Living Well / Aging Well
Mental Health

What is mental health?

Mental health includes emotional and psychological health. Mental health impacts how people think, feel, and act. It also determines how you manage stress, work with others, and make healthy choices. Mental health is important throughout every stage of life.
Source : CDC https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/index.htm

Why is mental health important?

Mental health is important to overall health and well-being. Depression can increase the likelihood of many health problems such as diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. The risk of mental illness can also increase with the development of chronic conditions.
Source: CDC https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/index.htm

How can I cope with stress and improve my mental health?

There are ways to cope with stress to improve mental health. Some include:

- Medicate or take deep breaths.
- Increase physical activity.
- Limit the use of coffee, energy drinks, nicotine, and alcohol, especially near bedtime.
- Get enough sleep and practice good sleep habits by going to bed and getting up at the same time each day.

For more suggestions, see the CDC website at https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/tools-resources/index.htm.

What are the signs of depression?

Depression is a mood disorder that makes one feel constant sadness or lack of interest in life. Sadness is only a small part of depression. Some people with depression may not feel sadness at all. Depression has many other symptoms, including physical ones. If you have been experiencing any of the following signs and symptoms for at least two weeks, you may be suffering from depression. It is important to talk to your doctor about how you feel.

- Always sad, anxious, or having an "empty" mood.
- Feeling guilty, worthless, helpless
- Lost interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities, isolation.
- Thoughts of death or suicide, suicide attempts.
- Decreased energy, tiredness, or trouble sleeping.
- Struggle to focus, remember, and make decisions.

- Persistent physical symptoms.
- Appetite and/or weight changes.
- Restlessness and/or irritability.
- **Source:** https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/depression#part_2255

What if I or someone I know has thoughts about suicide?

Suicidal fantasy is thinking about, considering, or planning the ending of one's own life. People who feel completely hopeless or believe they can no longer cope with their life situation may have suicidal thoughts. If you have experienced any of the depression signs listed above and any suicide warning signs below, please seek advice from your doctor. One or more of the below feelings could be present, or maybe none.

- Talking about wanting to die or wanting to kill themselves.
- Talking about feeling empty, hopeless, or having no reason to live.
- Planning to kill themselves, such as searching online, stockpiling pills, or buying a gun.
- Talking about great guilt or shame.
- Talking about feeling trapped or feeling that there are no solutions.
- Feeling unbearable pain (emotional or physical).
- Talking about being a burden to others.
- Increasing alcohol or drugs use (frequency or amount).
- Acting anxious or agitated.
- Withdrawing from family and friends.
- Changing eating and/or sleeping habits.
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge.
- Taking significant risks that could lead to death, such as driving extremely fast.
- Talking or thinking about death often.
- Displaying extreme mood swings, suddenly changing from very sad to very calm or happy.
- Giving away important possessions.
- Saying goodbye to friends and family.
- Putting affairs in order, making a will.
- **Source:** National Institute of Mental Health https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/suicide-prevention

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline- **provides 24/7, free & confidential support for people in distress. Call or text 988, Chat at 988lifeline.org, website https://988lifeline.org/**