

BEING INTENTIONAL ABOUT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Practicing healthy mental health habits regularly

Presented at: Mental Health America

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Agenda

- What is mental health + why be intentional about it?
- Impact of small habits
- Six ways to be more intentional
- Questions/Discussion

What is mental health?

- Balance between emotional, psychological, and social well-being
- Different from mental illness
- Can be impacted by stress, lifestyle habits and physical health
- Can be improved by lifestyle changes

What is being intentional?

- Being present and engaged
- Having purpose
- Done deliberately

Why be intentional about mental health?

It allows you to be connected with yourself, recognize any warning signs and act proactively to stay healthy. Also, improves wellbeing and relationships.

Being intentional doesn't mean time-consuming

- A micro-goal is the smallest change in your daily habits that compound over time and become bigger habits
- Focus on one or two keystone habits
- Find the *tiniest* change in behavior, and commit to that.

**How can you be intentional
for your mental health?**

#1: Make your habits work for you

- Easier to remember things if they're a part of your routine
- Prepared for stressful periods of time in future



Habit stacking: Add new habits to pre-existing ones.

#2: Check-in with yourself

- When was the last time I ate/drank water?
- Have I taken a break today (social media, work, obligations)?
- What can I celebrate about myself today?
- Is anything worrying me/getting me down?
- What do I need right now?

#3: Reframe rest

- Once a week, have a set time when you do nothing that's productivity related
- Schedule small breaks throughout the day
- Start a "rest ritual": something you do daily or weekly that is joyful and nourishing
- Go tech-free for a time

#4: Say no (to the right things)

Saying yes to too much can lead to burnout.

How to say no?

1. Appreciate the request. Thank them for thinking of you.
2. Ask for time.
3. Decline. You can tell give them a reason or keep it vague.
4. Offer an alternative (this one is optional)

#5: Use technology to help you

- Schedule in self-care time or health appointments in advance in your calendar
- Complete confidential screenings online to help recognize any issues
- Use reminder app to help develop new habit
- Use wellness tools - journaling, meditation, habit-tracking
- Automate regular tasks, errands, etc

#6: Practice emotional regulation

- Keep us grounded when stressed, improves resilience, reduces conflict in relationships

Emotional regulation skills

- Learn to identify and label emotions
- Self-soothing skills
- Somatic regulation
- Practice the pause

Examples of intentional mental health micro-goals

- Schedule small breaks in your day
- Sleep/wake up at the same time
- Have a short morning/evening routine
- Move your body daily
- Eat a balanced and nutritious diet
- Taking supplements
- Social connections with safe people
- Creative or craft-based play

Here's an example

The goal: increase restorative/reflective time.

1 - Choose the time of day you'd like to start a routine (morning, mid-afternoon or nighttime).

2 - Pick one small thing you can add to that time, easily, that won't require you changing your current situation.

E.g. if you go to the gym after work everyday, instead of adding another yoga class (unrealistic), add a 3 min meditation at the end of your work out (realistic).

Here's an example

3 - Do that one small thing for 4 weeks. Keep track of it on your phone or a journal, or with an accountability partner.

4 - Once the 4 weeks is over, reflect on: what worked and what didn't? How did you feel after completing this consistently for 4 weeks? Did you adjust the timing/duration? (This helps increase awareness about how you function/organize).

Questions and Discussion.

The image features a decorative graphic in the top right corner consisting of two overlapping curved lines. The inner line is a golden-brown color, and the outer line is a dark olive green color. Both lines curve from the top right towards the bottom right, creating a partial circular shape.