

ROADMAP TO MENTAL HEALTH

**THE MENTAL
HEALTH
COALITION**

Mental health is all around us, but it's often misunderstood. Here is some quick info to help demystify what we mean by "mental health" and how to talk about it. →

What is mental health?

Mental health is your general sense of emotional, psychological, and cognitive wellbeing. Everyone has mental health every day, but it's often ignored unless something is going seriously wrong. The best way to prevent that is to pay attention to your mental health even when you're feeling ok or even good.

What is the difference between mental health, mental illness, mental wellbeing, & mental fitness?

The language around mental health is constantly evolving, and understanding these terms can help you understand your own experiences and have meaningful conversations about these topics.

MENTAL HEALTH

An umbrella term

Captures everything from your daily mood to severe mental distress

Exists on a continuum that's always in flux

100% of people have mental health every day

MENTAL ILLNESS

A clinical term that describes a specific condition

Impacts mood, thinking, and behavior so that it's difficult to feel emotionally and cognitively well

Can be acute or chronic

50% of people will experience mental illness at some point

MENTAL WELLBEING

A strengths-based term

Describes a sense of emotional and cognitive wellness

Can exist at the same time as mental illness

Is fueled by a sense of belonging, connection, and meaning in one's life

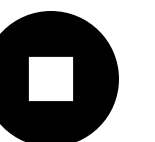
MENTAL FITNESS

A newer, evolving term

The purposeful practice of taking care of your mental health

Can include mindfulness, physical exercise, and self-care practices

Is important during times of wellness and illness

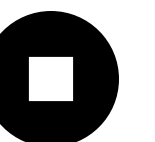


A quick way to take tabs on your mental health right now

Notice how your mental health is always changing and that you might have felt better yesterday than you do today. That's ok. Part of being human is experiencing the ebb and flow of your mental health. Check in with yourself. Ask yourself how you're really feeling, and see where you fall on the following scale.



Source: [Delphis.org](https://delphis.org)



Signs that it's time to pay attention to your mental health

When we're mentally healthy, we typically don't think much about it, because it's invisible. Without a thoughtful practice of looking at your mental health, it can be easy to start to feel unwell without noticing it. One way to make the invisible visible is to look out for signs that your mental health needs some care.

- Low Energy / Motivation
- Trouble sleeping
- Unexplained physical pain or tension
- Less interest in spending time with loved ones
- Long-lasting sadness, worry, or irritability
- Racing thoughts that feel difficult to get a handle on
- Extremely high or low mood
- Unpleasant thoughts that won't leave you alone
- Appetite changes
- Neglect of personal care
- Less interest in the things you typically enjoy
- Difficulty focusing on tasks
- Friends & family noticing that you seem different

Source: [Active Minds](#) and [NAMI](#)

Key ways to take care of your mental health

It's important to find mental and emotional outlets that feel good for you and fit your lifestyle. There's no one-size-fits-all for mental fitness, but these are some of the most common ways of fostering mental wellness.

More information from [Mental Health America](#) and [DBSA](#)

- Participate in physical exercise
- Create social connection
- Engage in spiritual practice
- Log quality sleep
- Do something you're good at
- Consume nutritious foods
- Set aside time for meaningful downtime
- Practice mindfulness
- Work with a mental health clinician



**IF YOU STILL FEEL LOST OR
CONFUSED ABOUT MENTAL
HEALTH, THAT'S **OK**. IT CAN BE
AN OVERWHELMING TOPIC.**

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This Roadmap was created by Naomi Torres-Mackie, Ph.D. for The Mental Health Coalition.

Check out [The Mental Health Coalition's Resource Library](#) for additional resources that are more specific to what might be on your mind.