

# WELL BALANCED<sup>o</sup>

- MAY 2023 -  
Mental Health Month



## Mental Health: A Well-Being Essential

Mental health concerns are on the rise and so are awareness and support for making mental health a priority in your life.

May is Mental Health Month—a perfect time to get educated, get support, and learn ways to make mental health a self-care priority in your daily life.

### What is Mental Health?

Mental health is not the absence of mental illness. It is our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Mental health is also an element of our health that can be amplified or diminished by any number of influences, and those influences are unique to each person, such as our environment, our relationships, our workplace, our social circles, our community, etc.

### Common Mental Health Concerns

In 2021, we found that the greatest mental health concerns reported by employees were<sup>(1)</sup>:

- » **Burnout** - Feelings of stress, low energy, exhaustion, apathy, or cynicism related to your work.
- » **Anxiety** - Feelings of worry, nervousness, apprehension, panic, or unease.
- » **Depression** - Persistently depressed mood or loss of interest in daily life and activities.
- » **Coping with the Return to the Office** - Stress around the transition from remote work back to office work.



### Help is Available 24/7 on these hotlines:

- » Suicide Crisis Lifeline and Text Line: 988
- » Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Helpline: 1-800-662-4357
- » Emergency Services: 911

- » **Substance Abuse** - Dependence, misuse, or excessive indulgence in addictive substances like drugs and alcohol.
- » **Self-Esteem Issues** - Negative feelings about your confidence, ability, or worth.

### Self-Care Strategies for Your Mental Health

Whether you're looking to prevent these common mental health challenges or want to take steps toward restoring your mental health, here are some things you can do to attain those goals.

- » **Prioritize Rest** - Pencilling in time for rest into your daily calendar is just as important if not more than pencilling in work tasks, errands, and chores. Think of things that help you feel energized, relaxed, and rested, and schedule time to make them a priority. Don't forget to use paid vacation days when needed for this. If you have a busy workload or schedule in your home life, be sure to ask for help and seek out people who can support you so that you can prioritize rest not only when you're exhausted, but before you reach that point.
- » **Prioritize Passions** - Just like scheduling time for rest, it's important to schedule time to pursue your passions. Hobbies aren't just for kids. Make time to explore areas of interest, develop new skills, take a class, or read about a topic that interests you. Your passions can fuel your feelings of purpose in life.

» **Set Boundaries** - In order to make time and space for prioritizing your mental health, you'll likely need to set boundaries to make that happen. Perhaps it's setting a defined start and stop time at work and communicating that to your manager. Maybe it's scheduling one day each week where you don't schedule meetings or appointments. Or maybe it's more personal like setting boundaries in relationships that feel mentally taxing or harmful to your mental health.

» **Practice Stress Management and Mindfulness** - Stress is an inevitable part of human life. It's important to develop a practice of stress management and/or mindfulness for when stressful moments arise. Diaphragmatic breathing exercises, yoga, meditation, prayer, journaling, and mindfulness exercises are a few things that you might consider trying.

» **Get Outside** - Research has shown that spending time in a "green space" has been associated with a wide range of health benefits, including stress reduction<sup>(2)</sup>. Find a safe environment near you and try getting outside for even 10 minutes each day to get some sun on your skin, fresh air in your lungs, and look for the beauty in nature.

» **Get Active** - Research has shown a correlation between exercise and improvement in mood states such as anxiety, stress and depression<sup>(3)</sup>. Find a form of exercise that brings you joy, and make it a part of your self-care routine. Even bouts of 10 minutes of movement can be beneficial. You don't have to take up running to get exercise. Freestyle dance to your favorite music, take up bicycling, try yoga, explore group fitness classes, or find a hiking trail.

» **Eat Well** - Food has also been found to have an effect on mental health<sup>(4)</sup>. Start noticing how eating different foods makes you feel. Does caffeine increase your anxiety? Do sugars make you feel sluggish? Does hydration make you feel energized? Noting how foods impact your mental health can help you tailor your eating habits to suit your mental health needs.

### When to Seek Help

It's important to know when and how to reach out and seek help when managing your mental health alone becomes too much.

Seek help if you:

- » Experience changes in personality, eating or sleeping patterns
- » Feel the inability to cope with problems or daily activities
- » Feel disconnection or withdrawn from people or usual activities
- » Feel excessive stress
- » Feel excessive anxiety
- » Experience prolonged sadness or depression
- » Engage in substance abuse
- » Notice mood swings
- » Have thoughts or make statements about suicide, self-harm, or harming others

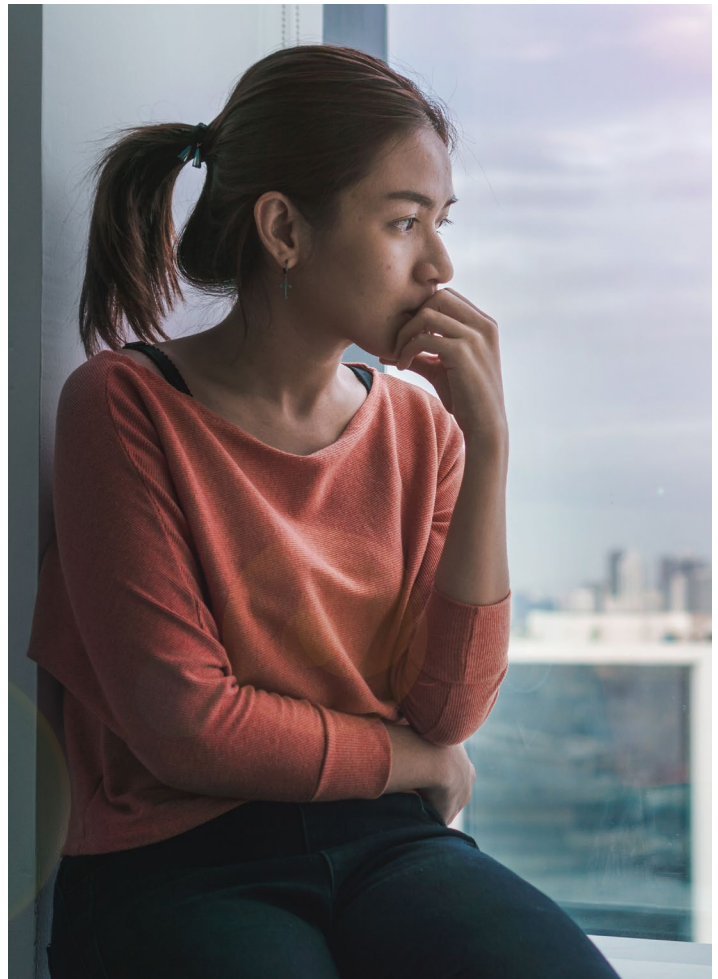
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Reach out to your doctor, a counselor, other mental health professionals, or a hotline. Telling a trusted friend or family member may also be helpful, but be sure to reach out to a professional who can get you the help you need.



### Want more resources on mental health?

Talk to your employer to find out what is available to you through your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or employee wellness program.



<sup>(1)</sup> <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/mental-health/art-20044098> <sup>(2)</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0169204611003665?via%3Dihub> <sup>(3)</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0378512217308563> <sup>(4)</sup> <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/nutritional-psychiatry-your-brain-on-food-201511168626> <sup>(5)</sup> <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/mental-health/art-20044098>