

# NIH 6 Strategies for Emotional Wellness

Emotional wellness is the ability to successfully handle life's stresses and adapt to change and difficult times. Mental wellness is about prevention; coping with life's adversity; and being resilient when we face stress, worry, loneliness, anger or sadness. Yet, mental wellness can move us toward a deeper, richer and more meaningful life.

But how do we get and keep Mental Wellness? The *National Institutes of Health* (NIH) give us 6 strategies for maintaining and improving our emotional wellbeing.

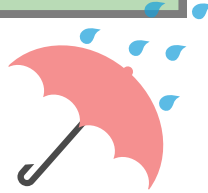
#1

## BUILD RESILIENCE

People who are emotionally well, have fewer negative emotions and are able to bounce back from difficulties faster. This quality is called *resilience*. Learning healthy ways to cope and how to draw from resources in your community can help you build resilience.

### **To build resilience:**

- o Develop healthy physical habits.
- o Take time for yourself each day.
- o Look at problems from different angles. Learn from your mistakes.
- o Practice gratitude.
- o Explore your beliefs about the meaning and purpose of life.
- o Tap into social connections and community.



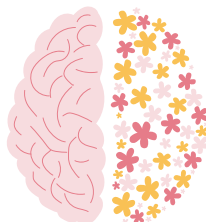
#2

## REDUCE STRESS

Everyone feels stressed from time to time. Stress can give you a rush of energy when it's needed most. But if stress lasts a long time—a condition known as chronic stress—those “high alert” changes become harmful rather than helpful. Learning healthy ways to cope with stress can also boost your resilience.

### **To help manage your stress:**

- o Get enough sleep.
- o Exercise regularly.
- o Build a social support network.
- o Set priorities.
- o Show compassion for yourself.
- o Try relaxation methods.
- o Seek help



#3

### BE MINDFUL

The concept of mindfulness is simple.

This ancient practice is about being completely aware of what's happening in the present—of all that's going on inside and all that's happening around you. It means not living your life on “autopilot.”

Becoming a more mindful person requires commitment and practice. Here are some tips to help you get started.



#### *To be more mindful:*

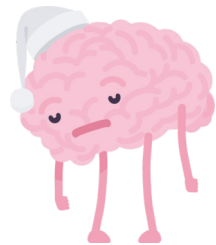
- o Take some deep breaths in through your nose to a count of 4, hold for 1 second and then exhale through the mouth to a count of 5. Repeat often.
- o Enjoy a stroll, notice the sights around you.
- o Practice mindful eating. Be aware of each bite and when you're full.
- o Be aware of your body. Do a mental scan, bring your attention to how each part feels.
- o Find mindfulness resources, including online programs.

#4

### GET QUALITY SLEEP

To fit in everything we want to do in our day, we often sacrifice sleep. But sleep affects both mental and physical health.

It's vital to your well-being. When you're tired, you can't function at your best. Sleep helps you think more clearly, have quicker reflexes and focus better. Take steps to make sure you regularly get a good night's sleep.



#### *To get better quality sleep:*

- o Go to bed and get up each day at the same time.
- o Sleep in a dark, quiet place.
- o Exercise daily.
- o Limit the use of electronics.
- o Relax before bedtime.
- o Avoid alcohol before bedtime and stimulants like caffeine or nicotine.
- o Consult a health care professional if you have ongoing sleep problems.

#5

### COPE WITH LOSS

When someone you love dies, your world changes. There is no right or wrong way to mourn. Although the death of a loved one can feel overwhelming, most people can make it through the grieving process with the support of family and friends. Learn healthy ways to help you through difficult times.



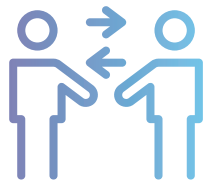
*To help cope with loss:*

- o Take care of yourself.
- o Talk to a caring friend.
- o Try not to make any major changes right away.
- o Join a grief support group.
- o Consider professional support.
- o Talk to your doctor if you're having trouble with everyday activities.
- o Be patient. Mourning takes time.

#6

### STRENGTHEN SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Social connections might help protect health and lengthen life. Scientists are finding that our links to others can have powerful effects on our health—both emotionally and physically. Whether with romantic partners, family, friends, neighbors, or others, social connections can influence our biology and well-being



*To build healthy support systems:*

- o Build strong relationships with your kids.
- o Get active and share good habits with family and friends.
- o If you're a family caregiver, ask for help from others.
- o Join a group focused on a favorite hobby, such as reading, hiking, or painting.
- o Take a class to learn something new.
- o Volunteer for things you care about in your community, like a community garden, school, library, or place of worship.
- o Travel to different places and meet new people.