

Taking Care of Your Mental Health: How to Get Started

Taking care of your mental health is important. But just what is your "mental health?"
And how do you even get started with getting care?

Your Mental Health Matters

There's no one definition of mental health. But for most people, it generally includes their state of mind and their emotions. Your mental health is an important part of your overall health. It affects how you think, feel, and act and can impact how you deal with stress, the choices you make, and your relationships, day-to-day life, and physical health.



You're Not Alone

Problems with mental health are common. In 2020, almost 53 million people in the United States had a mental health problem -- that's 1 out of every 5 adults. And it's not just adults -- many teens and kids have challenges with their mental health too.

Mental health problems can range from mild to disabling and be temporary or long lasting. Many factors can lead to these problems including your brain chemistry and genes (traits you inherit from your parents), life experiences, surroundings or

environment, and any history of mental health problems in your family.

Mental problems can look different for everyone, but signs that you or someone close to you may be having a mental health issue can include:

- Mood swings
 - Sleep problems
 - Pulling away from people
 - Trouble doing daily activities
 - Unexplained physical problems
 - Eating too much or not enough
 - Feeling numb, helpless, or hopeless
 - Being especially confused or forgetful
 - Losing interest in things you normally enjoy
 - Smoking or drinking more than usual or using drugs
 - Hearing or seeing things that aren't there or believing things that aren't true
 - Upsetting thoughts that won't go away or feeling angry, upset, worried, or scared more than usual
 - Thinking of harming yourself or others
-

Help Is Available

You may be hesitant to get help with your mental health because you don't know where to turn. Many people can also feel embarrassed talking about it or unsure if they're even having problems worth talking about. But there's no need to suffer -- help is available.

Noticing that you or someone you're close to may be having mental health challenges is the first step. The next step is to talk to someone about it. This may feel hard, but once you do, you're on the path to getting the care and treatment you need. And the sooner you take action, the better.

Try talking to family and friends to let them know you're having some challenges. Also talk to your family doctor or another healthcare team member about what you're going through and ask them to connect you with people who can help with mental health issues. If you don't have a doctor who can point you in the right direction, there are local and national services available, including:

- Calling 1-800-273-TALK (8255) to talk to a counselor at a free, confidential crisis service. This is available to everyone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and can help connect you to the nearest crisis center where you can get counseling and mental health referrals
- Texting "HELLO" to 741741 will also connect you to a crisis hotline that is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This serves anyone in any type of crisis and can connect you with a counselor who can provide support and information

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.



**Taking care of your mental health is important, but you don't have to go on the journey alone.
Reach out so you can get the support you need.**