

## Mental Health Month

Mental Health America has launched the **Live Your Life Well** campaign, designed to help people better manage stress and major life challenges by taking actions to preserve and strengthen their mental health. The campaign features 10 specific tools – activities each of us can do to better handle challenges, protect our health, and increase our well-being. The 10 tools don't demand huge changes. Just by setting aside a manageable amount of time each day, you can strengthen one of your greatest assets: your mental health. Good mental health keeps you productive, energetic, happy, and hopeful—even in the face of life's challenges.

1. Connect with others – humans are social animals. We tend to do much better when we feel supported, valued, and understood. Some ways to build connections: join a book group, hiking club, or other group; enroll in a class; or boost existing connections.
2. Stay positive – thinking negatively can drag down your mood and your health. But don't let that worry you. Experts say you can learn to be less gloomy. Some ways to stay positive include: don't assume the worst; keep a gratitude journal; or remember your achievements.
3. Get physically active – our bodies were built to move, especially when they're pumping out stress-induced hormones. Some ways to make sure you exercise: put it in your calendar; work out with a friend; or really run your errands.
4. Help others – if you help your neighbor, it's good for her, but it's good for you too. Examples of ways to help: volunteer with a community organization; volunteer a smile; tell someone what you admire about them.
5. Get enough rest – sleep may seem like a waste when there's so much to do, but you're more likely to succeed at your tasks if you get enough rest. Ways to create good nights: de-caffeinate yourself, de-stress yourself, and avoid frustration.
6. Create joy and satisfaction – go ahead, kick up your heels or just kick back. Feeling good is good for you. Ways to accomplish this: pop in a humor CD; do something you loved as a kid; identify the high points of your day.
7. Eat well – our bodies – and our brains – need good fuel to function well. Promote good nutrition by eating regularly, snack well, and strive for balance.
8. Take care of your spirit – taking care of your spirit means connecting to whatever you consider meaningful and holy, whether that's God, nature, art or something deep within yourself. Some ways to connect with your spiritual side: pray or focus on your notion of God; talk with others; read inspiring texts.
9. Deal better with hard times – most of us will face some particularly tough times in our lives, like a loss or divorce. Having ways to cope with these challenges can protect your health and well-being. Ways to deal with hard times: tackle problems, get support, and write it out.

10. Get professional help if you need it – if the problems in your life are stopping you from functioning well or feeling good, professional help can make a big difference. Some ways to get professional help: find names of mental health care providers; prepare a list of questions; and determine your insurance coverage.

For more information on these 10 tools or mental health, go to:

[www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/mhm/2009/stress](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/mhm/2009/stress) or to [www.healthyminds.org](http://www.healthyminds.org)