

# MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH: THE CONNECTION

TARGET: Look & Feel Good

OUTCOME: Help Ourselves & Others

There is no denying the connection between the mind and body. However there is a disparity between this acknowledgment and the generalized attitude and reaction to mental and physical health. When physical issues happen, we treat them. When mental issues happen, it's an entirely different story. Denial. Complete disregard. Stigma. Double standards. Guilt. Shame. Miseducation. These are some reactions of how mental health is treated compared to physical health. In order to live a healthy, happy life this has to change.

## TIPS TO SUPPORT MENTAL & PHYSICAL HEALTH

### Plan for success

Assign yourself short term goals to knock out during the week. This can be anything from preparing healthy snacks to fuel your body to setting a reminder to go to bed on time or nap if you know you won't be able to get a full nights rest. Be intentional.

### Stay present and practical

Focus on the starting line instead of the finish line; everyday has different successes. Be kind to yourself and when you notice things aren't going as planned, reexamine and reassess. Focusing on the now allows you to move forward instead of staying stuck in the past.

### Set boundaries

There will always be action items. Taking care of yourself and setting boundaries between work and personal life is integral in maintaining balance and overall health. Saying no and accepting help are both signs of strength.

### Start one new habit each month.

Add a vitamin. Change your protein intake. Add an activity. Each month reevaluate your change and decide if you want to keep it or ditch it.

### Set a check-in alarm

Every hour, take 4 mins to take deep breaths and check in with your body. Where are you feeling tension? Are you hungry? Are you tired? After checking in with yourself, take action to feel better.

### Focus on you, not others

Do what works for you. The comparison game is draining so reframe what you tell yourself. Be your own advocate just like you advocate for others. Also, what works for you today may not work for you next month so it's okay to make a change.

### Schedule time for you

Self care isn't an option and looks different for everyone. Schedule in your selfcare just like you do a work meeting. Make at least one appointment each week and commit to it. Participating in activities that make you happy give you the much needed brain break you need to function at high capacity during the rest of your week.

- Poor mental health is a risk factor for chronic physical conditions.
- People with serious mental health conditions are at high risk of experiencing chronic physical conditions.
- People with chronic physical conditions are at risk of developing poor mental health.



\*WHO

Reducing the risk factors related to mental & physical health can be overwhelming but are manageable. Key aspects of prevention include increasing physical activity, prioritizing nutritious foods, fostering social support, as well as acknowledging & taking action to support overall health.



# SELF-CARE: ESTABLISHING HEALTHY HABITS

Prioritizing self-care can be a challenge, especially if the term "self-care" is a turn off or for "it's not for me"! Self-care is for everyone and is essential to prevent burnout. The healthier you are, the more energy you will have. One way to stay healthy is to practice this key habit. Self-care does not look the same for every person. Try incorporating one of these tips each month and with practice, taking care of yourself will become second nature.



Learn & practice stress reducing techniques



Attend to your own healthcare needs



Get adequate rest and nutrition



Exercise regularly



Seek and accept the help of others



Take time off without guilt



Participate in enjoyable activities



Seek counseling when needed



Practice common humanity: through shared experiences, i.e. peer support, online support groups



Set obtainable goals



Practice self-kindness



Practice mindfulness: identify and acknowledge your thoughts, emotions, feelings, and challenges

## THE NUMBERS

- 30% of Americans set aside time for self-care
- Men are more consistent with self-care than women
- A survey shows that 74% of people take care of their bodies as a form of self-care, while 57% think of self-care as taking a mental break. Both are self-care!

*\*Birchbox*



Practice the Healthy Habits of Emotional Wellbeing



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Mental Health. For Life.



# Hormones & Mental Health

Balanced hormones are vital not only for a healthy body, but also for a healthy mind. Understanding the link between hormones and mental health can help you identify if there is an issue to address.

There is a direct connection between hormones and Mental Health. When people are stressed, they will likely have higher levels of the hormone, cortisol. This hormone impedes chemicals like dopamine and serotonin, which help regulate sound mood, sleep, and digestion. That being said, hormones that control many physical functions also have a mental health component, especially if there's an imbalance.

## Mental Health Conditions That May be Caused by Hormonal Imbalance

- Depressed mood
- Anxiety
- Memory loss
- Difficulty concentrating
- Confusion

## You Can Help Regulate Your Hormones by Establishing Healthy Habits

### Eat a Healthy and Balanced Diet

Your body works best when it is balanced and your diet is a big part of that. Eating leafy greens, unprocessed foods and complex carbs help keep your hormones level. Vitamin D is a great supplement to regulate moods.

### Practice Healthy Sleep Patters

Circadian rhythms influence hormone levels. It is important to set a good sleep routine which includes both your wake up and bed times. One simple way to accomplish this goal is to limit your screen time close to bed.

### Exercise Regularly

Exercise not only increases good hormones like endorphins but it also eliminates bad ones by releasing and burning up cortisol and adrenaline while you exercise.

### Get Mental with Therapy or Meditation

Talk therapy and meditation help reduce stress and increase positivity in your life. They help teach healthy skills which includes regulating emotions.

70%

**of people with a hormonal imbalance are not aware of the other conditions that may arise**

# Accessing Mental Health Care

## WHY SEEK CARE

The emotional roller coaster that comes along with managing unbalanced hormones and health make it even more important to keep your mental health and emotional wellbeing in shape. Think of mental health care as a gym that will give you exercise techniques you need to get through it all. Asking for help can feel vulnerable and bring up many feelings.

Seeking therapy is a sign of strength. Therapists listen and help you make connections. They may offer guidance or recommendations when you feel lost. There is no single, correct approach in finding care. Prioritize YOU and everything else on your goal list will fall into place.

## WHO TO CHOOSE

- If you have a mental health condition that may benefit from medication, consult a mental health doctor, such as a psychiatrist or mental health nurse practitioner who has experience treating your condition (MD, DO, PMHNP, APN)
- If you're seeking help with emotions, behaviors, and patterns, consult with a therapist, counselor, or psychologist. Like medical doctors, these professionals have specialties, so find one who knows about your specific issue (credentials include LCSW, LPC, LMFT, PhD)



## WHEN TO SEEK CARE

- Anytime! Maintenance is essential to your mental health
- You feel like you can't do normal daily activities you previously were able to accomplish
- Thinking about or coping with an issue is taking more than one hour of your day
- You have a major life event
- You've developed habits to cope with your emotional health that are impacting you physically in a negative way



# Finding a Therapist

Finding a therapist can be daunting, every therapist has different training, experience, insights, and character to bring to the table. How can you find a therapist who is right for your needs?

## HOW TO FIND CARE

Common places to find mental health providers:

- Ask your primary doctor if they have a relationship with a mental health professional who can support you
- Ask your insurance company for a list of in-network providers or your company's employee assistance program (EAP)
- Ask trusted family or friends or other caregivers for recommendations
- Search nonprofit, government or mental health organization websites that have lists of providers
- Contact local or national mental health organizations
- Consider consulting your physician.

Some physical health issues may cause symptoms similar to mental health illnesses. A physician can navigate this concern.

## WHAT TO ASK PROVIDERS

Before the first session:

- Do you have experience working with people in my situation?
- Do you accept my insurance? If I don't have insurance, do you have a sliding scale for payments?
- What kinds of therapy do you offer?
- Do you have a regular opening that fits my schedule?

After the first session:

- Do you think we are a good fit?
- What will my treatment plan or our sessions look like?
- How often do you think I should come?
- Will we make goals together? How will we measure success?
- How do I reach you in an emergency?

**REMEMBER: YOU ARE IN CONTROL OF YOUR THERAPUTIC RELATIONSHIP. ADVOCATE FOR YOURSELF AND SEEK ANOTHER CARE PROVIDER IF YOU DO NOT FEEL LIKE IT IS A GOOD THERAPUTIC FIT. ONE SIZE DOESN'T FIT ALL!**



# Post Traumatic Stress: *Myths* and **FACTS**

## Myth 1: Anything can be traumatic

While it's true that many events can be stressful, something that is considered 'traumatic' is very specific. There is a DSM-V criteria for an event to be labelled traumatic: "exposure to actual death threat of death, serious injury or sexual violence". Those who directly experience such events, witnessing them in person, or are indirectly exposed to the event may experience trauma.

## Myth 2: PTSD occurs immediately after trauma

Following a traumatic event, people will experience stress reactions or "acute stress". However, a PTSD diagnosis requires that symptoms last for at least a month.

Although PTSD symptoms usually occur within 3-months following an event, it can sometimes emerge months or years later following a "trigger" that brings back memories of the event.

## Myth 3: Only people in the military get PTSD

While the military does have the largest percentage of diagnosis of PTSD, anyone can develop PTSD, even children. Trauma doesn't discriminate based on age, gender, or occupation.

## Myth 4: People with PTSD are crazy and/or dangerous

The media has inaccurately portrayed those with PTSD as crazy, or dangerous. Symptoms are often a result of coping with the memories of a traumatic event. Language and labels are important and words like "crazy" can be damaging and stigmatizing to those suffering with PTSD.

## Myth 5: PTSD is untreatable

PTSD is very treatable. The hardest part is recognizing the signs and symptoms, but following a diagnosis there are many highly effective treatment options. High risk occupations, like police responders, are now actively working to provide support and prevention.

## Myth 6: PTSD sufferers should get over it

Those with PTSD would love to just "get over it" but PTSD sufferers may often be re-activated and revisit painful past memories. Although PTSD is treatable, symptoms can persist even with effective treatment. By building resilience through personal coping skills, and/or professional help they can learn to live alongside their PTSD and recover in their own time.

## Myth 7: PTSD is a sign of weakness

PTSD is not a sign of weakness, neither is seeking treatment for it, or talking about it. PTSD is a human response to an uncommon experience. Recovery is possible. The biggest influencing factor in recovery is support. Destigmatizing PTSD and mental illness, helps those who are suffering to feel strong, which supports treatment outcomes.

