

## Getting Your Mental Health Back In Shape

from the American Counseling Association

Today, most of us are more aware of our physical health than ever before. We exercise more, pay attention to our diets and get needed health checks in order to catch problems early.

But, most of us don't think about our mental health very much unless we happen to be facing a serious problem. In truth, however, just as it's possible to improve our physical health, there are also ways to get our feelings and attitudes into better shape. And in today's complicated and often stressful world, that's a very good thing.

So, where to begin? How about your daily schedule? Most of us tend to fill our days with work, family and social obligations, leaving little or no time for ourselves.

A fix for that is to include "you" in your daily calendar. Create a real schedule that includes time each day for at least one thing you find relaxing or enjoyable. Maybe it's reading a book, working at a hobby, or just taking a quiet walk. Whatever it is, just plan it and make sure it happens.

Another way to reduce stress and feel better about yourself is to get involved with others. Wherever you live, you'll find community, civic and religious organizations searching for volunteers to help carry out their work.

Giving something back to the community offers a sense of fulfillment and self-worth essential for good mental health. It can also offer a meaningful escape from your own problems and may help put such problems in a better perspective.

And yes, exercise and staying physically fit is another means to improving mental health. Studies find regular exercise is a great way to fight depression, for example. Plus, as we get ourselves into better shape, we usually start to feel more confident about ourselves - everything from how we look to what we can do. And that's good mental health.

No, you can't make stress and problems just disappear, but building a little relaxation into your life, helping those in need and staying physically active can all improve mental health and make it easier to cope with any problems that arise.

Don't accept that you have to feel unhappy or depressed. If your own actions don't have you feeling better, check out the help that a professional counselor can offer.

However you go about it, good mental health is a goal worth achieving.

*Counseling Corner* is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to [ACAcornet@counseling.org](mailto:ACAcornet@counseling.org) or visit the ACA website at [www.counseling.org](http://www.counseling.org)

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