



## Bite-sized actions for better **mental** **health**

There is more to being healthy than exercise or eating your vegetables. Think about getting healthy from the top down. What's good for your brain is good for your body and vice versa.<sup>1</sup>

Tackling your mental health may feel like a giant task. Does it involve seeing a therapist or taking prescription medications? Will it be expensive and take all your extra time? It doesn't have to.

Simply acknowledging you want to work on your mental health is a step in the right direction. Whether you're struggling with stress, feelings of anxiety or depression, or just want to feel better emotionally, you can take bite-sized actions toward mental well-being.

# Start anytime

It doesn't matter when you start working on your mental well-being, only that you do. Taking baby steps toward feeling better can help. Try these simple actions as a start:

## Check in with yourself

Step away from distractions and just be still. Pay attention to your inner voice. If you're hearing negative self-talk, change the conversation. The same goes for anything that is worrying you. Try to clear this mental clutter.<sup>2</sup>

## Get some sleep

Rest and mental health are intertwined. If you're not getting a solid seven to nine hours nightly, try:<sup>3</sup>

- Limiting screen time
- Relaxing before bedtime
- Going to bed a little earlier

## Eat with intention

Sometimes, we use food as consolation when we're feeling stressed or sad. Before you eat your first bite of a meal or snack, ask yourself, "Am I hungry?" If not, look at what need you're trying to satisfy. Work to be more mindful of physical or emotional cues.<sup>4</sup>

## Reach out

Seeing family and friends on social media may feel like a catch-up, but it's no substitute for the real thing. Pick up the phone and chat for a few minutes. Getting support and making connections are healthy steps to take.<sup>3</sup>



## Breathe

Rather than screaming at the top of your lungs or bottling up your feelings, take some deep breaths. Try these breathing tips:<sup>5</sup>

- Gently close one nostril with a finger while you breathe, forcing yourself to inhale and exhale more slowly.
- Lie flat on your back. Since this is a position we normally reserve for sleep, it can naturally signal your brain to slow down your breathing.
- Breathe deep into your belly. This turns off your stress response, telling your body that everything is going to be OK.

**Improving your mental health and feeling better about yourself isn't out of reach when you break it down into simple steps.**

*\*If you feel you could use more help with your mental health, reach out to a licensed mental health professional for support.*

**Learn how Livongo can help support you on your wellness journey. To sign up or learn more, go to [Go.Livongo.com/STATEOFIOWA/New](https://Go.Livongo.com/STATEOFIOWA/New).**

<sup>1</sup><https://news.northeastern.edu/2024/05/09/racquet-sports-longevity/>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/food-body-love/202309/eating-well-is-more-than-the-food-you-put-on-your-fork>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.nih.gov/health-information/emotional-wellness-toolkit>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/gaining-and-sustaining/202405/strengthening-your-relationship-with-yourself>

<sup>5</sup><https://library.teladochealth.com/hc/en-us/articles/360009313373-Relieving-Stress-in-the-Moment>

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