

# Mental health



## Warning signs of mental health issues

The National Alliance on Mental Illness notes that each mental illness has its own symptoms, so anyone concerned about their own mental health or the health of a loved one can speak with a mental health professional for more information. In the meantime, the NAMI notes that these are some common signs of mental illness in adults and adolescents.

- Excessive worrying or fear
- Feeling excessively sad or low
- Feelings of confusion or difficulty concentrating and learning
- Extreme mood changes, including uncontrollable “highs” or feelings of euphoria
- Prolonged or significant feelings of irritability or anger
- Avoiding friends and social activities
- Difficulty understanding or relating to other people
- Changes in sleeping habits or feelings of fatigue and low energy
- Changes in eating habits, such as increased hunger or lack of appetite
- Changes in sex drive
- Difficulty perceiving reality (delusions or hallucinations, in which a person experiences and senses things that don't exist in objective reality)
- Inability to perceive changes in one's own feelings, behavior or personality. Some individuals experience a lack of insight known as anosognosia,

which NAMI describes as unawareness of one's own mental health condition.

- Overconsumption of substances such as alcohol or drugs
- Multiple physical ailments without obvious causes, such as headaches, stomach aches and vague and ongoing aches and pains
- Suicidal thoughts
- Difficulties handling daily life, including an inability to carry out activities or handle problems and stress that arises each day
- An intense fear of weight gain or concern with appearance

Pre-adolescent children also can experience mental illness, which can manifest itself through these symptoms:

- Changes in academic performance
- Excessive worry or anxiety. Some children may fight with parents to avoid going to bed or school.
- Hyperactive behavior
- Frequent nightmares
- Frequent disobedience or aggression
- Frequent temper tantrums

Individuals who are experiencing any of these symptoms or those who recognize them in loved ones, including children, are urged to contact a health care professional, including their general physicians, who may be able to recommend a mental health specialist.

More information is available at [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org).

## Tips to boost mental wellness

The most successful health care regimens incorporate a number of variables to help individuals achieve optimal health. Physical health garners considerable attention when developing a health care regimen, but it's equally important that individuals prioritize mental health as well.

Mental health has garnered considerable attention in recent years, and that's not solely a byproduct of the pandemic. Prior to the onset of the pandemic, in 2019 the World Health Organization launched the WHO Special Initiative for Mental Health (2019-2023). That's an effort to ensure access to quality and affordable care for mental health conditions in 12 priority countries. The WHO initiative reflects the growing recognition of the importance of mental wellness and its role in overall health.

Protecting mental health and boosting mental wellness can have a profound impact on individuals who are struggling with stress, anxiety and depression. The National Council for Mental Well-Being recommends these strategies to boost mental wellness and protect mental health.

• **Express your feelings.** Individuals should not feel the need to keep their problems to themselves. Speak with someone you trust about your feelings and share details of any problems you may be having. Keeping feelings bottled up inside can compound

issues that are already adversely affecting your mental health.

• **Establish boundaries.**

Individuals should not feel compelled to engage in activities they don't enjoy or no longer want to do. It's everyone's right to say “no,” and exercising that right can improve mental health for individuals who routinely find themselves saying “yes” to activities they no longer enjoy. For example, many working professionals may feel compelled to respond to work emails long after quitting time. That can have an adverse effect on mental health by making individuals feel as though they're constantly working. Answering emails only during working hours can provide the mental break individuals need to unwind and relax.

• **Recognize the role that physical health can play in protecting mental health.** The National Council for Mental Well-Being notes that physical self-care helps individuals manage symptoms associated with mental health challenges. Eating right, exercising regularly and getting enough sleep can help individuals overcome mental health challenges and reduce risk for conditions such as anxiety and depression.

## There is hope even when your brain tells you there isn't



- Psychiatric Evaluation
- Medication Management
- Psychotherapy

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• **Find a healthy hobby.** A healthy hobby can quell boredom and serve as a coping mechanism when issues like stress and anxiety begin to feel a little overwhelming. A healthy hobby can serve as a distraction and provide a getaway when individuals feel as though their mental health is suffering.

• **Don't hesitate to seek help.** Individuals have no issue visiting their physicians when they experience physical symptoms of illness or injury. That same lack of hesitation should be present when mental health issues arise. Mental health professionals can provide the same valuable services for mental health that physicians do for physical health.

Strategies to protect mental health are important components of health care regimens. Individuals can learn more at [mentalhealthfirstaid.org](http://mentalhealthfirstaid.org).