

Discussions on Mental Health have increased over the past few months. The reason behind it is obvious — many people are experiencing mental health issues, and unlike earlier times, people have become more open about how they feel.

According to [Mentalhealth.gov](https://www.mentalhealth.gov), 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.

So it goes without saying that mental health is pretty important and today, we are going to dive into this subject and discover at least 7 ways to improve mental health.

Early Signs of Mental Health Problems

Biological factors, such as genes or brain chemistry; life experiences, such as trauma or abuse; and family history of mental health problems usually contribute to mental health issues.

While it may sound like too much, but following behaviours do count as early signs of mental health problems —

- Constantly feeling less energetic
- Feeling numb — like nothing in the world matters
- Feeling helpless
- Secluding yourself from everyday activities
- Feeling irritated for no reason
- Having unpredictable mood swings
- Feeling the urge to harm yourself
- Believing things that don't make sense

However, there are ways you can try to improve mental health.

Following are 7 ways to improve your mental health —

1. Eat a low-sugar, nutrition-rich diet

You might think it's a cliché, mom-says-so advice but researchers and nutritionists all around the world agree that green vegetables and fruits are no less than life-saving drugs. And guess what, they hate junk food!

As a matter of fact, you should focus on eating plenty of fruits and vegetables along with foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids such as — fish, soybean, walnut, chia seeds.

Researchers of the American Psychological Association have found that the stomach plays a significant role in stabilizing our moods. It is believed that over 90 per cent of the body's supply of Serotonin — a mood stabilizer — is produced by a certain bacteria found in our guts.

Studies have even shown that stress reduces the gut bacteria necessary for our well-being. So now you know why our moms keep nagging us for stealing midnight not-so-healthy snacks!

2. Get adequate sleep for 7 to 9 hours daily

Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise. This famous line has been said to all of us at least once. While it might sound annoying, productivity experts and health influencers never tire themselves over how good and timely sleep can change people's lives.

And it's actually true, there exists an abundance of research claiming the positive effects of good sleep on mental wellbeing. Now, the question stands, what is good sleep or better - how to get good sleep?

Simple, consider the following three aspects, work on them and ensure getting a relaxing goodnight sleep -

- A poor sleep routine paves way for anxiety, depression and other mental health issues. So to get rid of them and get good sleep, it's important to **address the concerns/worries** that are stopping you from dozing off at night. It could be *work pressure, financial worries, fights in relationships* or something even more serious. You need to address them so as to sleep well at night.

- **The environment** you choose to sleep in matters a lot. It has a significant effect on your mental health and day-to-day routine. The *temperature, noise levels, light* etc. constitute your sleeping environment. If you wish to sleep nicely, try a place where you find most comfortable, a place where there's less noise, moderate temperature as per the season, and dim lighting.
- There are **things you can do to sleep quicker** on a night when you hardly feel like sleeping. *Drinking warm milk, night walks as well as listening to soothing music* can do wonders on the nights you can't sleep. However, you should avoid devices or things that get you hooked - you know exactly the device I mean, YES IT'S YOUR PHONE!

Sleep is as essential as drinking, breathing and eating. Think over what you just read in those pointers and try planning your sleep. Once you get accustomed, sleep at least 7 to 9 hours every night and find your mental health issues fading away.

3. Do 30-minute low-intensity exercise for 5 days a week

An article titled, *Effects of exercise on anxiety, depression and mood* on Pubmed.gov states - Aerobic exercises, including jogging, swimming, cycling, walking, gardening, and dancing, have been proved to reduce anxiety and depression. Yeah, I just mentioned a highlighted piece from a medical journal to voice the words of our fitness freak friends - DUDE, MEET ME AT THE GYM!

Well, you don't really need to go to the gym if you wish to avoid mental health problems. All you need to do is spare some time off from your hectic schedule and do some light exercise, like those mentioned above.

Exercising daily boosts your lifestyle. And morning is the best time to exercise, irrespective of what people might say. Simply because exercising then becomes a part of the routine of how you start your day.

So if you're buzzing with excitement and want to avoid mental health problems, start with 30-minute routine exercises like walking, stretching, jogging and at least do it for 5 days a week. And try not to take consecutive days off as it might break the flow.

4. Practice meditation for 15 to 20 minutes every day

This is possibly the most popular advice you'd get if you share your mental health problems because meditation is by far the most effective solution in most cases.

Meditation is a process of concentrating one's mind for a time duration. There are multiple ways of meditating, however, the ultimate goal is one - to attain a feeling of relaxation or mental peace.

In fact, it's been said and proved that nothing cures stress but meditation. And as stress can lead to adverse health issues such as heart diseases, diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure and more, it's quite necessary to apply all means to reduce stress.

So if you can sit straight for 15 minutes and focus your mind, it will help you filter through all the worries and stuff that blocks your mind and makes you stressed. Listening to acoustic music or mindful podcasts while meditating are pretty useful for your mind to focus.

5. Learn new skills that stimulate your brain

If you keep your brain working, there's a low chance that you'd face mental health issues. In order to do so, try learning new and brain-stimulating skills.

Learning a mentally challenging skill can improve cognitive functioning and enhance your memory. In fact, neurologists have proven that learning a new skill changes the physical structures of the brain. By stimulating neurons in the brain, more neural pathways are formed; the more pathways that are formed, the faster impulses can travel.

Yep, a little bit of brain science to get you going!

So start learning new skills. Courses and classes are a great way to do this. Try solving puzzles, play games where you need to use your brain, and more. If learning a new skill gets you to do calculations and stuff, there's nothing better!

If it feels cumbersome, try learning something in a field that interests you. Yep — the whole purpose of learning a new skill is to keep your brain active and consistent. Therefore, it's better you don't choose to learn something that might be boring to you.

6. Socialize with like-minded people

YO, CHILL! You don't need to do everything by yourself. The best part of being human is that you get to TALK. I'm not joking around, socializing really helps if you're dealing with mental health problems.

Just look back in your life, socializing with other human beings has been the greatest part of your cognitive development. Your early relationships with parents, relatives and friends taught you how to speak and express your emotions. Thus, socialization lies at the core of every human being.

But what really works for your mental health is interacting with the people who share your interests, who are not too judgmental and understand you better compared to other people in general.

There are certain socialization activities your brain craves — but you might know yet — so I'll just list them down:

- Video chats with friends and family members — those who live at a distance from you
- Have meals with your loved ones
- Hangout on weekends with colleagues who match your vibe
- Join a club or organization — that works for a cause you relate to
- Go on trips with folks who are fun to be with

It's as simple as that. While solitude is important, social isolation can backfire. So in order to avoid mental health problems such as anxiety and sleeplessness, socialize with like-minded people and find your life-changing once and for all.

7. Seek professional help if mental health issues keep getting serious

Promise yourself not to be ashamed — if nothing works, be honest and open about your mental issues and seek professional help. There are many, especially in

India, who deny recognizing mental health issues as medical issues. But that should never be the case.

Mental therapy is the sure shot way to get rid of mental health problems. If only you convince yourself to talk to a mental health expert, things start rolling in your favor.

The best way to contact a mental health expert is by directly booking an appointment via a phone call, or you could try sending an email, if that option is available.

Following are some of the high-ranking websites of mental therapists you can find in Mumbai:

Getting it straight

Understand this, mental health issues are internal and often, other people can't recognize them. Therefore, it has to be you to catch the early signs of mental health problems and do something about it, even if it requires pushing your boundaries.

As we conclude this list of ways to improve your mental health, a simple piece of advice would be —

- Know you are amazing
- Know that things can get better from here
- Know that YOU CAN DO IT

A little bit of self-motivation and you'll find yourself super comfy with applying the above 7 ways to improve your mental health.