

May is Mental Health Month: #4Mind4Body

Raising awareness about mental health and eliminating the stigma is important.

Source: Kristen Fuller

Approximately one in five adults in the United States, 43.8 million, or 18.5%, experiences a mental illness in a given year and approximately one in five youth aged 13–18 (21.4%) experiences a severe mental health disorder at some point during their lifetime. For children aged 8–15, the estimate is 13%. Mental illness is not prejudiced; as mental health disorders affect men and women of all ages, races and social classes. Since 1949, the month of May has been observed as Mental Health Month in the United States and many national organizations such as NAMI, Mental Health America, and other affiliates spotlight Mental Health Month to raise awareness about the importance of mental health and to stop the stigma associated with mental health disorders. The theme for this year's Mental Health Month is Fitness #4Mind4Body, meaning that health is an all-encompassing matter and we must take care of our minds just as much as we take care of our bodies. Mental health is important for our physical health and vice versa. A well-balanced diet, a healthy sleep schedule, exercise, gut health, and hydration all affect our mental health and our physical health equally. Studies have shown that individuals who have chronic medical illnesses such as diabetes, high blood pressure or autoimmune disorders have a higher likelihood of being diagnosed with a mental health disorder such as depression or anxiety. Our bodies and mind act as one unit and therefore it is important to care for both our emotional and mental states as well as our physical health.

Changing your health by changing your habits

This year's campaign #4Mind4Body is encouraging individuals around the country to focus on the following healthy aspects of their daily lives in order to promote mental wellness:

- Maintain uninterrupted sleep for 8 hours each night.
- Avoid sugars, greasy foods, salts, processed foods and saturated fats.
- Consume more whole grains, greens, unprocessed foods, lean meats and unsaturated fats.
- Eat 2-3 well-balanced meals per day.
- Drink at least 3 liters of water per day.
- Consume natural probiotics such as yogurt, miso, sauerkraut, kefir, and kimchi.
- Engage in a physical for at least 30 minutes a day.
- Stay away from toxic thoughts, toxic people, and toxic conversations.
- Engage in positive thoughts and conversations.
- Practice mindfulness or meditation on a daily basis.
- Learn how to manage your stress.
- Stay present in your daily relationships.
- Avoid “screen time” and engage in more “in person time”.
- Visit your doctor for preventative health and cancer screenings.
- Take time for yourself every day.

Small changes have big impacts

For the month of May, Mental Health America and NAMI are challenging you to make small positive changes in your life that can benefit your mind and your body. Document these changes and feel free to share on social media. You may be surprised by how much positive impact one small change can have on your life.