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Mental Health 101

By Jackie Billhymer

According to a 2017 national [survey](#) by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), nearly one in five adults in the United States live with a mental illness. Everyone faces challenges in life that can affect their mental health. Mental health is key to overall health and wellbeing because it can help you

- Cope with the stresses of life
- Be physically healthy
- Have good relationships
- Make meaningful contributions to your community
- Work productively
- Realize your full potential

Mental illness is common and there are treatments available. It is important that you are able to recognize your feelings and identify your emotions. Journaling is one way to do this. Write down at least three feelings you had over the course of the day and what caused them. Life has many ups and downs and it is important to remember that even good or desired changes can cause stress.

Connecting with each other is what human beings do. Talk it out with someone you trust. Check out the website [Make Sure Your Friends Are Okay](#) for resources on how to have meaningful conversations. Create a health routine that is best for you and, if needed, get rid of toxic influences. You can [improve your mental health](#) by gradually making small changes and using mental health tools, like practicing gratitude and using meditation and relaxation techniques.

The way you think, feel, and act can affect the way your body responds to change. Your emotions can directly affect your physical and mental health. Some warning signs of a mental health problem are

- A change in your eating or sleeping habits
- Withdrawal from the people and activities you enjoy
- Having low or no energy
- Feeling numb or like nothing matters
- Having unexplained aches and pains



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- Feeling of helpless or hopeless
- Smoking, drinking, or using drugs more than usual
- Feeling unusually confused, forgetful, angry, upset, worried, or scared
- Having severe mood swings that cause problems in your relationships
- Thoughts and memories that you can't get out of your head
- Hearing voices or believing things that are not true
- Thinking of harming yourself or others
- Not being able to perform daily tasks like taking care of your kids or getting to work or school

If you, or someone you know, is experiencing any of these signs, or if you think you have a mental health problem, get help immediately. You can contact the University's [employee assistance program \(EAP\)](#) and there are [national programs](#) available as well. ■