

HealthyBy Choice

...One Day at a Time

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Mental Health Month

The coronavirus (COVID-19) has resulted in a crisis that affects not only our physical health and daily lives, but also our mental health. This year's theme for **Mental Health Month** is "**You are NOT alone**". There is help available to support you in being your strongest, healthiest self.

The first step is recognizing when you need emotional and mental support.

There's no easy test that can let someone know if they or someone they are close to is experiencing mental illness.

Each illness has its own symptoms, but common signs of mental illness in adults and adolescents can include the following:

- Excessive worrying or fear
- Feeling excessively sad or low
- Confused thinking or problems concentrating and learning
- Extreme mood changes, including uncontrollable "highs" or feelings of euphoria
- Prolonged or strong feelings of irritability or anger
- Avoiding friends and social activities
- Difficulties understanding or relating to other people
- Changes in sleeping habits or feeling tired and low energy
- Changes in eating habits such as increased hunger or lack of appetite
- Changes in sex drive
- Difficulty perceiving reality (delusions or hallucinations, in which a person experiences and senses things that don't exist in objective reality)
- Inability to perceive changes in one's own feelings, behavior or personality ("lack of insight" or anosognosia)
- Overuse of substances like alcohol or drugs
- Multiple physical ailments without obvious causes (such as headaches, stomach aches, vague and ongoing "aches and pains")
- Thinking about suicide
- Inability to carry out daily activities or handle daily problems and stress

Don't be afraid to reach out if you or someone you know needs help.

Reach out to your health insurance, primary care doctor or state/county mental health authority for more resources.

Contact the National Alliance on Mental Health HelpLine at 800-950-NAMI to find out what services and supports are available in your community.

If you or someone you know needs help now, you should immediately call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 or call 911.



**YOU ARE
NOT
ALONE**



Stop the Stigma!



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BETTER SLEEP MONTH

May is Better Sleep Month, an important component of good mental and physical health. Here are 9 tips to help you get high-quality rest.

Better Sleep Tip #1: Get Physical. Exercise of any kind releases the natural chemicals in your body that enhances mood and boosts relaxation, called endorphins, making physical activity throughout the day one of the best ways to help get you to sleep at night.

Better Sleep Tip #2: Give Hypnosis a Try. Hypnosis has been proven to induce a state of deep relaxation and improve focus, as well as providing natural treatment for insomnia. Hypnosis can be done with a trained professional or you can give self-hypnosis a try with the help of a CD, book, or online hypnosis course.

Better Sleep Tip #3: Relax with a Massage. Massage has been used for many years as a way to relax the mind *and* the body. Deep tissue massage has been shown to increase relaxation and calming of the mind, while also improving the immune system and relieving recurring pain.

Better Sleep Tip #4: Mindful Meditation. Meditation has been used for centuries to calm and clear the mind, while also energizing the spirit. Research has shown that meditation has been very beneficial to those that suffer from insomnia and other sleep disorders.

Better Sleep Tip #5: Mellow Out with Music. Music has been proven to have a profound effect on the body, and music with a slower tempo has shown to lower blood pressure and stress levels, making it an ideal addition to bedtime routines. Music can also fight depression and reduce tension. Choose soothing and relaxing music before bed.

Better Sleep Tip #6: Progressive Muscle Relaxation. Relaxing your body to encourage sleep can be done by slowly and systematically tightening and then relaxing major muscle groups, starting from the toes and working up to the head.

Better Sleep Tip #7: Movement Meditation. Tai Chi is also called meditation in motion, and it was designed to connect the body and the mind through flowing movements and coordinated deep breathing, a perfect pre-bedtime practice.

Better Sleep Tip #8: Guided Imagery. Visualization is a relaxation method that relieves stress and tension, allowing you to fall asleep faster and easier. Guided imagery is done by picturing a peaceful scene such as a moonlit beach or a mountain stream and can be done with the aid of a recording on YouTube or an app.

Better Sleep Tip #9: Calm Yourself with Yoga. Yoga helps you to achieve a peaceful and relaxed sleep through stretching of the limbs and purposeful breathing techniques. Practicing yoga on a regular basis throughout the day will help your body to slip into sleep more naturally.



Start every day with a good night's sleep!

