

# Prioritizing Your Mental Health

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When someone experiences ongoing physical pain, they typically visit a primary care physician, and if that person experiences other specific health concerns they might visit a specialty doctor. Imagine what would happen if we treated our mental health with the same urgency. Many people tend to put their mental health aside because it is less tangible and can feel differently than physical health symptoms. Why do we not address our mental health like we do our physical health?



Throughout history, physical health has been held to a much higher standard than mental health, and while it is getting better, there is still much work to be done.

However, no matter how much emphasis is placed on physical health, it is important for us to remember that they are both interconnected. The relationship between physical and mental health is reciprocal, meaning that physical health may impact mental health and vice versa. For example, physical illnesses may create mental health concerns or symptoms, such as anxiety and depression, while mental illnesses have been shown to significantly increase the risk of chronic physical illnesses. These examples demonstrate why individuals might benefit from prioritizing their mental health.

If we work to prioritize our mental health, it allows for building positive life experiences and strengthening resiliency. Life often presents difficult circumstances and having that resiliency allows us to bounce back and live in a way that creates more joy and helps us to achieve our goals. Someone who prioritizes mental health might find it easier to balance work life, school and personal life, and it becomes easier to set boundaries and make time for rest, hobbies and social interaction.

You can try using these tips to help better prioritize your mental health and well-being:

- **Setting goals.** Take the time to identify your unique mental health focus areas. Set goals and make time to create healthy boundaries in order to address these concerns. This will help you in the process of working toward finding a peaceful balance in your life.
- **Research treatment.** If therapy or treatment is something you are considering, try to do some research about treatment options or mental health providers. Find stories that people have shared about their journey with mental health and how it has impacted them and their way of life.
- **Normalize experiences.** Speak out about your experiences with mental health challenges and encourage others to seek treatment even if it is just to talk to someone. Remind others that therapy and treatment are not only limited to crisis care, but are meant to positively impact and equip individuals with healthy coping strategies.
- **Be an advocate.** Listen to others and their experiences—use this as a way to educate yourself, and reduce the stigmas associated with mental health treatment. Share resources with loved ones and within communities to help break the barriers that people might run into when seeking help or sharing their stories.

Once you begin to prioritize your mental health, you will begin to realize how much you are capable of and how strong you are. Taking the time to identify personal goals and concerns that you might have about your mental health is one of the first steps towards having a more balanced life. If you find that you are struggling moving forward after dealing with stressful situations or need help finding balance, it may be time to reach out to a mental health professional. There they can provide you with the necessary tools for your mental well-being and healthy tips for coping.

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