



Faith-based mental well-being guidebook

Practice healthy habits



Wellness includes:

Physical: Nourishing a healthy body through exercise, nutrition, sleep, etc.

Mental: Engaging the world through learning, problem-solving, creativity, etc.

Emotional: Being aware of, accepting and expressing our feelings, and understanding the feelings of others.

Spiritual: Searching for meaning and higher purpose in human existence.

Social: Connecting and engaging with others and our communities in meaningful ways.

Environmental: Fostering positive interrelationships between planetary health and human actions, choices and wellbeing.

What is holding you back from being mentally and physically healthy?

Part of the reason mental health is often ignored is that there is still a lot of stigma surrounding mental illness.

Another reason is that it's not always easy to see. Unlike physical illnesses, which often have visible symptoms, mental illness can be harder to detect.

For many people, mental illness is seen as a sign of weakness. There's a belief that if you can't "just snap out of it," there's something wrong with you. This couldn't be further from the truth. Mental illness is a real medical condition that should be treated with the same care and attention as any other illness.

Faith-based communities sometimes promote stigma in encouraging congregants to pray and rely on their higher power *instead* of seeking professional assistance rather than *along with* reaching out for help.

People may think or say things such as:

- "Give it to God"
- "Prayer changes things"
- "Just pray about it"
- "What happens in this house stays in this house"
- "They have issues"
- "Too blessed to be stressed"
- "So and so has been through worse"

Stigma not only directly affects individuals with mental illness but also their loved ones who want to see them start to feel better.

Stigma around mental illness is a significant issue in some diverse racial and ethnic communities and it can be a major barrier to people from those cultures accessing mental health services.

That's why it's so important to pay attention to your loved ones and be on the lookout for signs of distress. If someone you know seems withdrawn or loses interest in activities they used to enjoy, it could be a sign they're struggling mentally.

Mental health impacts

Mental health impacts overall health and can contribute to other chronic illnesses. Just like physical health, mental health is a vital part of our lives. It affects how we think, feel and behave.

When our mental health becomes impaired, it can have a negative impact on our lives. We may not be able to function as well at work or school and our relationships may suffer. Conditions like anxiety and depression have been linked to an increased risk for developing chronic illnesses including heart disease and diabetes.

It's so important to seek help if you're struggling mentally. By getting treatment, you can not only improve your mental health, but also your physical health.

Causes and treatment

There's no single cause for mental health concerns. Many factors can contribute to risk for mental illness. Every culture in the world experiences mental illness in its population. Mental illness is universal.

As our world is beautifully rich in cultural and religious diversity, it's important to recognize and be sensitive to differences and how they relate to mental health diagnosis, clinical care and other services.

Risk factors include:

- Early adverse life experiences such as trauma or a history of abuse
- Experiences related to other chronic medical conditions, such as cancer or diabetes
- Biological factors or chemical imbalances in the brain
- Use of alcohol or drugs
- Feelings of loneliness or isolation

A mental health professional can make an assessment based on a person's particular pattern of symptoms. The mental health professional will discuss with the person how the treatment will work and explain any possible side-effects.

The person can ask the mental health professional questions about the proposed treatment. They might also recommend accessing other health professionals, community supports or resources as an adjunct to treatment.

There are many treatment and support options to help people experiencing mental health conditions. When someone first starts to develop symptoms of a mental health condition, it's important to contact a general practitioner or primary care doctor for help.

Mental health services are increasingly provided in the community by case managers, crisis teams and community support programs.



How to help someone who's struggling

Listen. Let someone really express their experiences. Being someone they can talk to is essential when giving support.

Don't judge. Don't criticize or minimize the way they feel. You may not be able to understand exactly what they're going through, and that's okay.

Ask what, not why. When you ask questions, avoid asking "why" questions, and instead ask "what" questions. Asking "why?" can have a judgmental tone even if you don't mean it that way.

Give information — don't diagnose. Don't assume they have an illness or condition. Provide direction to resources that can identify and treat mental health issues.

Act as a bridge. You can connect someone to mental health resources. Resources include family, school guidance, mental health professionals and organizations like <https://NavHope.org>.



If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health emergency or immediate safety concern, dial 988 to speak to someone immediately.

Ready to talk to a counselor? Access online therapy sessions:

<https://www.cvs.com/content/health-hub/mental-health-counseling?icid=healthhub-sd-depression>

CVS Be Seen, Be Heard

<https://cvshealthbeseenbeheard.cvshealth.com>

The AAKOMA Project helps diverse teenagers/families achieve optimal mental health.

<https://aakomaproject.org>

Taking care of your mental and emotional well-being is just another part of self-care. Reaching out for support is an act of strength and courage.



 **CVS**Health

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