

# Maintain Mental Health

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**Mental illness comes in a variety of forms and for several reasons. Although a person may not be able to avoid all of the risk factors for mental illness, there are many things you CAN do to keep your mind and body health and strong.**

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## Mental Illness

In order to describe mental health it is important to understand mental illness. The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) states that “A mental illness is a condition that impacts a person's thinking, feeling or mood and may affect his or her ability to relate to others and function on a daily basis.”

Let’s look at the two common mental illnesses; anxiety and depression. Anxiety is excessive worry over specific things—like spiders or snakes—or general things, like whether you turned off the stove, locked the door, or will be late for work, etc. Anxiety often goes hand in hand with depression. Depression can be described as feelings of hopelessness and sadness for two weeks or more. Other types of mental disorders may include drug or alcohol abuse, severe mood swings called bi-polar disorder, memory disorders like Alzheimer’s disease, or sensory processing disorders like autism. Just as there is a vast array of medical conditions that a person may experience, mental illnesses also have a broad range of types, symptoms, and onset.

So how does a person get a mental illness? There’s no definitive answer that describes every person and every illness. Many mental illnesses have a genetic factor, meaning that they are more likely to run in families. Genetics isn’t the only determining factor, though. Some illness happens in response to situational factors—like being overly stressed and developing anxiety. Some illnesses appear in response to childhood abuse, trauma, or neglect, and some illnesses occur due to environmental toxins that interrupt normal brain development.

## Mental Health

There are many different environmental, behavioral, and situational conditions that can bring about mental illness, and the bad news is that some of them can’t be avoided. The good news, however, is that every person has the ability to live the best life they can to keep mental and physical illness at bay. The most important things to do (and I know you’ve heard this before) is get adequate sleep and rest, engage in regular physical exercise, and eat a healthy diet. Research shows that people who live a healthy lifestyle tend to have fewer health problems—both physical and mental—stronger interpersonal relationships, and a more positive outlook on life.

If you have more questions about mental health, mental illness, or ways to keep your mind and body healthy, call your Employee Assistance Program for free and confidential help.

Be well!

Source: <https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-Conditions>



## Self Care

Consistent self-care is essential to building and maintaining strong mental health. Here is a list of things you can do to stay healthy:

- Eat a healthy diet high in vitamins and nutrients. Drink plenty of water.
- Get a little exercise every day. You may not feel up to running a marathon, but a brisk walk around the block could really help.
- Get plenty of rest. Even if you can't sleep, there is value in rest.
- Pay attention to how you are doing. Don't push yourself too hard. Give yourself permission to slow down and listen to your body.
- Find ways to discuss and express your thoughts, feelings and emotions—by yourself and with others.
- Find support in family, friends, faith communities, and support groups.
- Practice mindfulness, meditation, or relaxation exercises regularly.
- Purposefully use music to regulate your emotions; lively music when you need energy, relaxing music when you need to focus, etc.
- Never underestimate the power of a deep breath. Deep breathing is a powerful tool that is always available to you.
- Look for silver linings. People grow through difficult circumstances. Consider how your circumstances have impacted you and how your resilience and character have grown as a result (this may take weeks, months or even years to determine).
- If your feelings become overwhelming, or you begin to think about harming yourself or someone else, consider calling your Employee Assistance Program for additional support.

### Where can I go for additional help?

There are many mental health professionals who specialize in helping people recover from mental illness. A good place to start is with a counselor from your EAP. They can meet with you for an assessment, provide you with strategies to help you cope or refer you to a provider who specializes in your area of need. There's no problem too big or too small for EAP. If you are thinking that maybe you should talk to someone, you probably should. Call today! We're here for you.

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