"Happiness can be found even in the darkest of times, if one only remembers to turn on the light." — Albus Dumbledore.

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

Over the course of your life, if you experience mental health problems, you’re thinking, mood, and behaviour could be affected. Many factors contribute to mental health problems, including: Biological factors, such as genes or brain chemistry. Life experiences, such as trauma or abuse .Family history of mental health problems

Mental health problems are common but help is available. People with mental health problems can get better and many recover completely.

Stresss man q

“Learn to say no to demands, requests, invitations, and activities that leave you with no time for yourself. Until I learned to say no, and mean it, I was always overloaded by stress. You may feel guilty and selfish at first for guarding your down- time, but you’ll soon find that you are a much nicer, more present, more productive person in each instance you do choose to say yes.”

― Holly Mosier

Stress management offers a range of strategies to help you better deal with stress and difficulty (adversity) in your life. Managing stress can help you lead a more balanced, healthier life.

Stress is an automatic physical, mental and emotional response to a challenging event. It's a normal part of everyone's life. When used positively, stress can lead to growth, action and change. But negative, long-term stress can lessen your quality of life.

Hapii q

“It’s up to you today to start making healthy choices. Not choices that are just healthy for your body, but healthy for your mind.”― Steve Maraboli

happiness, in psychology, a state of emotional well-being that a person experiences either in a narrow sense, when good things happen in a specific moment, or more broadly, as a positive evaluation of one’s life and accomplishments overall—that is, subjective well-being.

Happiness can be distinguished both from negative emotions (such as sadness, fear, and anger) and also from other positive emotions (such as affection, excitement, and interest). This emotion often co-occurs with a specific facial expression: the smile.

Medi

“To know yourself is to be confident. To be confident is to fearlessly express your potential.” -Andy Puddicombe, Headspace co-founder

Meditation has been practiced for thousands of years. Meditation originally was meant to help deepen understanding of the sacred and mystical forces of life. These days, meditation is commonly used for relaxation and stress reduction.

Meditation is considered a type of mind-body complementary medicine. Meditation can produce a deep state of relaxation and a tranquil mind.

During meditation, you focus your attention and eliminate the stream of jumbled thoughts that may be crowding your mind and causing stress. This process may result in enhanced physical and emotional well-being.

Brain heal

"You are not your illness. You have an individual story to tell. You have a name, a history, a personality. Staying yourself is part of the battle." — Julian Seifter

The brain is arguably the most complex organ in the human body and recognized as the body’s command centre, influencing every aspect of life.

Brain health is the state of brain functioning across cognitive, sensory, social-emotional, behavioural and motor domains, allowing a person to realize their full potential over the life course, irrespective of the presence or absence of disorders.

Numerous interconnected determinants pertaining to physical health, healthy environments, safety and security, learning and social connection as well as access to quality services influence the way our brains develop, adapt and respond to stress and adversity, giving way to strategies for both promotion and prevention across the life course. Optimizing brain health by addressing these determinants not only improves mental and physical health but also creates positive social and economic impacts, all of which contribute to greater well-being and help advance society.

**Healthy habbits to improve mental health**

Because of the various causes of mental health problems and differing experiences of individuals, mental health is a difficult and complex topic.

While different people may have different needs, creating healthy habits can help maintain or improve mental health. Here are some professionally-recommended habits used by students at Utah State University to help ease and control the symptoms of mental health problems.

**1.Get active**

Exercise is one of the most common recommendations to improve mental health. According to multiple studies, regular exercise is shown to not only help with physical fitness, but to relieve stress, improve sleep and decrease symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Angela Johnson, a USU student majoring in outdoor recreational therapy, uses exercise and outdoor activities to handle the stress of schoolwork and other responsibilities. “For me, it’s a let-out,” Johnson said. “It helps me get away from the things that are stressing me out.” She also said that getting outside and exercising helps her be happier and more productive.

Whether it is taking a walk around campus or going snowboarding, daily physical activity is an effective tool in increasing confidence and building positive mental health.

**2.Limit screen time, especially social media**

With the advent of the smartphone, we now have screens in front of us almost constantly. Recent research from The Nielsen Company found that American adults spend over 11 hours a day interacting with media. While social media allows for easier communication between friends and family, it may be taking a toll on the mental health of its users.

A study from the University of Pennsylvania observed 143 undergraduate students and their mental health statuses. One group of students limited their social media use to 30 minutes a day while the other group used it as normal. After three weeks, the group that limited social media use showed a significant decrease in loneliness and depression.

As a result, researchers in this study recommend setting a limit of 30 minutes of social media use every day. Self-monitoring screen time is also believed to decrease symptoms of anxiety.

Monitoring social media use and screen time is now very easy, as many smartphones have built-in or downloadable apps that can help track app usage.

**3.Find activities you enjoy**

Nicole Fleming, a student studying computer engineering, found that art helped her deal with stress during high school when she started sculpting. Since coming to USU, she has taken up painting to help her maintain her mental health. “It takes a level of focus that has just helped me forget about what things are really stressful,” she said.

While painting might not be your activity of choice, it is important to find hobbies to do outside of schoolwork. These types of activities, whether it be playing the guitar or board games with friends, can help wind the brain down after a stressful day and give a chance to focus on other things in life.

**4.Watch what you eat**

When feeling down or anxious, it can be easy to fill meals with heavily processed comfort food. However, research shows that people will be better off eating healthy, both mentally and physically.

In a post on the blog of the Harvard Medical School, Doctor Eva Selhub argued that what we eat influences our brains and how we function. She said that research has shown that diets high in fruits and vegetables, fish and unprocessed grains help regulate the levels of serotonin in our bodies. Serotonin helps regulate things like our sleep schedules and moods. This improved regulation results in better physical and mental health.

**5.Take time to be mindful**

Mindfulness is a common technique to help maintain mental health, and it has become more popular in recent years. According to Jon Kabat-Zinn, director of the Center for Mindfulness at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, mindfulness is “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and nonjudgmentally.” Mindfulness is one of the core principles of meditation and yoga.

Jessica Spackman, a senior in technical communication at USU, has found that doing yoga multiple times a week has helped her take control of her mental health. “I am prone to anxiety and have noticed a difference in the days and weeks when I have done yoga and when I have taken time for myself,” she said.

Yoga and meditation resources can be easily found on the internet. Spackman, for example, practices yoga on her own by using YouTube, including the popular channel “Yoga with Adriene.”

**Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder**

ADHD is one of the most common neurodevelopmental disorders of childhood. It is usually first diagnosed in childhood and often lasts into adulthood. Children with ADHD may have trouble paying attention, controlling impulsive behaviors (may act without thinking about what the result will be), or be overly active.

**Signs and Symptoms**

It is normal for children to have trouble focusing and behaving at one time or another. However, children with ADHD do not just grow out of these behaviors. The symptoms continue, can be severe, and can cause difficulty at school, at home, or with friends.

**A child with ADHD might:**

daydream a lot

forget or lose things a lot

squirm or fidget

talk too much

make careless mistakes or take unnecessary risks

have a hard time resisting temptation

have trouble taking turns

have difficulty getting along with others

**Types**

There are three different ways ADHD presents itself, depending on which types of symptoms are strongest in the individual:

* Predominantly Inattentive Presentation: It is hard for the individual to organize or finish a task, to pay attention to details, or to follow instructions or conversations. The person is easily distracted or forgets details of daily routines.
* Predominantly Hyperactive-Impulsive Presentation: The person fidgets and talks a lot. It is hard to sit still for long (e.g., for a meal or while doing homework). Smaller children may run, jump or climb constantly. The individual feels restless and has trouble with impulsivity. Someone who is impulsive may interrupt others a lot, grab things from people, or speak at inappropriate times. It is hard for the person to wait their turn or listen to directions. A person with impulsiveness may have more accidents and injuries than others.
* Combined Presentation: Symptoms of the above two types are equally present in the person.Because symptoms can change over time, the presentation may change over time as well.

**Causes of ADHD**

Scientists are studying cause(s) and risk factors in an effort to find better ways to manage and reduce the chances of a person having ADHD. The cause(s) and risk factors for ADHD are unknown, but current research shows that genetics plays an important role. Recent studies link genetic factors with ADHD.1

In addition to genetics, scientists are studying other possible causes and risk factors including:

* Brain injury
* Exposure to environmental risks (e.g., lead) during pregnancy or at a young age
* Alcohol and tobacco use during pregnancy
* Premature delivery
* Low birth weight

Research does not support the popularly held views that ADHD is caused by eating too much sugar, watching too much television, parenting, or social and environmental factors such as poverty or family chaos. Of course, many things, including these, might make symptoms worse, especially in certain people. But the evidence is not strong enough to conclude that they are the main causes of ADHD.

**Diagnosis**

Deciding if a child has ADHD is a process with several steps. There is no single test to diagnose ADHD, and many other problems, like anxiety, depression, sleep problems, and certain types of learning disabilities, can have similar symptoms. One step of the process involves having a medical exam, including hearing and vision tests, to rule out other problems with symptoms like ADHD. Diagnosing ADHD usually includes a checklist for rating ADHD symptoms and taking a history of the child from parents, teachers, and sometimes, the child.

**Treatments**

In most cases, ADHD is best treated with a combination of behaviour therapy and medication. For preschool-aged children (4-5 years of age) with ADHD, behaviour therapy, particularly training for parents, is recommended as the first line of treatment before medication is tried. What works best can depend on the child and family. Good treatment plans will include close monitoring, follow-ups, and making changes, if needed, along the way.

**Addiction**

An addiction is a chronic dysfunction of the brain system that involves reward, motivation, and memory. It’s about the way your body craves a substance or behavior, especially if it causes a compulsive or obsessive pursuit of “reward” and lack of concern over consequences.

Someone experiencing an addiction will:

* be unable stay away from the substance or stop the addictive behavior
* display a lack of self-control
* have an increased desire for the substance or behavior
* dismiss how their behavior may be causing problems
* lack an emotional response

Over time, addictions can seriously interfere with your daily life. People experiencing addiction are also prone to cycles of relapse and remission. This means they may cycle between intense and mild use. Despite these cycles, addictions will typically worsen over time. They can lead to permanent health complications and serious consequences like bankruptcy.

That’s why it’s important for anyone who is experiencing addiction to seek help. Call 800-622-4357 for confidential and free treatment referral information, if you or someone you know has an addiction. This number is for The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). They’ll be able to provide more information, including guidance on prevention and mental and substance use disorders.

What are the types?

According to U.K. charity Action on Addiction, 1 in 3 people in the world have an addiction of some kind. Addiction can come in the form of any substance or behavior.

The most well-known and serious addiction is to drugs and alcohol. Nearly 1 in 10 Americans have an addiction to both. Of the people with a drug addiction, more than two-thirds also abuse alcohol.

The most common drug addictions are:

* nicotine, found in tobacco
* THC, found in marijuana
* opioid (narcotics), or pain relievers
* cocaine

Substances or behaviors that can trigger addiction

In 2014, Addiction.com, a website devoted to helping those with addiction, listed the top 10 types of addictions. Besides nicotine, drugs, and alcohol, other common addictions include:

* coffee or caffeine
* gambling
* anger, as a coping strategy
* food
* technology
* sex
* work

Technology, sex, and work addictions are not recognized as addictions by the American Psychiatric Association in their most recent edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

Some habits or social behaviors look like addiction. But in the case of an addiction, a person will typically react negatively when they don’t get their “reward.” For example, someone addicted to coffee can experience physical and psychological withdrawal symptoms such as severe headaches and irritability.

What are the signs?

Most signs of addiction relate to a person’s impaired ability to maintain self-control. This includes changes that are:

* social, such as seeking out situations that encourage a substance or behavior
* behavioral, such increased secrecy
* health related, such as insomnia or memory loss
* related to personality

Someone with an addition won’t stop their behavior, even if they recognize the problems the addiction is causing. In some cases, they’ll also display a lack of control, like using more than intended.

Some behavior and emotional changes associated with addiction include:

* unrealistic or poor assessment of the pros and cons associated with using substances or behaviors
* blaming other factors or people for their problems
* increased levels of anxiety, depression, and sadness
* increased sensitivity and more severe reactions to stress
* trouble identifying feelings
* trouble telling the difference between feelings and the physical sensations of one’s emotions

What causes addiction?

Addictive substances and behaviors can create a pleasurable “high” that’s physical and psychological. You’ll typically use more of certain substances or engage in behaviors longer to achieve the same high again. Over time, the addiction becomes difficult to stop.

The brain

Some people may try a substance or behavior and never approach it again, while others become addicted. This is partially due to the brain’s frontal lobes. The frontal lobe allows a person to delay feelings of reward or gratification. In addiction, the frontal lobe malfunctions and gratification is immediate.

Additional areas of the brain may also play a role in addiction. The anterior cingulate cortex and the nucleus accumbens, which is associated with pleasurable sensations, can increase a person’s response when exposed to addictive substances and behaviors.

Other possible causes of addiction include chemical imbalances in the brain and mental disorders such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder. These disorders can lead to coping strategies that become addictions.

Early exposure

Experts believe that repeated and early exposure to addictive substances and behaviors play a significant role. Genetics also increase the likelihood of an addiction by about 50 percent, according to the American Society of Addiction Medicine.

But just because addiction runs in the family does not necessarily mean a person will develop one.

Environment and culture also play a role in how a person responds to a substance or behavior. A lack or disruption in a person’s social support system can lead to substance or behavioral addiction. Traumatic experiences that affect coping abilities can also lead to addictive behaviors.

What are the stages?

Addiction will often play out in stages. Your brain and body’s reactions at early stages of addiction are different from reactions during the later stages.

The four stages of addiction are:

* experimentation: uses or engages out of curiosity
* social or regular: uses or engages in social situations or for social reasons
* problem or risk: uses or engages in an extreme way with disregard for consequences
* dependency: uses or engages in a behavior on a daily basis, or several times per day, despite possible negative consequences

What are the complications?

Addiction that’s left untreated can lead to long-term consequences. These consequences can be:

* physical, such as heart disease, HIV/AIDS, and neurological damage
* psychological and emotional, such as anxiety, stress, and depression
* social, such as jail and damaged relationships
* economic, such as bankruptcy and debt

Different substances and behaviors have different effects on a person’s health. Serious complications can cause health concerns or social situations to result in the end of a life.

How do you treat addiction?

All types of addiction are treatable. The best plans are comprehensive, as addiction often affects many areas of life. Treatments will focus on helping you or the person you know stop seeking and engaging in their addiction.

Common therapies include:

* medications, for mental disorders such as depression or schizophrenia
* psychotherapy, including behavioral, talk, and group therapies
* medical services, to help treat serious complications of addiction, like withdrawal during detox
* addiction case manager, to help coordinate and check ongoing treatment
* inpatient addiction treatment
* self-help and support groups

You can also visit your primary care doctor for an evaluation. The type of treatment a doctor recommends depends on the severity and stage of the addiction. With early stages of addiction, a doctor may recommend medication and therapy. Later stages may benefit from inpatient addiction treatment in a controlled setting.

You can book an appointment with a primary care doctor in your area using our Healthline FindCare tool.