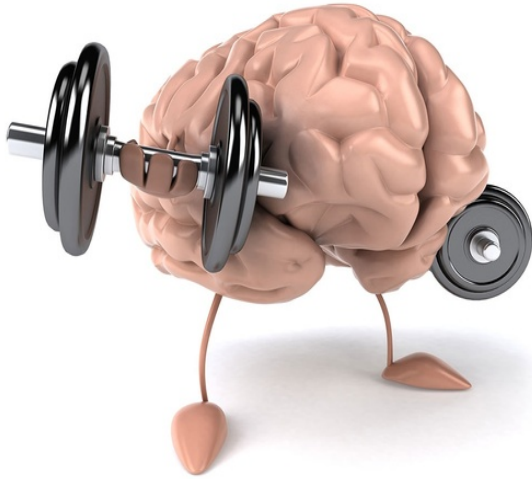




A W A K E N
p s y c h o l o g y

healing
through
growth



MENTAL WELLNESS ... WHAT YOU CAN DO

This month's newsletter follows on from the last two months. Over the last two months we've described some of the most common and not so common mental health challenges in the Australian population. This month we follow up with tips on how to keep yourself mentally fit and well.

Click [here](#) to read last month's newsletter, and to access all our previous articles.

Keeping Mentally Fit and Well!

By Amanda Pulford
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With almost half (45%) of the population experiencing a mental disorder at some time in their life (that's about 8.6 million people!!), I bet you're asking, "Is there anything I can do to help myself because I already have a mental health challenge", or maybe you're asking, "Is there anything I can do to prevent getting mentally unwell"? Great questions by the way.

Well, the answer is **absolutely**. Read on for 6 tips to keep you mentally fit and well.

If you're interested in our previous articles, please click [here](#)

If you've got a suggestion for an article, or there's something more you would like to hear about, please send us an email - click [here](#)

Nourish Yourself

It's no surprise, but eating has changed significantly over the past few generations. Now we eat more highly processed foods – foods that have added unhealthy fats, sugars, colours, and preservatives. And it should also be no surprise that unhealthy foods lead to poorer physical health, such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke and even early death. But what you may not know is that unhealthy foods also lead to poorer mental health, such as increased depression and anxiety. So, foods that are good for your physical health are also good for your mental health!

Healthy eating, focussing on wholefoods, such as vegetables, salads, fruits, legumes (e.g. chickpeas, lentils), wholegrains, seeds and raw nuts; fish, chicken and lean red meats; and healthy fats such as olive oil, will certainly boost your mental health. Also, current research is showing that dietary modification may prevent depression and reduce anxiety. Great news!

Challenge : *Can you swap one unhealthy food for a healthier food for the next two weeks?*

Keep Active

Did you know that exercise helps your brain ... not just your body? It pumps blood to the brain so you think more clearly, it increases the size of the memory centres in your brain, it increases connections between the nerve cells in the brain, it releases chemicals like endorphins and serotonin (the 'feel good' hormones), it gets you out in the world, and it helps to reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation. Regular exercise also reduces your stress, reduces symptoms of depression and anxiety, helps with recovery from mental health, and improves your sleep.

We should all be exercising, moderately to intensely, 30 minutes most or all days of the week (you can combine 2 x 15-minute sessions if you like). And make sure that you choose an activity that you enjoy. Maybe even get someone to join you. Or take your dog, or someone else's, for a walk – they'll love you for it. And don't forget to practise mindfulness while you're at it.

Challenge : *Can you do at least 15 minutes of exercise nearly every day, for the next two weeks?*

Get Adequate Sleep

There's so much in the media about sleep and getting good quality sleep. Not enough sleep makes us think negatively, is linked to depression (and vice versa), is linked to anxiety, and makes us more emotionally vulnerable. On the flip side, adequate sleep helps us to be more resilient, deal with adversity, and bounce back. And good sleep helps our brain to process our day, to store memories, it helps us to concentrate, helps us to be creative, and helps us to learn.

Did you know that you should be sleeping between 7 and 9 hours every night? And to get good quality sleep keep a regular go to bed and regular wake time, don't have caffeine or cigarettes too close to bed (or at all), have minimal or no sugar close to bed, exercise during the day, eat well, reduce your alcohol intake, ensure your bedroom is quiet and dark, ensure your bedroom is cool, ensure your bed is comfortable, remove all electronic equipment from your bedroom, don't 'clock watch', and if you're not sleeping try not to worry about it (the worry only makes you wake up).

Challenge : *What's one sleep habit you can improve for the next two weeks that will help you get between 7 and 9 hours sleep a night?*

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Be Kind To Yourself and Others

When we're not kind to ourselves we talk to ourselves harshly, we don't take care of ourselves, we feel isolated, we over identify with our struggles, we experience more symptoms of depression and anxiety, and we're less kind to others. And funnily enough, when we're not kind to others we isolate ourselves, we experience more loneliness, we experience more negative thoughts, we experience more symptoms of depression and anxiety, and we're harder on ourselves.

So, if you can be kinder to yourself, celebrate your uniqueness and talk compassionately to yourself, in return you'll take better care of yourself, you'll experience less symptoms of depression and anxiety, you'll be more resilient, you'll compare yourself less, and you'll feel part of the world. And if you can be kinder to others, you'll find you talk kindly to and about others, you will increase your social wellbeing, you'll make a positive contribution, and you'll find yourself performing small acts of kindness.

Challenge : *Can you do at least one kind thing for yourself, and for someone else, over the next two weeks?*

Share Time With Others

Loneliness is becoming a topic of conversation as we're starting to realise how detrimental feeling sad or distressed about being by yourself, or feeling disconnected from the world or those around you, is. Loneliness can lead to aches and pains, headaches, illness or worsening of medical conditions, low energy, lack of motivation, difficulties with sleep, increase in or loss of appetite, increased use of alcohol, smoking, medications, feelings of worthlessness or hopelessness, increased symptoms of depression and anxiety.

If you find you're experiencing loneliness focus on building relationships with family, with friends, and in your community (with those the same age, or older or younger than you). Make sure you invest time and energy by making contact, inviting people out, inviting people over, talking to someone, having a support network, and make sure you open up when you're troubled.

Challenge : *Can you spend quality time with friends over the next two weeks?*

Live Your Purpose

Purpose is a person's sense of resolve or determination, the reason for which someone exists. Not living your purpose leads to increased stress, decreased happiness, decreased energy, decreased motivation, not making future plans, not having a direction, increased depression, increased anxiety, and continually asking yourself "Is this is?".

Find your purpose : be optimistic, do things you love, use your talents, live your dreams, help others, and be actively involved in your community.

Challenge : *Find ways to live your purpose ... every day if you can!*

The Take Away

Whether you currently are finding your mental health challenging, or you're wanting to prevent future mental health challenges, follow these 6 tips to mental wellness.

And always seek support as soon as you can – from family, from friends, from your GP, from a mental health professional – if your mental health isn't improving.

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Talks

There's No Shame In Taking Care of Your Mental Health by Sangu Delle

https://www.ted.com/talks/sangu_delle_the_re_s_no_shame_in_taking_care_of_your_mental_health?language=en

When stress got to be too much for Sangu Delle, he had to confront his own deep prejudice: that men shouldn't take care of their mental health. Delle says: "Being honest about how we feel doesn't make us weak - it makes us human."

We All Need To Practice Emotional First Aid by Guy Winch

https://www.ted.com/talks/guy_winch_the_case_for_emotional_hygiene?language=en

We'll go to the doctor when we feel flu-ish or a nagging pain. So why don't we see a health professional when we feel emotional pain: guilt, loss, loneliness? Guy states we should practice emotional hygiene - taking care of our emotions, our minds - with the same diligence we take care of our bodies.

How To Manage Your Mental Health by Leon Taylor

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rkZl2gsLUp4>

Leon is a former competitive diver who competed at three Olympic Games. Leon explains that prolonged psychological stress is the enemy of our mental health, and physical movement is our best weapon.

Useful Web Pages

Understanding Mental Health and Wellbeing

<https://everymind.org.au/mental-health/understanding-mental-health/understanding-mental-health-and-wellbeing>

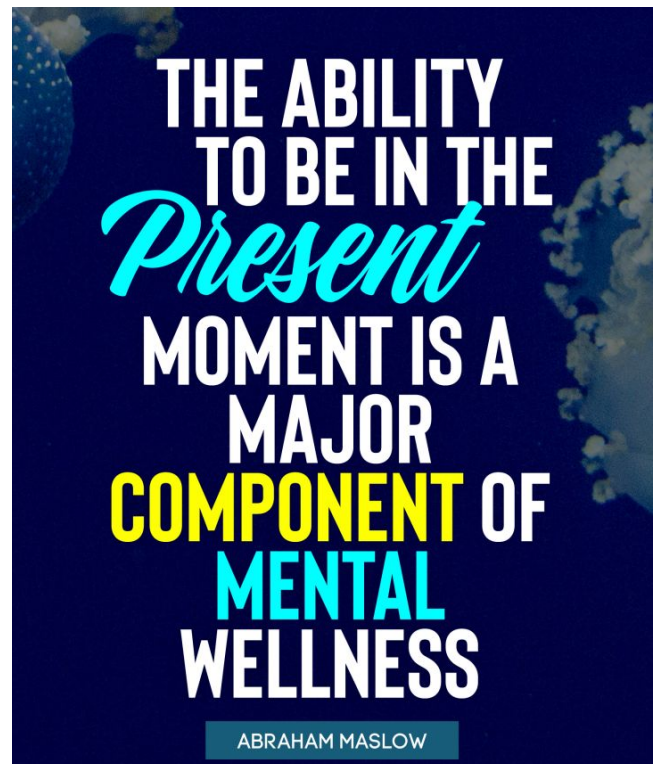
Being mentally healthy and living well is important to every single one of us – whether we are living with a mental illness or not.

The Mental Wellness Routine That Will Change Your Life

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/living-forward/201703/the-mental-wellness-routine-will-change-your-life>

Everyone wants to be happy. What most people mean when they say they want happiness is that they want to feel a positive sense of mental well-being. Mental wellness however, requires some effort, in the same way physical health does.

As always, if you would like some help, please feel free to contact us on 0488 954 195, admin@awakenpsychology.com.au or [click here](#)



If at any stage, you find you need urgent assistance – go to your closest **Emergency Department**, call the **Mental Health Emergency Line** on 13 14 65, or call **Lifeline** on 13 11 14.

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