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## Self-Care - Caring for Your Mental Health

Components of mental health include emotional, psychological, and social well-being.

Self-care can help maintain mental health and support treatment and recovery of a behavioral health problem.

Take time to participate in activities and practices that enrich your life and improve physical and mental health. This can help you manage stress, lower your risk of illness, and increase your energy. Small, consistent activities can have big payoffs.

**Here are some self-care tips from National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH):**

- **Get regular exercise.** Just 30 minutes of walking every day can boost your mood and improve your health. Small amounts of exercise add up, so don't be discouraged if you can't do 30 minutes at one time.
- **Eat healthy, regular meals and stay hydrated.** A balanced diet and plenty of water can improve your energy and focus throughout the day. Pay attention to your intake of caffeine and alcohol and how they affect your mood and well-being—for some, decreasing caffeine and alcohol consumption can be helpful.
- **Make sleep a priority.** Stick to a schedule, and make sure you're getting enough sleep. Fall asleep faster by reducing blue light from devices and screens before bed.
- **Try a relaxing activity.** Explore relaxation or wellness programs or apps, which may incorporate meditation, muscle relaxation, or breathing exercises. Schedule regular times for these and other healthy activities you enjoy, such as listening to music, reading, spending time in nature, and engaging in low-stress hobbies.
- **Set goals and priorities.** Decide what must get done now and what can wait. Learn to say “no” to new tasks if you start to feel like you're taking on too much. Try to appreciate what you have accomplished at the end of the day.
- **Practice gratitude.** Remind yourself daily of things you are grateful for. Be specific. Write them down or replay them in your mind.
- **Focus on positivity.** Identify and challenge your negative and unhelpful thoughts.
- **Stay connected.** Reach out to friends or family members who can provide emotional support and practical help.
- **Customize your self-care.** It can look different based on your needs and interests. Try different practices until you find what works for you.

**Seek professional help** if you experience any of these symptoms for more than two weeks.

- Changes in appetite or unplanned weight changes
- Difficulty getting out of bed in the morning because of mood
- Difficulty concentrating
- Loss of interest in things you usually find enjoyable
- Inability to complete usual tasks and activities
- Feelings of irritability, frustration, or restlessness

**Need help?** Contact your agency's employee assistance program, Corps Care at [PHSCorpsCare@hhs.gov](mailto:PHSCorpsCare@hhs.gov), or your primary care manager, and for crisis support contact **988**.