

Mind-body wellness

Your mind and body are powerful allies. How you think can affect how you feel. And how you feel can affect your thinking.

An example of this mind-body connection is how your body responds to stress. Constant worry and stress over jobs, finances, or other problems can cause tense muscles, pain, headaches, and stomach problems. It may also lead to high blood pressure or other serious problems.

On the other hand, constant pain or a health problem like heart disease can affect your emotions. You might become depressed, anxious, and stressed, which could affect how well you treat, manage, or cope with your illness.

How do your thoughts and feelings affect your health?

Your brain produces substances that can improve your health. These substances include endorphins, which are natural painkillers, and gamma globulin, which strengthens your immune system.

Research shows that what your brain produces depends in part on your thoughts, feelings, and expectations. If you're sick but you have hope and a positive attitude and you believe that you'll get better, your brain is likely to produce chemicals that will boost your body's healing power.

Negative thoughts and emotions can keep your brain from producing some of the chemicals that help your body heal. But this doesn't mean you should blame yourself for getting sick or feeling down about a health problem. Some illnesses are beyond your control. But your thoughts and state of mind are resources you can use to get better.

Ideas for mind-body wellness

- Relaxing your mind and body can help ease stress. It can also relieve anxiety, depression, and sleep problems. Try one or more of the following techniques to help you relax:
- Deep breathing is one of the best ways to lower stress. When you breathe deeply, it sends a message to your brain to calm down and relax. The brain then sends this message to your body.
- Guided imagery is a technique in which you imagine yourself in a setting that helps you feel calm and relaxed.
- Mindfulness-based stress reduction focuses your attention on things that are happening in the present moment. The idea is just to note what is happening without trying to change it.
- Progressive muscle relaxation involves tensing and relaxing each muscle group to reduce anxiety and muscle tension. If you have trouble falling asleep, this method may also help with sleep problems.
- Yoga includes breathing, meditation, and exercises, called postures or poses, that stretch the body.
- Laughter and humor make life richer and healthier. Laughter increases creativity, reduces pain, and speeds healing.
- Building resilience can help you cope. Being resilient means you're able to bounce back from difficult situations or problems.
- Tending to your spiritual wellness can help your mind-body wellness. Spiritual wellness can bring comfort and lend strength for handling life's challenges.

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