

# ROADMAP TO MENTAL HEALTH

**THE MENTAL  
HEALTH  
COALITION**

Mental health is all around us, but it's often misunderstood. Here is some quick info to help demystify what we mean by "mental health" and how to talk about it. →

# What is mental health?

Mental health is your general sense of emotional, psychological, and cognitive wellbeing. Everyone has mental health every day, but it's often ignored unless something is going seriously wrong. The best way to prevent that is to pay attention to your mental health even when you're feeling ok or even good.

# What is the difference between mental health, mental illness, mental wellbeing, & mental fitness?

The language around mental health is constantly evolving, and understanding these terms can help you understand your own experiences and have meaningful conversations about these topics.

**MENTAL HEALTH**

- An umbrella term
- Captures everything from your daily mood to severe mental distress
- Exists on a continuum that's always in flux
- 100% of people have mental health every day

**MENTAL ILLNESS**

- A clinical term that describes a specific condition
- Impacts mood, thinking, and behavior so that it's difficult to feel emotionally and cognitively well
- Can be acute or chronic
- 50% of people will experience mental illness at some point

**MENTAL WELLBEING**

- A strengths-based term
- Describes a sense of emotional and cognitive wellness
- Can exist at the same time as mental illness
- Is fueled by a sense of belonging, connection, and meaning in one's life

**MENTAL FITNESS**

- A newer, evolving term
- The purposeful practice of taking care of your mental health
- Can include mindfulness, physical exercise, and self-care practices
- Is important during times of wellness and illness



# A quick way to take tabs on your mental health right now

Notice how your mental health is always changing and that you might have felt better yesterday than you do today. That's ok. Part of being human is experiencing the ebb and flow of your mental health. Check in with yourself. Ask yourself how you're really feeling, and see where you fall on the following scale.



Source: [Delphis.org](https://delphis.org)



# Signs that it's time to pay attention to your mental health

When we're mentally healthy, we typically don't think much about it, because it's invisible. Without a thoughtful practice of looking at your mental health, it can be easy to start to feel unwell without noticing it. One way to make the invisible visible is to look out for signs that your mental health needs some care.

- Low Energy / Motivation
- Trouble sleeping
- Unexplained physical pain or tension
- Less interest in spending time with loved ones
- Long-lasting sadness, worry, or irritability
- Racing thoughts that feel difficult to get a handle on
- Extremely high or low mood
- Unpleasant thoughts that won't leave you alone
- Appetite changes
- Neglect of personal care
- Less interest in the things you typically enjoy
- Difficulty focusing on tasks
- Friends & family noticing that you seem different

Source: [Active Minds](#) and [NAMI](#)

# Key ways to take care of your mental health

It's important to find mental and emotional outlets that feel good for you and fit your lifestyle. There's no one-size-fits-all for mental fitness, but these are some of the most common ways of fostering mental wellness.

More information from [Mental Health America](#) and [DBSA](#)

- Participate in physical exercise
- Create social connection
- Engage in spiritual practice
- Log quality sleep
- Do something you're good at
- Consume nutritious foods
- Set aside time for meaningful downtime
- Practice mindfulness
- Work with a mental health clinician



**IF YOU STILL FEEL LOST OR  
CONFUSED ABOUT MENTAL  
HEALTH, THAT'S **OK**. IT CAN BE  
AN OVERWHELMING TOPIC.**

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Check out [The Mental Health Coalition's  
Resource Library](#) for additional resources  
that are more specific to what might be on  
your mind.