

Improving Your Mental Health: Tips and Resources

1. Take a personal day. Sometimes, you just need to give yourself a break and spend some time doing things you love to improve your mental health. Watch your favorite show, bake some cookies, or go for a walk to clear your head. It's extremely helpful and will help you reset and refresh yourself.
2. Exercise. Exercise helps you become stronger and more confident, and studies show that it can help your mental health just as much as it helps your physical health. Try going for a walk or jog outside for as little as 20 minutes, and see how you feel.



Photo Credit: Bruno Nascimento

3. Reach out to a friend/someone you like or love. Many people are feeling the effects of social distancing during the pandemic. A lot of us miss our friends or miss social interaction in general. Try reaching out to someone you haven't talked to in a while, or try Facetiming a friend or family member. Talking and laughing with someone you care about will help brighten your mood and improve your mental health.
4. Try/learn something new. Lots of people have been developing new skills during the pandemic to keep themselves occupied. Trying something new can help you make new friends and will likely give you a reason to be proud of yourself, which really helps improve mental health and a low self esteem. So before you go about your regular

routine again, consider picking up a new instrument or learning a new language.

5. Download some fun apps. It may seem a little dumb, but downloading a fun new app can really brighten your day and can help you learn something new whenever you want. Apps like Facts, Curiosity, and Health IQ can help you learn new things and live a healthier and more curious/aware lifestyle.



Photo Credit: Rami Al-zayat

6. Create and meet a fitness goal with a friend. We included this tip in our exercise manual, but it's definitely worth mentioning again. Reaching fitness goals (ex. being able to hold a plank for 3 minutes) help you become stronger and happier, and can increase your self esteem. Working out regularly with a friend is even more beneficial because it'll be twice the celebration when you finish, and you'll be cheering each other on along the way!
7. Cut toxic people out of your life. Toxic friendships and relationships can really affect mental health in a negative way. People like this bring you down, and sometimes it's important to consider whether or not the friendships are worth the drama and/or the toll they have on you. Sometimes, drifting away from a bad friend and making a new friend is one of the best things you can do for yourself. (We know this is easier said than done, but it's definitely good to start thinking about it).
8. Reflect/keep a journal. Keeping a gratitude journal or diary can help you feel happier and improve your mental health. Reflecting on your mood and day can help you become more aware of your daily stressors and try to lessen them to boost your mental health. If keeping a journal is too extra/time consuming for you, download an app like Reflectly or Happyfeed to help you reflect.

9. Try meditating. Meditation can greatly benefit your mental health. Apps like Calm, Meditation Nest, and MyLife Meditation, as well as many others, can really help you ground yourself to become more productive and mindful.



Photo Credit: Jared Rice

10. Get more sleep. Getting more sleep will help you feel more well rested and ready to take on the day. Sleep also has a huge effect on your mental health. Try to go to bed and turn off your phone earlier. There are tons of apps (Sleep, Sleep Cycle, etc.) that can help you. But you can also start by trying chamomile tea or warm milk before bed, making sure you don't go to sleep right after eating, and turning a fan on while you sleep (you'll sleep better if you're a bit chilly).
11. Take advantage of airplane mode. This is one of the easiest and simplest tips here, but we can't stress it enough. Social media and notifications can be a stressor, and if they're overwhelming you, take a break! Putting your phone on airplane mode to do something you love quietly without interruption can be great for your mental health!
12. Try doing something for someone. Helping others or volunteering can really help you feel better about yourself and the world, improving your mental health and self esteem. You can help a stranger, donate to a worthy cause, or try volunteering virtually to make a difference.

13. Stay positive. Yes, this is easier said than done. However, trying your best to stay positive can really help you improve your mental health. Try thinking the best of people and of yourself, and practice a more positive mindset. Apps like ThinkUp, I am, and Motivation can help you look at the world in a more positive way.
14. Try caffeine. This sounds counterintuitive, and yes, too much caffeine is bad for you. However, having a bit of coffee or dark chocolate once in a while can help boost your mood, increase your energy, and improve your mental health.



Photo Credit: Tetiana Bykovets

15. Plan something to look forward to. Planning a short trip or a (socially distanced!) dinner with a friend or even a nice warm bath at the end of the day can improve your mood and mental health. It'll also help you tackle the day with more excitement and energy.
16. Go for a walk/spend time with an animal. Spending time with dogs and cats has been scientifically proven to improve mental health in some cases. Going on a walk or spending time with a pet will help you be happier and more active.
17. Laugh more. Try downloading an app like FailArmy or Funny Laughs to make yourself laugh. Or, try watching stand up comedy, a funny show (The Office, Parks and Rec, etc.) or listening to a comedy podcast. Laughing greatly improves your mental health and will help you stay more positive! *Note: not all comedy apps, stand-up shows, etc. are appropriate for younger listeners/viewers. Check with your parents before watching or downloading.