

Improving Mental and Emotional Health

Good mental health means having a sense of wellbeing, being able to function in everyday life and being able to meet the challenges that life presents. When we are mentally well, we feel confident and have positive self esteem. We are able to feel a range of emotions and express them in a constructive way.

KEY POINTS:

- When we are mentally well, we feel confident and have positive self esteem
- Difficulties are a part of life and experiencing a range of emotions is a part of being human
- Learning strategies for positive thinking can be beneficial, especially if you are prone to worrying
- Looking after your mental health can help you to handle life's difficulties and better manage your emotional response to negative events and experiences
- If your life, or the life of someone else is in danger, call emergency services on 000
- You can also contact the beyondblue Support Service by calling 1300 22 4636

Mental wellbeing is more than the absence of mental health problems, such as depression or anxiety. Rather, it's the presence of positive characteristics such as strong relationships and the ability to recover from setbacks and 'get on with it'. This doesn't mean never experiencing hard times: difficulties are a part of life and experiencing a range of emotions is a part of being human. However, looking after your mental health can equip you to handle life's difficulties and better manage your emotional responses.

HOW CAN WE CARE FOR OUR MENTAL HEALTH?

Just as we need to care for our physical health, we can also take proactive and positive steps to maintain our mental wellbeing.

Build relationships

We are social beings and maintaining strong relationships is one of the best things we can do for our mental health. Having a broad network of family, friends, work mates etc increases our sense of wellbeing and the likelihood that our emotional needs will be met. Make sure you invest time and energy into these relationships through face to face contact. If you feel socially isolated, consider joining a topic-based interest group such through avenues like Meet up or look to participate in other social or sporting groups.

Exercise and a healthy lifestyle

Studies have shown that physical exercise can keep us mentally healthy and reduce the symptoms of anxiety and depression. Our brain, like any other part of our body, benefits from a healthy diet and regular exercise. If you are not currently active it can be difficult to get motivated. Enlisting the support of friends or family and setting small achievable goals can help to get you going.

Avoid using alcohol and other drugs to manage emotions as this can lead to dependency. Ensure that you are getting enough sleep and maintain a regular sleep routine.

Give to others

Contributing to your community is a great way to increase your sense of wellbeing. Community involvement can increase social contact and provide a sense of meaning and purpose to your life. There are many opportunities to volunteer your time



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in community organisations or through less formal channels; you could help a neighbour or become involved with a charity.

To find opportunities to volunteer in your community or with a cause that you care about visit websites such as GoVolunteer or SEEK Volunteer.

Positive thinking

Many people describe themselves as 'worriers'. People who regularly worry might feel like they have no control over these negative thoughts. By being aware of negative and unhelpful thoughts you can challenge them: try writing down what you are most concerned about and any positive actions you might take to address your worries.

Alternatively, focus on acting on the things that are within your control or those that you can positively influence.

You may also find it helpful to speak to a psychologist or mental health professional to learn techniques to manage chronic worry. You can also speak with your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider for advice on tactics to help manage your negative thoughts.

Practising mindfulness or meditation can also help reduce negative thought patterns. Undertaking a mindfulness course or using one of the apps available is a good way to get started. Learning these techniques and being more present can help you manage your thoughts and feelings.

HELP IS ALWAYS AVAILABLE

Your employer provides you with access to the Converge EAP: our counsellors are always available — 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year — when you call 1300 687 327.

Mental health support is always available. If you or someone you know is at risk, get help; contact emergency services on 000.

For additional support related to mental health you can also contact the beyondblue Support Service by calling 1300 224 636.

Converge offers 24-hour, 7 day a week counselling support. Contact us via the Converge App, our website or phone - it's easy!



Download our **App** to book an appointment.



Visit **convergeinternational.com.au** to Live Chat with a counsellor.



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