Building Positive Mental Health in Nine Simple Steps

Effective habits for a healthy life
Take simple steps every day to improve mental health and enhance well-being

- Get Good Sleep
- Exercise Regularly
- Avoid Alcohol and Drugs
- Practice Meditation
- Connect Socially
- Reduce Screen Time / Media Exposure
- Learn new Skills
- Eat Healthy
- Connect with Nature
1. Get Good Sleep

Practice sleep hygiene to rest the mind and body every day. Insufficient sleep creates a cycle of stress.

- Sleep in a quiet, dark and well ventilated environment
- Keep a regular sleep schedule, and try to sleep and wake up at the same time every day
- Avoid alcohol and caffeine or other stimulants before going to sleep
- Exercise regularly, as physical activity promotes deep and restful sleep
- Avoid watching TV, or using the phone immediately before going to sleep

How Sleep Deprivation Cycle Affects Individuals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sleep Deprivation Cycle Recommendations</th>
<th>ADULTS at least</th>
<th>CHILDREN at least</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sleep Duration</td>
<td>7-8 hrs</td>
<td>10 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(hours of sleep every night)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Get Regular Exercise

World Health Organization recommends at least:

- **150 mins** of moderate-intensity or **75 mins** of vigorous intensity aerobic physical activity throughout the week.
- **60 mins** of moderate-to-vigorous-intensity physical activity daily.
- **3 days** of physical activity a week to enhance balance and prevent falls for older adults, with poor mobility.

People who exercise regularly, experience fewer mental health issues than those who do not.

The Lancet Psychiatry
3. Avoid Alcohol and Drugs

Alcohol and drug abuse exacerbate mental health issues, creating a negative cycle of dependence.

- Avoid situations and people associated with cravings
- Learn to say no! Don’t give in to peer pressure
- Engage in social and creative activities

* Refer to this [NIMHANS document](https://nimhans.ac.in) on de-addiction for more details
4. Practice Meditation

Yoga techniques—*asanas* (postures), *pranayama* (deep breathing) and *dhyaan* (meditation)—improve mental health.

Meditate for at least 15 minutes every day, and combine it with some asanas. *And remember, it takes two months of daily practice to make a behaviour into a habit!*

You can visit the Centre for Yoga (NICY) classes created to cope during the COVID-19 Pandemic by NIMHANS: https://nimhansyoga.in/

Begin by sitting or lying down in a comfortable position, close your eyes, breathe gently and focus on your breath.
5. Keep Socially Connected

Spend time with family and friends and volunteer for causes you genuinely care about. Meaningful social connections significantly improve mental health.

- Be open to sharing and listening
- Be kind and empathetic to those around you
- Keep regular connection with close friends/family
- Connect on calls/video chat if you’re unable to go outside
- Listen to music you enjoy
6. Learn new skills

Learning new skills boosts self-confidence and self-esteem. It provides a sense of purpose which triggers positive emotions in the brain.

Engage in fun and play based activities. Even small experiences that trigger pleasant emotions promote overall well-being.

Pick up new skills—craft making, drawing, singing, dancing, cooking, coding etc.
7. Reduce Screen Time/Exposure to Media

Excessive use of social media leads to stress, anxiety and depression. Adolescents who spend more time on social media platforms and smartphones, are more likely to report mental health issues.

- Limit social media consumption
- Limit exposure to TV/Online News etc.
- Replace media consumption with social interactions
8. Eat Healthy

Eat a balanced diet—combination of vegetables, whole grains, protein and fruit—to maintain brain health.

- Fats/Oils: Total 35g/Day
  - Visible fats
- Cereals & Millets: 4 Rotis, 4 Cups of Rice
- Fruits: Seasonal 1 Medium
- Vegetables: 7½ Cup Veg Curry, 7-8 Slices of Salad

Nutritional deficiencies have shown to cause symptoms of depression, fatigue, cognitive decline, and other mental health issues.

- Sugars: Total 25g/Day
- Milk & Milk Products: Milk 1½ Cup or Direct/indirect through Tea/Coffee/Curd
- Veg Protein (Pulses): 1 Cup Dal
- Non-Veg Protein: Substitute 1½ Cup Portion of Pulses with Egg/Meat/Chicken/Fish
9. Connect with Nature

Spending time in natural environment reduces depression and anxiety. Interaction with indoor plants also has a positive impact on mental health.

Try to spend at least two hours a week in outdoor green spaces. Create a small green area at home with potted plants.

How Growing Plants Creates A Positive Emotional Cycle

- Caring and Nurturing
- Sense of Motivation and Purpose
- Sense of Achievement
- Reduction in Stress/Negative feelings
- Sense of Connectedness and Self-confidence
Do not neglect your mental health

Everyone experiences mental health issues in life. Taking individual steps to build mental health resilience, and seeking external support when necessary, makes it easier to cope with such issues.

Positive mental health enables people to realize their potential, cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively, and contribute to their communities.

Mental health affects

COGNITIVE
EMOTIONAL
SOCIAL
PHYSICAL
well-being
Help someone going through mental health issues

The needless stigma and shame associated with mental health issues, prevents people from asking for help. If you know someone who may be experiencing such issues, encourage them to take steps towards building positive mental health.

LISTEN - Listen to the person closely, with empathy, and without judging

INQUIRE ABOUT NEEDS AND CONCERNS - Assess and respond to various needs and concerns—emotional, physical, social and practical (e.g. childcare)

VALIDATE - Show that you understand and believe the person. Assure the person that he/she is not to blame

ENHANCE SAFETY - Discuss a plan to protect the person from harm

SUPPORT - Support the person by providing access to information, services and social support

Do not discriminate against those undergoing mental health issues!
Do not ignore the symptoms!

Mental health issues show up in many different ways. Learning to recognise these signs is an essential step towards building positive mental health.
Remember!

It is normal to experience mental health issues. You can take control of your mental health by taking small conscious steps everyday for prevention and treatment.
Many resources are available for individuals who need external support to cope with mental health issues. Make sure you reach out if you feel any sign of mental distress!
Government and NGO Helplines

These are some government and NGO resources available on mental health. There are many more organizations and departments working on mental health across India.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOVERNMENT</th>
<th>NGOs and ORGANIZATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NIMHANS</td>
<td>Vandrevala Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08046100007</td>
<td>7204599836/37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Timings - 24x7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIMHANS Perinatal Mental Health Helpline</td>
<td>Languages - English, Hindi, Gujarati (For other languages, calls transferred to specific counsellors)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number for Women - 8105711277</td>
<td>Based in : Gujarat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[<a href="http://www.perinatalpsynimhans.org/">http://www.perinatalpsynimhans.org/</a>]</td>
<td><a href="mailto:help@vandrevalafoundation.com">help@vandrevalafoundation.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day and time: Specialized Outpatient Services are available every Friday between 9 AM and 2 PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone – 080 – 26995547</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:perinatalnimhans@gmail.com">perinatalnimhans@gmail.com</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[<a href="https://www.mohfw.gov.in/pdf/MentalHealthIssuesCOVID19NIMHANS.pdf">https://www.mohfw.gov.in/pdf/MentalHealthIssuesCOVID19NIMHANS.pdf</a>]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Institute of Psychiatry, Ranchi</td>
<td>Aasra Central Helpline Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800-345-1849</td>
<td>9820466726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timings : 24 hr helpline no.</td>
<td>Hours : 24 hours, 7 days a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can directly talk to psychologists</td>
<td>[<a href="http://www.aasra.info/helpline.html">http://www.aasra.info/helpline.html</a>] (It contains information of Suicide Prevention Helpline Directory for 17 States and 3 UTs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[<a href="https://cipranchi.nic.in/">https://cipranchi.nic.in/</a>]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Commission for Women</td>
<td>Sahai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Violence Help-line- Phone 181</td>
<td>080-25497777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:sahaihelpline@gmail.com">sahaihelpline@gmail.com</a></td>
<td>Languages – English, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timings - 9.30-5.30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student and Child Helpline</td>
<td>Suicide, Depression and Addiction Helpline Numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1098</td>
<td>[<a href="https://indianhelpline.com/SUICIDE-HELPLINE/">https://indianhelpline.com/SUICIDE-HELPLINE/</a>]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Ages : 0-18 years</td>
<td>Contains information of 29 organisations working in most parts of the country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timings : 24x7 hotline</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages : Available in all languages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These are some government and NGO resources available on mental health. There are many more organizations and departments working on mental health across India.
Mobile Applications on Mental Health

These are some of the numerous mobile applications in India that provide resources and support for mental health.

https://www.oowomaniya.com/
https://www.theinnerhour.com/
https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.epochs.will&hl=en_IN
https://www.therapyinindia.com/

https://yourdost.com/
https://www.wayforward.co.in/
https://www.wysa.io/
https://www.hopenetwork.in/

https://pinkymind.com/
http://www.ewellnessexpert.com/

https://www.juno.clinic/
http://epsyclinic.com/
https://ticktalkto.com/
By taking these steps, you can slowly **build positive mental health** and cognitive, emotional, social, and physical resilience for a fulfilling life.
Cope with normal stresses of life
Contribute to community
Work productively
Realize full capabilities