

Healthy Mind, Healthy Body – What is the Connection?

Can your state of mind influence your physical health? More and more researchers, scientists, physicians, and patients are beginning to recognize that mental wellness and physical well-being are intimately related. People with positive attitudes generally enjoy life more. They feel good about themselves and others are able to sustain relationships with friends and family, and carry out responsibilities at home and at work. Studies show that optimists have a lower risk of early death, fewer physical and emotional problems, and more energy. They are happier and healthier. Your outlook on life, how you think, feel and act **can** influence how well and how long you live.

To help you improve your mental health, consider the following suggestions:

1. Build self-esteem and confidence

- Identify your strengths and weaknesses
- Be willing to improve
- Set attainable personal goals
- Don't compare yourself with others
- Strive to do your best

2. Manage stress

- Handle one thing at a time
- Share your feelings by talking things over
- Be flexible
- Be realistic
- Learn to say, "NO"

3. Take care of your body

- Don't abuse drugs or alcohol
- Stop smoking and avoid second hand smoke
- Exercise regularly
- Choose a well-balanced diet, include whole grains, fruits, and vegetables,
- Low fat dairy products and lean meat/poultry
- Get plenty of rest

4. Learn to relax

- Practice deep breathing exercises
- Try prayer/meditation
- Think pleasant thoughts
- Visualize (form mental pictures) positive expectations or outcomes
- Start a hobby such as gardening or painting

5. Express and handle your emotions in a positive way

- Share your problems with someone you trust
- Stop all negative self-talk, verbalize statements in positive terms, - e. g., "I am a capable person"
- Give and accept support
- Let go of the past
- Open yourself to laughter and humor

6. Cultivate love and friendship

- Make time for and spend time with friends and family
- Be cheerful, helpful, and nice to others
- Volunteer – helping others gives a sense of purpose and satisfaction

Your expectations, emotions and thoughts determine how well you cope with everyday living. By learning how to improve your mental health, you can increase your chances of a longer, healthier, and more satisfied life.