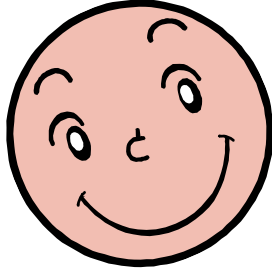


Look inside to find out how you can make your mind healthier and your life happier!



Unique Ways to Improve Your Mental Health

Everyone could use a mental health pick-me-up occasionally. For some of us, it may need to be more than “occasionally”! Even if you’re not dealing with trauma, serious mental illness or tragedy, the stresses of everyday life can chip away at you.

In this issue, we explore a variety of ways to improve our mental health. None of these methods are invasive or expensive, and most anyone can participate. Using these methods often and varying them will provide the best results. Some of these ideas have even been known to benefit the terminally ill and help prevent health problems, such as heart disease.

With several of these methods, you’ll find yourself helping others as well. What better way to improve the world...pass along your mental healthiness! Even children can implement these ideas and develop early healthy attitudes.

If you read this newsletter and find yourself unable to utilize these ideas, or feeling too depressed to even bother trying, contact us. Your **Employee Assistance Program** is here 7 days a week, 24 hours a day just for you and your family. We’ll help you discover what it is that keeps you from feeling great and provide opportunities for healing. Call us today at **1-800-899-3926**.

World’s Funniest Joke

In 2002, Dr. Richard Wiseman, a British psychologist, researched to discover the world’s funniest joke. His research included over 40,000 jokes and close to two million ratings. He eventually chose the joke that appealed to the widest range of audience: various countries, men and women, young and old. One result of the research was that Wiseman found variances in what makes different ethnic groups laugh.

According to Wiseman, “These results are really interesting. It suggests that people from different parts of the world have fundamentally different senses of humor...Also, we find jokes funny for lots of different reasons. They sometimes make us feel superior to others, reduce the emotional impact of anxiety-producing situations or surprise us because of some kind of incongruity.” According to a CNN.com article, jokes containing

103 words are extremely funny and jokes mentioning ducks often hit the funny

bone! To learn how laughter can strengthen your mental health, and to read the world’s funniest joke, see the article on page 2.



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Laughing Each Day Keeps the Doctor Away?



Are you ready? Okay...
Two hunters are out in the woods when one of them collapses. He doesn't seem to be breathing and his eyes are glazed. The other guy takes out his phone and calls the emergency services.

He gasps: "My friend is dead! What can I do?"

The operator says: "Calm down. I can help. First, let's make sure your friend is dead." There is silence, then a gunshot. Back on the phone, the guy says, "Okay, now what?"

Are you laughing? Do your sides ache? Are there tears rolling down your cheeks? Well, according to CNN.com, you should be, as this is the world's funniest joke, or at least it was in 2002.

Is it possible that aching sides, tears and the inability to catch your breath are all healthy? Well, they can be. Many doctors believe that large doses of laughter each day can strengthen your immune system. Social laughter, or laughing with others, appears to be especially beneficial. In particular, people who can laugh their way out of an awkward situation, rather than stress about it, will find themselves extremely healthy. One study out of the University of Maryland Medical Center suggests that people who respond with a sense of humor to difficult situations will be less likely to have heart disease. Although laughter can't undo the effects of a poor diet and no exercise, it can increase the body's ability to fight off such disease.

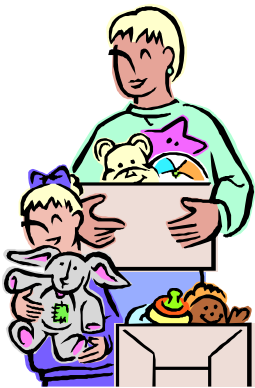
Laughing each day also improves your outlook or mental health. Anytime that you can use humor to combat stress, you will build up your mental stamina by not allowing the negative effects of stress to prevail.

The best news of all is that if you don't have a sense of humor, you can get one. It won't even cost you anything...except maybe a little pride. Here are a few things to get you started:

1. Read the comics, at least on Sunday. You may find some of your childhood favorites, such as *Peanuts*, will have you chuckling in no time.
2. Hang out with funny people. Laughter is contagious and some people just have a knack for making any situation hilarious.
3. Keep a particular joke, comic strip or even a silly photograph in sight at your desk or on your refrigerator, just to remind you to laugh.
4. Don't watch the news every day. They're definitely not out to make you laugh. Once a week will keep you up to date, or read the newspaper where you can select your bad news.
5. Rent some classic funny movies. Just remember...humor is subjective. What may seem funny to you may not be funny to your spouse.

Whether or not laughter actually builds the immunity system isn't that important. It's one of the few wonderful things in life that research has never proven to be unhealthy!

Laughter is one of the few things that research hasn't proven to be unhealthy!



Volunteer work promotes a healthier outlook and a strong sense of community, even in children.

VOLUNTEER WORK

One of the kindest ways to boost your own mental health is to help others. It's pretty difficult to feel bad about your own life when you are helping someone in need. There are so many needs out there and with the internet, you can research the various opportunities to volunteer. Two websites that match volunteers with needs include:

www.volunteermatch.org
www.servenet.org

There are a vast number of organizations and interests, from feeding children to saving animals to prison ministries. If you belong to a church or have some religious affiliation, you'll probably find a multitude of ways to help through that organization.

It is important to volunteer in an area that allows you to use a talent or an area in which you have an extreme interest. A CPA might volunteer to do taxes for those who can't afford tax services, or she might work with the American Cancer Society because her mom had breast cancer. A carpenter might help build homes for the needy or collect toys for children during the holiday season. Whatever your interest or gift, volunteer work will help your heart, introduce you to a new world, and keep you from feeling sorry for yourself!

Journaling: It's Not Just for Writers



Journaling used to be something that only writers did, keeping track of their brilliant book ideas. But journaling has a whole new market these

days...everyone's doing it. Some people journal to keep up with their garden's planting schedule. Others journal their dreams, or just their goals. Still more journal about their everyday life and how they feel.

Writing is just another form of communication. The great thing about journaling is that you can write things that you might not want to communicate verbally. Journaling gives you the opportunity to get things off your chest, see yourself work on problems and solve them, even write letters to someone who can't or won't read them.

There are many positives about keeping a journal including:

- ✍ **Stress is reduced** by getting emotions out that may otherwise cause you to brood or explode.
- ✍ **Organizing your thoughts** in writing is easier than in your head.
- ✍ **Solving problems** by brainstorming in your journal various options, allowing you to contemplate and explore, without responding impulsively.
- ✍ **Setting goals** in a journal helps you keep a written record and document progress toward achievement.
- ✍ **Spending time with yourself**, examining your thoughts can be very valuable and relaxing.
- ✍ **Recording meaningful events** with a written record that will last for a long time.
- ✍ **Creative development** such as poetry or lyric writing may reveal a new talent!

Expressing yourself in the written word is excellent mental health therapy.

You don't have to be suffering from illness or responding to tragedy in order to benefit from journaling.

Developing journaling habits isn't difficult, but here are a few tips that will help make the habit stick.

- 📖 **Start journaling on any day of the year.** Don't procrastinate by waiting until the first day of the year or month. Start today!
- 📖 **Choose a specific journal.** Rather than jot ideas on napkins and slips of paper, use a designated book. It can be as simple as a spiral bound notebook or as luxurious as a leather bound journal. There are almost as many types of journals as there are people: expensive/inexpensive, lined/unlined, locked/tied, etc. If you'd like a special journal type, check out major bookstore chains where there are an abundance from which to choose.
- 📖 **Journal anything at all.** You decide what goes in your journal. Write about dreams, problems, profound thoughts, or just your daily life.
- 📖 **Don't worry about how much to write each day**, just write! One day it may be pages and another, just a couple of sentences.
- 📖 **Make journaling a habit.** This doesn't mean you have to write every day, but develop a regular routine. You may find that you journal best right before going to bed at night or just after dinner when you're feeling comfortable.
- 📖 **Keep your journal confident.** Even if you're not writing about other people, it's a good policy to establish that your journal is off limits to others, unless you chose to share it.

Time heals many things. Writing your thoughts and ideas over a period of time can reveal to you how life changes and time works. Clarification, thought organization and evaluation can all be accomplished through journaling, resulting in a healthier state of mind.

The great thing about journaling is that you can write things that you might not communicate verbally.



Just for fun!

"It took me fifteen years to discover that I had no talent for writing, but I couldn't give it up because by that time I was too famous."

-Robert Benchley

Music and Your Mind

*Music has charms to soothe a savage
beast, to soften rocks, or bend a
knotted oak.*

-William Congreve

There is even music therapy, where
vocal and instrumental activities are
used help people communicate better,
feel safer and even improve physical
health, in some cases. The elderly

and those with chronic
illness are often
excellent candidates for
music therapy. While
rarely used in isolation,
it appears to be highly
effective when
combined with other
forms of mental health



treatment.

You can be your own music
therapist by experimenting with
various moods and different types of
music. Find what works for you and
use it! Some benefits of listening to
music include:

1. Helps with social interaction
2. Promotes positive emotional responses
3. Stress-relieving
4. Improves your concentration skills
5. Allows for verbal and non-verbal expression
6. Provides time to work through issues without being impulsive
7. Generally improves demeanor.

So, shut off the television and
turn on the CD player! Let music
unbend, soften and soothe you!

It has been often
documented that the right
music can bring solace and
peace. Of course, the wrong
music can also bring on an
awful headache! Learning
how different types of music
affect you is simply a matter
of listening. For some,
classical music reduces stress and yet
for others, it is simply reminiscent of
the elevator at the office. Whatever
your music choice may be, listening
to what heals your soul makes sense.
Developing an awareness of how you
are affected by different styles of
music is the first step.

If you feel down after a long
and stressful workday or an argument
with a loved one, find the type of
music that will sooth you. It won't
eliminate your problems, but it may
help you relax enough to think more
clearly and rationally.

Off to dinner with the in-laws
or an evening business meeting?
Listen to music that makes your heart
dance and increases your energy.

It's not a surprise that people
work out to music or that mother's
sing their children to sleep. Everyone
responds to music in some form.

*You can be your
own "music
therapist" by
experimenting
with various
moods and
different types of
music.*

*If you're having
difficulty being
emotionally
content, contact
your **Employee
Assistance
Program** at
1-800-899-3926.*

Publishing Information

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