



EMOTIONAL/MENTAL WELLNESS

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MARCH IS NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH

March 1	Employee Appreciation Day
March 17	St. Patrick's Day
March 20	First Day of Spring
	401K Enrollment Deadline
March 30	National Doctors Day

**DON'T FORGET TO ENROLL IN THE NEW 401K RETIREMENT
PLAN!**

**ENROLLMENT MEETINGS ARE UNDERWAY. SIGN UP
TODAY AND TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS AWESOME
COMPANY BENEFIT**

*Deadline for Enrollment is March 20th

MARCH 2019

How Can You Use Food to Boost Mood

So how should you change your diet if you want to try to improve your mood? You'll find eight suggestions below. Try to incorporate as many as possible, because regardless of their effects on mood, most of these changes offer other health benefits as well.

1. DON'T BANISH CARBS - JUST CHOOSE 'SMART' ONES

The connection between carbohydrates and mood is all about tryptophan, a nonessential amino acid. As more tryptophan enters the brain, more serotonin is synthesized in the brain, and mood tends to improve. Serotonin, known as a mood regulator, is made naturally in the brain from tryptophan with some help from the B vitamins. Foods thought to increase serotonin levels in the brain include fish and vitamin D. It's important to make smart carbohydrate choices like whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and legumes, which also contribute important nutrients and fiber.

2. GET MORE OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS

In recent years, researchers have noted that omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids (found in fatty fish, flaxseed, and walnuts) may help protect against depression.

3. Eat a Balanced Breakfast

Eating breakfast regularly leads to improved mood, according to some researchers -- along with better memory, more energy throughout the day, and feelings of calmness.

4. KEEP EXERCISING AND LOSE WEIGHT (SLOWLY)

There is a strong link between depression and obesity as well as depression and lower physical activity levels and a higher calorie intake. Even without obesity as a factor, depression was associated with lower amounts of moderate or vigorous physical activity. In many of these women, it is suspected that depression feeds the obesity and vice versa.

5. GET ENOUGH VITAMIN D

Vitamin D increases levels of serotonin in the brain but researchers are unsure of the individual differences that determine how much vitamin D is ideal (based on where you live, time of year, skin type, level of sun exposure).

6. Don't Overdo Caffeine

In people with sensitivity, caffeine may exacerbate depression. (And if caffeine keeps you awake at night, this could certainly affect your mood the next day.) Those at risk could try limiting or eliminating caffeine for a month or so to see if it improves mood.



GOOD FOOD = GOOD MOOD

HOW EXERCISE IMPROVES MOOD

Regular exercise helps in the prevention and management of health conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and obesity. However, it can also improve your mood, lift your spirits and make you feel better about yourself. When you exercise, your body releases chemicals that boost your sense of well-being and suppresses hormones that cause stress and anxiety. Physical activity is an effective tool against depression and you can find many different ways to make it a pleasurable pastime.

Beneficial Exercises

You do not have to indulge in demanding physical activity to reap the psychological benefits of exercise. The Harvard Medical School says that walking, stretching, mental exercises, breathing techniques and muscle relaxation techniques can all be effective in combating stress.

Chemical Factors

The body produces endorphins, which are chemicals that reduce the perception of pain, improve immunity and help you relax. Endorphins are natural mood boosters that enhance feelings of optimism and satisfaction. Exercise promotes the generation and release of endorphins.



Emotional Benefits

Stress can cause a vicious cycle of negative thinking, worrisome thoughts and physical symptoms such as muscular discomfort, indigestion and pain. Exercise provides a distraction from your worries, whether you exercise by yourself at home or in the company of friends. It also gives you an opportunity to socialize.

How Exercise Affects Mood

Researchers found that those who exercised reported having 1.5 fewer poor mental health days in the last month than those who did not exercise.

BRAIN SCIENCE TO IMPROVE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

On the surface, your own brain may be your furthest consideration when you are trying to improve your relationships. Yet it is the very place that processes where you perceive, understand, remember, evaluate, desire, and respond to people. The somewhat bizarre fact of life is that the people who are in our lives are not simply who they actually are. They are some interesting mix of who they are and what we make of them in our brains. If we understand the ways in which relationships impact our brains, we can likely change our brains to alter the ways in which we interact with others too.

Cognitive Empathy

When you are trying to negotiate with someone, you may think it helpful to reflect their emotions, but this emotional empathy could backfire. In most instances, it's far more effective to use cognitive empathy instead. When you use cognitive empathy, the other person becomes less defensive and feels heard too. While there is some overlap, cognitive empathy activates a mentalizing network in the brain, which differs from the emotional mirroring mechanisms of emotional empathy.

What you can do: When trying to resolve a conflict, try using cognitive empathy rather than emotional empathy to resolve the conflict. This means that you reflect on what they are saying, and then neutrally paraphrase what they are saying or intending.

Transference

Transference is a psychological phenomenon in which conversational or relational partners activate earlier memories. As a result, we may unconsciously repeat conflicts from the past that have nothing to do with the current relationship.

What you can do: To prevent this kind of situation, introduce new self-reflections, and possibly even points of discussion when you find yourself engaged in a conflict. Ask yourself, "Am I responding to this person, or am I mixing them up with someone from the past?" This can also make for an interesting discussion when you are trying to resolve a conflict.

Emotional Contagion

Our emotions can be easily transferred to another person without us even knowing. This can also happen through large-scale social networks without in-person interactions or nonverbal cues.

On the other hand, interacting with a positive group will probably make you feel more positive. Often, our negative emotions such as anger are transferred more easily than positive ones.

What you can do: When you are interacting online, ensure that you know that whatever content you are consuming is likely to impact your mood.



THESE THREE LITTLE WORDS ARE MAKING YOU A NEGATIVE PERSON—AND YOU PROBABLY SAY THEM ALL THE TIME

Here's something that'll make you think twice: "The majority of American conversations are characterized by a complaint," says Scott Bea, Psy.D., a psychologist at the Cleveland Clinic. It makes sense. Human brains have what's called a negative bias. "We tend to notice things that are threatening in our condition," says Bea. It goes back to our ancestors' time when being able to spot threats was crucial to survival.

And before you say that you really try not to complain—you meditate, you think positive, you always try to find the good—you're likely more guilty than you think. After all, when was the last time you said that you had to do something? Maybe you had to go grocery shopping. Or you had to work out. Maybe you had to go to your in-laws after work. It's an easy trap we all fall into from time-to-time—but it's one that can not only make our perspectives on life a little more blue, but also likely negatively impact brain chemistry, notes Bea.

Fortunately, a tiny language tweak can help: **Instead of saying "I have to," say, "I get to."** It's something that companies like Life Is Good, which sends positive messages through all kinds of apparel and goods, encourage their employees and customers to do.

Here's why it works: "'I have to' sounds like a burden. 'I get to' is an opportunity," says Bea. "And our brain responds very powerfully to the way we use language when we talk and the way we use language in our thoughts."

Even more: Emerging psychotherapies, including something called acceptance and commitment therapy, focus on small language tweaks like this to help people beat tough times, he notes. So while positive thinking (and all the perks that come with it) is about positive thoughts, it's also about positive attitudes, which can, in turn, cultivate gratitude and appreciation, encouraging even more positive behaviors and, yep, thoughts, too. Complaints on the other hand? They can leave us feeling more vulnerable and threatened in the world, furthering a cycle of negativity and fear.

To that extent, "I have to" isn't the only phrase you should drop. Bea says that we tend to categorize ourselves with language in broad, sweeping terms that are often exaggerations. We say: "I'm lonely" or "I'm unhappy" versus "I've had some lonely moments" or "I've had a few sad days recently." All of that can color the way we experience life, he notes. While the former can seem overwhelming—almost impossible to beat—the latter leaves more room for improvement and also paints a more realistic, tangible picture of the situation at hand.

The best part about these simple changes? They're small—and you can start doing them, stat. Plus, they feed off of each other.

Gratitude forces you to put a filter on subsequent days to start looking for things for which you're grateful, and that's not typical of human beings so it kind of creates a systematic program. And that's a program we can get behind.



MARCH

EMOTIONAL/MENTAL WELLNESS

Mark here if you choose to
perform the activity.

ACTIVITIES

Did you complete the
activity?

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> (Page 3) Choose 1/6 good food, good mood tips to focus on this week. | Y | N |
| <input type="radio"/> (Page 4) Work out this week and have the focus be on your mental health. | Y | N |
| <input type="radio"/> (Page 5) Choose a brain science topic to incorporate into your daily conversations this week. | Y | N |
| <input type="radio"/> (Page 6) Change your vocabulary from "have to" to "get to". | Y | N |
| <input type="radio"/> Start spring-cleaning. Go through everything in one room of your house this week and get rid of anything that doesn't bring you joy anymore. | Y | N |
| <input type="radio"/> Give up a bad habit this week. | Y | N |
| <input type="radio"/> Plan a night out with your friends or family. | Y | N |
| <input type="radio"/> Be mindful of your self-talk; cut out the negatives and tell yourself only positive things. | Y | N |
| <input type="radio"/> Check-in on your New Year's resolutions and intentions. It's time to take stock of what's working and what's not working with regards to your emotional well being. | Y | N |
| <input type="radio"/> Pay a genuine compliment to a stranger some time this week, | Y | N |

Please describe activities (not listed above) that have helped you improve your
mental/emotional wellness this month:
