

How do you stay mentally healthy? There are many ways you can become or stay healthy. Mental health isn't only about your brain but can also be affected by your body, time, and thinking habit.

SCHEDULES AND ROUTINES

Schedules and routines are important because they help manage your life so it's less overwhelming. Sticking to a schedule helps you plan ahead. Knowing when you wake up and go to bed makes it easier to manage the rest of your time.

Managing your time makes it easier to set and achieve goals in your life. Make sure you also plan to do physical activity in your schedule. Staying active is very important to both your mental and physical health. Please see your physician before beginning any new physical exercise program to ensure it's okay for your health and safety.

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Social connections are the relationships you have with the people around you. They can be connections with family and friends or even casual acquaintances/conversations with people such as the pharmacist or convenience store clerk. Having social connections helps keep you healthy because human connection is important. Your emotions tend to be more positive if you spend time with your support system, such as your friends and family. However, it is also important to know your personal boundaries and expectations for other people.



SENSORY DIET

A sensory diet is a specific plan of physical activities and accommodations developed to meet a person's sensory needs. Making your home or room soothing is important so you have somewhere to go that feels safe to relax and decompress. Exploring what feels good to your sensory system and using this knowledge in your personal space is very important. It's especially prudent if your sensory system is different than most other people's systems. A small size sensory kit can be useful when traveling or when you're out and about. For example, ear plugs, gum, a fidget item, and rubber bands are good items for your sensory travel kit. Knowing what works for you is important when putting together a travel kit.

COPING SKILLS

Try different coping skills and practice them on a regular basis. Deep breathing, counting backwards, and grounding exercises are a few coping skills that may work for you. It takes time and effort to effectively use a coping skill. Make sure you practice enough to get used to the skill. Practice the skill in a few different situations before deciding if it works for you. Coping skills are great because you can “take” them anywhere. You can also learn as many as you want and use them in any way that is helpful for you.



SPECIAL INTERESTS

Special interests can include things like trains, comic books, video games, crafting, and sports teams. They can be useful to connect to others who have similar interests. Looking for special interest groups can be a great way to meet similar-minded people. For example, if you love LEGO, you could check out [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) or similar sites to see if you can find a LEGO club. Special interests are often associated with joy, happiness, and other positive emotions. You can sometimes use your special interest to learn more about and engage with the world. For example, if you love animals, you could check out your local Humane Society or get involved in local rescues or animal welfare rescues and shelters. You can join Facebook groups or similar social media groups that are focused on animals as well. Engaging in your special interests within moderation is a great, healthy way to spend time doing what you love with others. However, it can be easy to spend too much time, money, or energy on special interests and neglect other areas of your life. Remember to keep a balance between your special interests and your other daily tasks and responsibilities.

