburn, indigestion, acid reflux, bloating, pain, constipation, and/or diarrhea.¹



Research in animals has shown that changes in the gut microbiome and inflammation in the gut can affect the brain and cause symptoms that look like Parkinson’s disease, autism, anxiety and depression.



Having anxiety and depression can cause changes in the gut microbiome because of what happens in the body when it has a stress response.²



TIPS FOR TAKING CARE OF YOUR GUT

Eating a balanced and nutritious diet is the most important thing a person can do to keep their gut healthy.

DO

Eat a diet full of whole grains, lean meats, fish, fruits, and vegetables.



DON'T

Base your diet on sugary, fried, or processed foods and soft drinks.



Feed the good bacteria, viruses, and fungi that live in the gut what they like to help them grow. These foods are called prebiotics.

Prebiotic foods are high in fiber and work best when they are raw. Try asparagus, bananas (especially if they aren't quite ripe), garlic, onions, or jicama. If you can't stand the taste of these foods raw, you can try steaming them lightly to still get most of their prebiotic benefits. Tomatoes, apples, berries and mangos are also good prebiotic choices.



You can also eat bacteria. Probiotics are live bacteria that exist in foods.

Eating probiotics can be tricky. The types and amounts of bacteria in probiotics vary, and when foods are heated the bacteria often die. Examples of probiotic foods are yogurt (the label should say live or active cultures), unpasteurized sauerkraut and kimchi, miso soup, kefir (a yogurt-like beverage), kombucha (fermented black tea), tempeh (made of soy beans), and apple cider vinegar.



You can also get probiotic supplements to help grow good gut bacteria, but it is important to pick the right ones. Make sure the type of bacteria is listed on the bottle – Bifidobacterium and Lactobacillus are some of the most common – and that the label says that the bacteria are live and there are billions of colony forming units (CFUs). Store them in a cool, dry place like the refrigerator.



OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER

Avoid taking antibiotics unless your doctor says they are absolutely necessary. Antibiotics kill bad bacteria, but also kill the good bacteria that keeps your gut working properly.

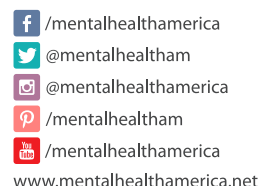
If you have gut problems like an upset stomach or unusual bathroom habits that don't go away it is important to see a doctor. Start with your primary care doctor. They may recommend you see a specialist called a gastroenterologist.

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SLEEP

Your physical and emotional health depends so much on how rested you are. Sleep is fundamental to a healthy mind and body – getting a good night’s sleep can make a huge difference in your overall health.

SLEEP AFFECTS THE ENTIRE BODY

It plays a role in our moods, ability to learn and make memories, the health of our organs, how well our immune system works, and other bodily functions like appetite, metabolism, and hormone release.



SLEEP IS IMPORTANT DOWN TO THE CELLULAR LEVEL

Sleep helps the body to re-energize its cells.



It also increases the amount of space between brain cells to allow fluid to flow and clear away toxins.¹

HOW MUCH SLEEP SHOULD YOU BE GETTING?

If you get approximately 8 hours each night, you’ll spend about 1/3 of your life asleep. Based on the average U.S. life expectancy², that is 230,680 hours or 26.3 years of sleep in a lifetime.

The amount of sleep you need each night depends on your age. The National Sleep Foundation recommends:³

**NEWBORNS
(0-3 MONTHS)**



**14-17
HOURS**

**9-11
HOURS**



**SCHOOL CHILDREN
(6-13 YEARS)**

**INFANTS
(4-11 MONTHS)**



**12-15
HOURS**

**8-10
HOURS**



**TEENS
(14-17 YEARS)**

**TODDLERS
(1-2 YEARS)**



**11-14
HOURS**

**7-9
HOURS**



**ADULTS
(18-64 YEARS)**

**PRE-SCHOOLERS
(3-5 YEARS)**



**10-13
HOURS**

**7-8
HOURS**



**OLDER ADULTS
(65+ YEARS)**

QUALITY OF SLEEP MATTERS

Good quality sleep means:⁴

Being asleep for at least 85% of the time you are in bed



Falling asleep in 30 minutes or less



Waking up no more than once per night for no longer than 20 minutes



When a person consistently struggles to get enough sleep or good quality sleep, they have a higher risk for health problems like high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, depression, and obesity.⁵



Poor quality of sleep can increase the risk of developing mental health symptoms like: manic episodes⁶, a first episode of psychosis⁷, paranoia⁸, anxiety⁹, and depression.¹⁰



Sleep problems affect 50% to 80% of people under the care of a psychiatrist, compared with 10% to 18% of adults in the general U.S. population.¹¹



Among visitors to mhascreening.org who scored moderately to severely depressed, 95% reported trouble falling asleep or sleeping too much at least several days in the past month.¹²

TIPS FOR A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day—including weekends. This helps to keep your body's natural rhythms running on schedule.

Avoid exercising 2-3 hours before your bedtime. Try to exercise in 30 minute sessions either in the morning or afternoon.

Get out in the sun - getting natural sunlight during the day helps to maintain your body's sleep-wake cycle. Aim for 30 minutes of sun exposure and be sure to wear sunscreen.

Limit caffeine to the morning. The energy-boosting effects of caffeine can take as long as 8 hours to wear off.

Don't eat right before bed - it can cause indigestion and heartburn, which can mess up sleep.

Nap smart. If you need a nap, take it before 3 p.m. and limit it to an hour.

If you can't fall asleep for more than 20 minutes after going to bed, get up and do something calming until you feel sleepy.

Say no to nicotine. The nicotine in tobacco products and vapes is a stimulant, which can keep you up at night.

See a doctor if you always feel tired even after getting enough sleep, or have trouble falling asleep every night.

Some over-the-counter and prescription medications may affect your ability to go to sleep or cause you to sleep for longer than necessary. If you can't avoid medications, talk to your doctor.

Get rid of anything in your bedroom that might distract you from sleep, like noises or bright lights. The light from screens can confuse your body's internal clock.

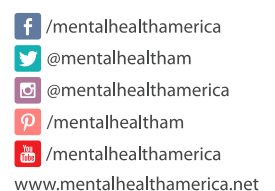
Go easy on the drinks. Drinking too much before bed can make you wake up to go to the bathroom and alcohol gets in the way of reaching the deep and restful stages of sleep.

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STRESS

No one likes to be stressed out – especially when we know it can be linked to poor health. Learning how to manage your stress can be a small change with a big positive impact on your physical and mental health.

EVERYONE HAS STRESS

Stress is a normal part of life. You can feel stress in your body when you have too much to do or when you haven't slept well. You can also feel stress when you worry about things like your job, money, relationships, or a friend or family member who is struggling with illness or difficult circumstances.



In response to these strains, your body releases chemicals that cause increases in blood pressure, heart rate, breathing, availability of cell energy, and blood flow to your muscles. At the same time, it also releases chemicals to slow down less urgent bodily functions that deal with digestion, growth, sex, and aspects of the immune system.

These stress responses are intended to help your body react quickly and effectively to dangerous or high-pressure situations – known as the “fight or flight” reaction - and were especially important when our ancestors were living in the wilderness, facing exposure to predators and extreme weather conditions.



WHEN STRESS DOESN'T LET UP

When stress comes and goes relatively quickly the body can return to functioning in a normal, healthy way. When you are constantly reacting to stressful situations (chronic stress), cells in your immune system can cause inflammation that doesn't go away.¹

Chronic stress and inflammation have been linked to reduced ability to fight off viruses (from HIV to the common cold), and increased risk for heart disease, headaches, intestinal problems, sexual dysfunction, diabetes, and even cancer.²

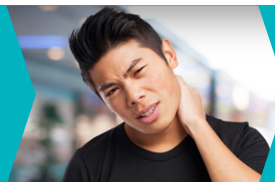


Stress can also cause a number of other physical symptoms, including:

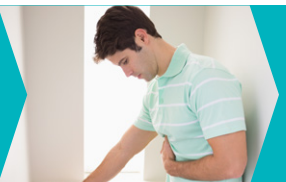
Acne and other skin problems



Muscle aches and tension



Nausea, stomach pain, and heartburn



Diarrhea, constipation and other digestive issues



Irregular or painful periods



Changes in appetite and weight



TEN TIPS FOR DEALING WITH STRESS

BE REALISTIC

You may be taking on more responsibility than you can or should handle for yourself or your family. If you feel overwhelmed by how many things are on your schedule, it's ok to say "No" to new activities! You may also decide to stop doing an activity that is not 100% necessary. If friends or family criticize your decisions, give reasons why you're making the changes. If you are a parent and your kids' activities are part of your stress, be willing to listen to their concerns and stay open to compromise.

NO ONE IS PERFECT

Shed the "superman/superwoman" urge. Don't expect perfection from yourself or others. Ask yourself, "What really needs to be done? How much can I do? Is the deadline realistic? What adjustments can I make?" Don't hesitate to ask for help if you need it.

MEDITATE

Just ten to twenty minutes of quiet reflection may bring relief from chronic stress as well as increase your tolerance to it. Use the time to listen to music, relax and try to think of pleasant things or nothing.

VISUALIZE

Use your imagination and picture how you can manage a stressful situation more successfully. Whether it's a business presentation or moving to a new place, many people feel visual rehearsals boost self-confidence and help them to take a more positive approach to a difficult task.

ONE THING AT A TIME

For people under tension or stress, their day-to-day workload can sometimes seem unbearable. You may feel like you have to multi-task, but that often leads to more stress. Take one task at a time. Make a list of things you need to get done and start with one task. Once you accomplish that task, choose the next one. The feeling of checking items off a list is very satisfying and can motivate you to keep going.

EXERCISE

Regular exercise is a popular way to relieve stress. It gives an outlet to energy your body makes when it is preparing for a "flight or fight" response to stress or danger. Twenty to thirty minutes of physical activity benefits both the body and the mind.

GET A HOBBY

Take a break from your worries by doing something you enjoy. Whether it's gardening, painting, doing jigsaw puzzles or playing video games, schedule time to indulge your interests. The "zoned out" feeling people get while doing these types of activities is a great way to relax.

VENT

Talking with a friend or family member lets you know that you are not the only one having a bad day, caring for a sick child or working in a busy office. Try to limit complaining and keep conversations constructive. Ask them how they have dealt with a similar situation that may be "stressing you out." Let them provide love, support and guidance. Don't try to cope alone.

BE FLEXIBLE

If you find you're meeting constant opposition in either your personal or professional life, rethink your approach. Arguing only intensifies stressful feelings. Make allowances for others' opinions and be prepared to compromise. If you are willing to be accommodating, others may meet you halfway. Not only will you reduce your stress, you may find better solutions to your problems.

GO EASY ON CRITICISM

You may expect too much of yourself and others. Try not to hold on to frustration or disappointment when another person does not measure up. The "other person" may be a coworker, spouse, or child whose behavior you are trying to change or don't agree with. Avoid criticisms about character, such as "You're so stubborn," and try providing helpful suggestions for how someone might do something differently. Also remember to be kind to yourself. Negative self-talk doesn't fix problems and will make you feel worse.

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END NOTES

DIET AND NUTRITION

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Special thanks to Dr. Felice Jacka and the staff at the Food and Mood Centre.

EXERCISE

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Special thanks to Dr. Pankaj Jay Pasricha and Ph.D. candidate Calliope Hologue of Johns Hopkins.

SLEEP

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- ⁴https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2017-01/nsf-wig011917.php
- ⁵<https://www.ninds.nih.gov/Disorders/Patient-Caregiver-Education/Understanding-Sleep>
- ⁶Kaplan K, McGlinchey EL, Soehner A, et al. Hypersomnia subtypes, sleep and relapse in bipolar disorder. (2014). *Psychological Medicine*. 45(8):1751-1763.
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- ¹⁰Buysse DJ, Angst J, Gamma A, Ajdacic V, Eich D, Rössler W. Prevalence, Course, and Comorbidity of Insomnia and Depression in Young Adults. (2008). *Sleep*. 31(4):473–80.
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- ¹²Proprietary data. mhascreening.org
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STRESS

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TAKE THE #4MIND4BODY CHALLENGE!

Join Mental Health America this May as we challenge ourselves to make small changes - both physically and mentally - to create huge gains for our overall fitness and wellbeing.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

Each day during the month of May, Mental Health America will post a challenge of the day online.

ON OUR WEBSITE: WWW.MENTALHEALTHAMERICA.NET/CHALLENGE

ON FACEBOOK: [/MENTALHEALTHAMERICA](https://www.facebook.com/MENTALHEALTHAMERICA)

ON TWITTER: [@MENTALHEALTHAM](https://twitter.com/MENTALHEALTHAM)

ON INSTAGRAM: [@MENTALHEALTHAMERICA](https://www.instagram.com/MENTALHEALTHAMERICA)

The challenges won't be very time consuming and are designed for everyone to be able to participate in, no matter what kind of shape you are in or where you are in your mental health journey.






Be sure to share your daily progress by posting to your social media accounts with #4mind4body. If you don't use social media, post directly to www.mentalhealthamerica.net/4mind4body.

Mental Health America will collect posts that use #4mind4body on our website at www.mentalhealthamerica.net/4mind4body so you can see how other people are tackling the daily challenges.

If you are taking steps to live a healthy lifestyle but still feel like you are struggling with your mental health, visit www.mhascreening.org to check your symptoms. It's free, confidential, and anonymous.

Once you have your results, we'll give you information and help you find tools and resources to feel better.



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WORKSHEET:

WHEN CHANGING DIET IS HARD

Making changes to your diet can be hard. Really hard. Here are some questions to think about that might help get you started.

What do you want to change about your eating habits?

What are the negative effects of your current eating habits? Are they getting in the way of living your life the way you want?

If you made changes now, how would life get better?

What has worked before to help you make and keep changes to your lifestyle?

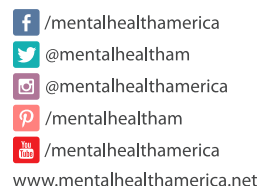
What is one thing you can do during a defined period of time (one day/one week/one month/a few months) to start making the changes in eating habits that you mentioned in question number one? If you need ideas, check out www.mentalhealthamerica.net/challenge.

Who or what can help you stay accountable to yourself? This can be someone who is working on changes with you or reminding you to stay on track. It could also be an app or wearable device that helps you track things.

How can you break up your goal into smaller milestones? How can you reward yourself for reaching these milestones?

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It's free, confidential, and anonymous. Once you have your results, we'll give you information and help you find tools and resources to feel better.



WORKSHEET:

WHEN CHANGING EXERCISE IS HARD

Making changes to your exercise habits can be hard. Really hard. Here are some questions to think about that might help get you started.

What do you want to change about your exercise habits?

What are the negative effects of your current exercise habits? Are they getting in the way of living your life the way you want?

If you made changes now, how would life get better?

What has worked before to help you make and keep changes to your lifestyle?

What is one thing you can do during a defined period of time (one day/one week/one month/a few months) to start making the changes in exercise habits that you mentioned in question number one? If you need ideas, check out www.mentalhealthamerica.net/challenge.

Who or what can help you stay accountable to yourself? This can be someone who is working on changes with you or reminding you to stay on track. It could also be an app or wearable device that helps you track things.

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WORKSHEET:

WHEN CHANGING SLEEP IS HARD

Making changes to your sleep can be hard. Really hard. Here are some questions to think about that might help get you started.

What do you want to change about your sleeping habits?

What are the negative effects of your current sleeping habits? Are they getting in the way of living your life the way you want?

If you made changes now, how would life get better?

What has worked before to help you make and keep changes to your lifestyle?

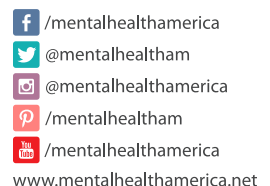
What is one thing you can do during a defined period of time (one day/one week/one month/a few months) to start making the changes in sleeping habits that you mentioned in question number one? If you need ideas, check out www.mentalhealthamerica.net/challenge.

Who or what can help you stay accountable to yourself? This can be someone who is working on changes with you or reminding you to stay on track. It could also be an app or wearable device that helps you track things.

How can you break up your goal into smaller milestones? How can you reward yourself for reaching these milestones?

If you are taking steps to live a healthy lifestyle but still feel like you are struggling with your mental health, visit www.mhascreening.org to check your symptoms.

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WORKSHEET:

WHEN MANAGING STRESS IS HARD

Making changes to how you handle stress can be hard. Really hard. Here are some questions to think about that might help get you started.

What do you want to change about you manage stress?

What are the negative effects of how you currently handle stress? Are they getting in the way of living your life the way you want?

If you made changes now, how would life get better?

What has worked before to help you make and keep changes to your lifestyle?

What is one thing you can do during a defined period of time (one day/one week/one month/a few months) to start making the changes to how you deal with stress that you mentioned in question number one? If you need ideas, check out www.mentalhealthamerica.net/challenge.

Who or what can help you stay accountable to yourself? This can be someone who is working on changes with you or reminding you to stay on track. It could also be an app or wearable device that helps you track things.

How can you break up your goal into smaller milestones? How can you reward yourself for reaching these milestones?

If you are taking steps to live a healthy lifestyle but still feel like you are struggling with your mental health, visit www.mhascreening.org to check your symptoms.

It's free, confidential, and anonymous. Once you have your results, we'll give you information and help you find tools and resources to feel better.

