

# MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH 2019

# 4 M I N D 4 B O D Y



# OUTREACH TOOLKIT



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[www.mentalhealthamerica.net](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net)

[MENTALHEALTHAMERICA.NET/MAY](http://MENTALHEALTHAMERICA.NET/MAY)

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# FOREWARD

Very few people go through life without any chronic health challenges. Cancer, heart disease, chronic pain, diabetes, mental illnesses, and more touch every family at some point.

And often mental illnesses and other chronic conditions co-occur. People with cancer often have depression; people with schizophrenia often have diabetes; and people with chronic pain often have both physical and behavioral health challenges.

We know that the underlying environment – the “social determinants” of health – plays a role in the development of both physical and mental health conditions.

And what we also know is that some common tools and strategies – such as animal companionship, humor, spirituality, work-life balance, and recreation and social networking – lead to improvements in both physical and mental health.

This year, Mental Health America has chosen to expand on our 4Mind4Body Mental Health Month theme with a variety of new tools and materials specifically designed for people living with chronic conditions and the people who care for them.

Our 4Mind4Body theme proved tremendously popular in 2018, with more than 16,000 organizations downloading our health and wellness toolkit and making it part of their own Mental Health Month messaging. Those resources are still available on our web site. This year we’ve expanded on them with a set of new resources that are best characterized as essential parts of everyone’s recovery toolkit.

This year’s annual MHA conference will have a similar theme – *Dueling Diagnoses: Mental Health and Chronic Conditions in Children in Adults*. It is again open to all and will take place at the culmination of Mental Health Month, from June 13-15 in Washington D.C. We’ll take an even deeper dive at the conference into the many common challenges faced by people living with multiple chronic conditions and their caregivers.

I hope that you find this year’s Mental Health Month toolkit as useful as you have found our toolkits in the past. Last year alone, 30 million people were exposed to these resources!

MHA is proud to have started Mental Health Month in 1949. Over the past seventy years, it has become the most widely recognized mental health awareness effort in the world. Thank you for doing your part to help us make mental health an essential part of our overall health and well-being.



  
Paul Gionfriddo  
President and CEO



# INTRODUCTION

For Mental Health Month 2019 we are expanding upon last year's theme of 4Mind4Body and taking it to the next level, as we explore the topics of animal companionship (including pets and support animals), spirituality and religion, humor, work-life balance, and recreation and social connections as ways to boost mental health and general wellness.

These topics are relevant to all Americans, and may be especially important to the health of those living with chronic health conditions and the people who care for them.

By using the toolkit materials, you will help members of your community:

- Understand how lifestyle factors impact the health of the mind and body;
- Start talking about mental health B4Stage4;
- Assess their own mental health through use of MHA's screening tools;
- Share their strategies for maintaining overall health by tagging social media posts with #4Mind4Body, or uploading content directly to MHA's website; and
- Learn how others use animals, spirituality and religion, humor, work-life balance, and recreation and social connections to improve their physical and mental health by visiting [mentalhealthamerica.net/4Mind4Body](http://mentalhealthamerica.net/4Mind4Body).

This year's toolkit includes:

## Media Materials

- Key Messages
- Sample Press Release
- Drop-In Article
- May is Mental Health Month Proclamation

## Social Media and Web Components

- Sample Facebook and Twitter Posts
- Facebook Profile, Cover, and Shareable Images
- Twitter Profile, Header, and Shareable Images
- Instagram Profile and Shareable Images
- Call to Action Buttons for Screening and sharing with #4mind4body
- Horizontal Banner Image
- Vertical Banner Image

## Fact Sheets and Handouts

- Fact Sheet: Animal Companionship
- Fact Sheet: Spirituality and Religion
- Fact Sheet: Humor
- Fact Sheet: Work-Life Balance
- Fact Sheet: Social Connections and Recreation
- *May is Mental Health Month* 4Mind4Body Calendar/Poster
- 4Mind4Body Chronic Health Conditions Poster
- 4Mind4Body Caregivers Poster

## Other

- Outreach Ideas
- Additional Resources
- End Notes (Fact Sheet Sources)

## QUESTIONS?

If you have further questions about Mental Health Month, please contact Danielle Fritze, Associate Vice President of Public Education and Design at [dfritze@mentalhealthamerica.net](mailto:dfritze@mentalhealthamerica.net).

# OUTREACH IDEAS

## HOW THE #4MIND4BODY SOCIAL MEDIA HUB WORKS

Throughout the month of May, Mental Health America will use our Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts to ask individuals to post about how they personally use animals, spirituality and religion, humor, work-life balance, and recreation and social connections to improve their physical and mental health with #4Mind4Body.

MHA will have a page on our website at [www.mentalhealthamerica.net/4Mind4Body](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/4Mind4Body) where special software will collect Tweets, Pins (Pinterest), and posts from Instagram with #4Mind4Body. Individuals who don't use social media will be able to post directly to [www.mentalhealthamerica.net/4Mind4Body](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/4Mind4Body). This collection of tagged posts will allow people to see what others are doing to maintain healthy lifestyles and act as a source of inspiration in the future for those looking to improve their overall health and wellness.

Unfortunately, Facebook and Youtube posts that use #4Mind4Body will not automatically be collected on the page due to the privacy restrictions of these social media platforms.

- Take photos and video at events that your organization holds during May to post at [www.mentalhealthamerica.net/4Mind4Body](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/4Mind4Body) or on your own social media pages.
- Use the sample posts from this toolkit, or share posts from MHA's social media accounts on your organization's social media networks: Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, Facebook, etc. each day to raise awareness of May as Mental Health Month activities. Make sure to tag Mental Health America's profile using the account information below so we can see it!

 /mentalhealthamerica

 /mentalhealtham

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 @mentalhealthamerica

### Here are some other ideas to help you plan for outreach activities during the month of May:

- Ask your governor, mayor or other local official to declare May as Mental Health Month using the sample proclamation that is part of the toolkit.
- Organize a community run or walk for mental health. Reach out to your local media for assistance in promoting the event. Email all of your partners, family members and friends, donors, and local officials inviting them to participate.
- Host a mental health screening or other educational event at a local venue (e.g., town hall, firehouse, church, mall or library). Have computers or tablets available for people to go to [mhascreening.org](http://mhascreening.org). Make sure to have a printer so people can print their results.
- Plan a day at your state Capitol. Invite advocates, consumers, concerned citizens and community and business leaders to visit each policymaker to discuss your community's mental health needs.
- Host a social event at a local park and invite people to bring their pets.
- Contact [PetPartners.org](http://PetPartners.org) to inquire about animal-assisted workplace well-being visits for May.

We'll be reaching out in mid-June to ask about your outreach and impact. Make sure to keep track of your efforts by doing things like:

- Counting how many handouts you distribute;
- Tracking media hits and impressions;
- Keeping tally of likes, shares and retweets of your Mental Health Month posts on social media networks;
- If you do a screening event or health fair, keep count of how many people visit your booth and/or take a screen; and
- Conducting a pre/post survey to see how you've increased knowledge about mental health issues among those you reach. Set up a quick survey of up to 10 questions for free online using [SurveyMonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com).

## LET US KNOW WHAT YOU'VE GOT PLANNED!

Tell us about your events so we can post them on MHA's Web Calendar, and help you get the word out. Contact Jenny Cheang at [jcheang@mentalhealthamerica.net](mailto:jcheang@mentalhealthamerica.net) with the following information:

Name of Event  
Date  
Location  
Brief Description  
Registration/Sign-Up Instructions  
Contact Person

## LIKE OUR MATERIALS? WANT MORE?

Brochures on assorted topics and B4Stage4 merchandise are available through the Mental Health America store to supplement the information provided in the 2019 *May is Mental Health Month* toolkit.

Visit the Mental Health America store at <https://squareup.com/store/mental-health-america>. Be sure to keep an eye out for our pet tag coming in May—new this year to complement one of our Mental Health Month topics.

\***MHA Affiliates** – One of the benefits of being an affiliate is getting a discount on printed materials at the MHA store. Contact Laqwanda Roberts-Buckley at [lruckley@mentalhealthamerica.net](mailto:lruckley@mentalhealthamerica.net) if you need help getting your affiliate discount code. There will also be extra May is Mental Health Month tools for you ("Affiliate Exclusives") on the Education and Outreach section of the Affiliate Resource Center.



# KEY MESSAGES

- Mental health is essential to everyone's overall health and well-being, and mental illnesses are common and treatable.
- A healthy lifestyle can help to prevent the onset or worsening of mental health conditions, as well as chronic conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. It can also help people recover from these conditions.
- For those dealing with a chronic health condition and the people who care for them, it can be especially important to focus on mental health. When dealing with dueling diagnoses, focusing on both the physical and mental health concerns can be daunting – but critically important in achieving overall wellness.
- Humor, spirituality, recreation, animal companionship, and work-life balance are important for everyone, but may be of special importance to people also living with chronic health conditions and those who care for them.
- Finding a reason to laugh, going for a walk, meditating, playing with a pet, or working from home once a week can go a long way in making you both physically and mentally healthy.
- The company of animals – whether as pets or service animals – can have a profound impact on a person's quality of life and ability to recover from illnesses. A pet can be a source of comfort and can help us to live mentally healthier lives.
- Sometimes life is far from funny but finding humor in a situation can lift moods with laughter and help people to better deal with and overcome difficult experiences.
- Whether you go to church, meditate daily, or simply find time to enjoy that cup of tea each morning while checking in with yourself – it can be important to connect with your spiritual side in order to find that mind-body connection.
- Living a healthy lifestyle may not be easy but can be achieved by gradually making small changes and building on those successes.
- Finding the balance between work and play, the ups and downs of life, physical health and mental health, can help you on the path towards focusing both #4Mind4Body.

Feel free to supplement these key messages with the assorted statistics, research, and tips included in the fact sheets.

# PRESS RELEASE

**May is Mental Health Month Marks 70 Years**  
**#4Mind4Body Theme Highlights Importance of Work-Life Balance, Pets, Spirituality**  
**in Achieving Balanced Mental Health**

Contact: [NAME, PHONE, EMAIL]

[CITY, STATE] (DATE)—When you or someone you love is dealing with a mental health concern, sometimes it's a lot to handle. It's important to remember that mental health is essential to everyone's overall health and well-being, and mental illnesses are common and treatable.

*May is Mental Health Month* was started 70 years ago by [AFFILIATE's] national organization, Mental Health America, to raise awareness about mental health conditions and the importance of good mental health for everyone. Last year, Mental Health Month materials were seen and used by over 30 million people, with more than 16,000 entities downloading MHA's tool kit.

A healthy lifestyle can help to prevent the onset or worsening of mental health conditions, as well as chronic conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. It can also help people recover from these conditions. For those dealing with a chronic health condition and the people who care for them, it can be especially important to focus on mental health.

That is why in 2019 we are expanding upon last year's theme of 4Mind4Body and taking it to the next level, as we explore the topics of animal companionship, spirituality and religion, humor, work-life balance, and recreation and social connections as ways to boost mental health and general wellness.

During May, MHA will also look at how these topics may be especially beneficial to people who are living with chronic physical illnesses as we ramp up to MHA's 2019 Annual Conference – *Dueling Diagnoses: Mental Health and Chronic Conditions in Children and Adults*, June 13-15 in Washington, D.C. where MHA will be discussing the impact and intersection of chronic conditions and mental health.

"It is important to really look at your overall health, both physically and mentally, to achieve wellness," said [NAME] [TITLE] of [AFFILIATE]. "Finding a reason to laugh, going for a walk with a friend, meditating, playing with a pet, or working from home once a week can go a long way in making you both physically and mentally healthy – it's all about finding the right balance to benefit both the mind and body."

MHA has developed a series of fact sheets (available at [www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may)) to help people understand how their lifestyle affects their health.

"We know that living a healthy lifestyle is not always easy, but it can be achieved by gradually making small changes and building on those successes," concluded [NAME]. "Finding the balance between work and play, the ups and downs of life, physical health and mental health, can help you on the path towards focusing both 4Mind4Body."

For more information on *May is Mental Health Month*, visit MHA's website at [www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may).

[BOILERPLATE]



# DROP-IN ARTICLE

## *Do You Focus on #4Mind4Body?*

Mental health is essential to everyone's overall health and well-being, and mental illnesses are common and treatable. So much of what we do physically impacts us mentally – it's important to pay attention to both your physical health and your mental health, which can help you achieve overall wellness and set you on a path to recovery.

Did you know that Mental Health America (MHA) founded *May is Mental Health Month* back in 1949? That means this year marks MHA's 70th year celebrating Mental Health Month!

This *May is Mental Health Month* [ORGANIZATION NAME] is expanding its focus from 2018 and raising awareness about the connection between physical health and mental health, through the theme #4Mind4Body. We are exploring the topics of animal companionship, spirituality and religion, humor, work-life balance, and recreation and social connections as ways to boost mental health and general wellness.

A healthy lifestyle can help to prevent the onset or worsening of mental health conditions, as well as chronic conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. It can also help people recover from these conditions. For those dealing with a chronic health condition and the people who care for them, it can be especially important to focus on mental health. When dealing with dueling diagnoses, focusing on both physical and mental health concerns can be daunting – but critically important in achieving overall wellness.

There are things you can do that may help. Finding a reason to laugh, going for a walk with a friend, meditating, playing with a pet, or working from home once a week can go a long way in making you both physically and mentally healthy. The company of animals – whether as pets or service animals— can have a profound impact on a person's quality of life and ability to recover from illnesses. A pet can be a source of comfort and can help us to live mentally healthier lives. And whether you go to church, meditate daily, or simply find time to enjoy that cup of tea each morning while checking in with yourself – it can be important to connect with your spiritual side in order to find that mind-body connection.

[ORGANIZATION] wants everyone to know that mental illnesses are real, and recovery is always the goal. Living a healthy lifestyle may not be easy but can be achieved by gradually making small changes and building on those successes. Finding the balance between work and play, the ups and downs of life, physical health and mental health, can help you on the path towards focusing both #4Mind4Body.

For more information, visit [www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may).





# PROCLAMATION

Encourage your local public officials to go on the record in support of mental health. Below, please find a sample proclamation that designates May as Mental Health Month. An official signing of a proclamation is a perfect occasion for a news event, photo opportunity or other activity.

*Mental Health Month 2019  
"#4Mind4Body"*

WHEREAS, mental health is essential to everyone's overall health and well-being; and

WHEREAS, all Americans experience times of difficulty and stress in their lives; and

WHEREAS, prevention is an effective way to reduce the burden of mental health conditions; and

WHEREAS, there is a strong research that animal companionship, humor, spirituality, religion, recreation, social connections, and work-life balance can help all Americans protect their health and well-being; and

WHEREAS, mental health conditions are real and prevalent in our nation; and

WHEREAS, with effective treatment, those individuals with mental health and other chronic health conditions can recover and lead full, productive lives; and

WHEREAS, each business, school, government agency, healthcare provider, organization and citizen shares the burden of mental health problems and has a responsibility to promote mental wellness and support prevention efforts.

THEREFORE, I [NAME OF PUBLIC OFFICIAL], do hereby proclaim May 2019 as Mental Health Month in [STATE OR COMMUNITY]. As the [TITLE OF LOCAL OFFICIAL], I also call upon the citizens, government agencies, public and private institutions, businesses and schools in [STATE OR COMMUNITY] to recommit our community to increasing awareness and understanding of mental health, the steps our citizens can take to protect their mental health, and the need for appropriate and accessible services for all people with mental health conditions.



# SOCIAL POSTS

## TWITTER

### DOWNLOAD THE TOOLKIT:

- Celebrate 70 years of #mentalhealth! May is #MentalHealthMonth, so download the 2019 #4Mind4Body toolkit and share to raise awareness with us: [bit.ly/MayMH] #MHM2019
- It's #MentalHealthMonth! Download this year's toolkit & share with others to spread awareness about #mentalhealth: [bit.ly/MayMH] #MHM2019 #4Mind4Body
- 2019 marks the 70th year that #MentalHealthMonth will be observed. Raise awareness and celebrate mental wellness by downloading this year's toolkit: [bit.ly/MayMH] #4Mind4Body #MHM2019

### FACTS/LEARN MORE:

- Finding a reason to laugh, walking with a friend, meditating, playing with a pet, or working from home once a week can go a long way in making you both physically and mentally healthy. Learn more about #4Mind4Body health for #MentalHealthMonth: [bit.ly/MayMH] #MHM2019
- Finding balance between work and play, the ups and downs of life, physical #health and #mentalhealth, can help you towards focusing both #4Mind4Body. #MentalHealthMonth is all about health #4Mind4Body! Learn more: [bit.ly/MayMH] #MHM2019
- Living a healthy lifestyle may not be easy but can be achieved by gradually making small changes and building on those successes. Find out how you can live healthy #4Mind4Body for #MentalHealthMonth: [bit.ly/MayMH] #MHM2019
- Things that are important to #mentalhealth: humor, spirituality, recreation, animal companionship, and work-life balance. But what makes them so critical to health #4Mind4Body? Learn more: [bit.ly/MayMH] #MentalHealthMonth #MHM2019
- Pets are not only lovable friends but also beneficial to #mentalhealth. Learn more about how animal companionship is important for health #4Mind4Body: [bit.ly/MayMH] #MentalHealthMonth #MHM2019

## FACEBOOK/INSTAGRAM

### DOWNLOAD THE TOOLKIT:

- Join @mentalhealthamerica for the 70th annual #MentalHealthMonth! Increase awareness of the connection between physical and #mentalhealth by downloading the free toolkit, featuring facts sheets with infographics, social media images, and more from bit.ly/MayMH. #MHM2019 #4Mind4Body
- 2019 marks the 70th year that #MentalHealthMonth will be observed. Since 1949, #MentalHealthMonth has been used to raise awareness about #mentalillness and celebrate #mentalhealth. Join in by downloading this year's toolkit: [bit.ly/MayMH] #4Mind4Body #MHM2019
- May is #MentalHealthMonth. We need to speak up early and educate people about #mentalillness—and do so in a compassionate, judgement-free way. Download @mentalhealthamerica's 2019 toolkit to help raise awareness at bit.ly/MayMH. #4Mind4Body #MHM2019

## FACTS/LEARN MORE:

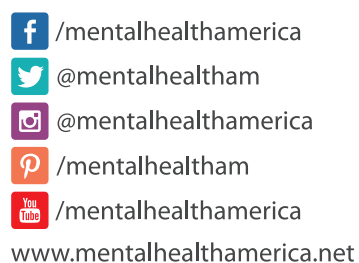
- Finding a reason to laugh, walking with a friend, meditating, playing with a pet, or working from home once a week can go a long way in making you both physically and mentally healthy. Learn more about #4Mind4Body health for #MentalHealthMonth at [bit.ly/MayMH](http://bit.ly/MayMH). #MHM2019
- Finding balance between work and play, the ups and downs of life, physical #health and #mentalhealth, can help you towards focusing both #4Mind4Body. #MentalHealthMonth is all about health #4Mind4Body! Learn more at [bit.ly/MayMH](http://bit.ly/MayMH). #MHM2019
- Living a healthy lifestyle may not be easy but can be achieved by gradually making small changes and building on those successes. Find out how you can live healthy #4Mind4Body for #MentalHealthMonth: at [bit.ly/MayMH](http://bit.ly/MayMH). #MHM2019
- Humor, spirituality, recreation, animal companionship, and work-life balance are important for everyone, but may be of special importance to people also living with #chronicillness and those who care for them. Learn more about #4Mind4Body health at [bit.ly/MayMH](http://bit.ly/MayMH). #MentalHealthMonth #MHM2019
- The company of animals – whether as pets or service animals— can have a profound impact on a person’s quality of life and ability to recover from illnesses. A pet can be a source of comfort and can help us to healthier lives #4Mind4Body. Learn more about how science supports animals for your #mentalhealth at [bit.ly/MayMH](http://bit.ly/MayMH). #MentalHealthMonth #MHM2019

## HASHTAGS

- #MHM2019
- #4Mind4Body
- #MentalHealthMonth

## LINKS

- [bit.ly/MayMH](http://bit.ly/MayMH) ([mentalhealthamerica.net/may](http://mentalhealthamerica.net/may))
- [bit.ly/4Mind4BodyHumor](http://bit.ly/4Mind4BodyHumor)
- [bit.ly/4Mind4BodyAnimals](http://bit.ly/4Mind4BodyAnimals)
- [bit.ly/4Mind4BodySpirituality](http://bit.ly/4Mind4BodySpirituality)
- [bit.ly/4Mind4BodyWork](http://bit.ly/4Mind4BodyWork)
- [bit.ly/4Mind4BodySocial](http://bit.ly/4Mind4BodySocial)
- [bit.ly/4Mind4Body](http://bit.ly/4Mind4Body) ([mentalhealthamerica.net/4Mind4Body](http://mentalhealthamerica.net/4Mind4Body))



# IMAGES

Download and save the images provided for use on your social media platforms or websites. All images can be downloaded by visiting [www.mentalhealthamerica.net/mental-health-month-2019-toolkit-download](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/mental-health-month-2019-toolkit-download), then right-clicking on the image and selecting "Save image as."

## Calls to Action

**#4MIND4BODY**

**LEARN ABOUT HEALTH - 4MIND4BODY**  
at [bit.ly/MayMH](http://bit.ly/MayMH).

**SHARE WHAT YOU DO TO STAY WELL**  
by posting with #4Mind4Body.

**SEE WHAT OTHERS ARE DOING**  
at [bit.ly/4Mind4Body](http://bit.ly/4Mind4Body).

If you are taking steps to live a healthy lifestyle but still feel like you are struggling with your mental health, visit [www.mhascreening.org](http://www.mhascreening.org) to check your symptoms.

**FREE. CONFIDENTIAL. ANONYMOUS.**

Once you have your results, we'll give you information and help you find tools and resources to feel better.

## Profile Images (for Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram)

**MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH 2019**  
**#4MIND4BODY**

**MAY IS 2019**  
**MENTAL HEALTH MONTH**  
**#4MIND4BODY**

## Facebook Cover and Twitter Headers (3 options)

**MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH 2019**  
**LEARN MORE AT BIT.LY/MAYMH**

**#4MIND4BODY**

## Vertical Banner

**MAY IS 2019**  
**MENTAL HEALTH MONTH**  
**#4MIND4BODY**

**LEARN ABOUT HEALTH 4MIND4BODY**

**SHARE WHAT YOU DO TO STAY WELL**

**SEE WHAT OTHERS ARE DOING**  
[bit.ly/MayMH](http://bit.ly/MayMH)

## Shareable (for all social media platforms)

**MAY IS 2019**  
**MENTAL HEALTH MONTH**  
**#4MIND4BODY**

Humor, spirituality, recreation, social connections, animal companionship, and work-life balance can help to prevent the onset or worsening of mental and physical health conditions and also help people recover.

**LEARN ABOUT HEALTH - 4MIND4BODY**  
at [bit.ly/MayMH](http://bit.ly/MayMH).

**SHARE WHAT YOU DO TO STAY WELL**  
by posting with #4Mind4Body.

**SEE WHAT OTHERS ARE DOING**  
at [bit.ly/4Mind4Body](http://bit.ly/4Mind4Body).

## Horizontal Banner

**MAY IS 2019**  
**MENTAL HEALTH MONTH**  
**#4MIND4BODY**

**LEARN ABOUT HEALTH - 4MIND4BODY**  
at [bit.ly/MayMH](http://bit.ly/MayMH).

**SHARE WHAT YOU DO TO STAY WELL**  
by posting with #4Mind4Body.

**SEE WHAT OTHERS ARE DOING**  
at [bit.ly/4Mind4Body](http://bit.ly/4Mind4Body).

# MORE RESOURCES

## **ANIMAL COMPANIONSHIP**

[Habri.org](#) - Information and research on the connection between people and animals.

[PetPartners.org](#) - Organization promoting the health and wellness benefits of animal-assisted therapy, activities, and education, and providing education and credentials for therapy animal teams. Visit [petpartners.org](#) to learn more about therapy animals and inquire about setting up therapy animal visiting programs.

[PetPeaceOfMind.org](#) - Organization that helps people receiving hospice or palliative care to care for their pets.

[TherapyDogs.com](#) - Provides training and certification for dogs to become registered therapy dogs and has teams that make visits in the community.

## **WORK-LIFE BALANCE**

[AskJAN.org](#) - Job Accommodation Network's official website with resources for individuals, employers, and others surrounding workplace accommodations and disability employment issues. Also in Spanish.

[MentalHealthAmerica.net/Workplace-Mental-Health](#) - Data from MHA's Workplace Health Survey on work environments, workplace stress, employee engagement, and employee benefits.

[WorkFlexibility.org](#) - National initiative in support of workplace flexibility.

## **SOCIAL CONNECTION AND RECREATION**

[Clubhouse-Intl.org](#) - A website for individuals living with mental illnesses to find Clubhouses—safe environments with opportunities for friendship, employment, housing, education and access to medical and psychiatric services in a single setting.

[ColorTherapy.app](#) - Color Therapy is an app for every day people, from all walks of life, to de-stress and unwind through a social coloring experience. The in-app community benefits from friendly, unconditional support when voicing their worries, anxieties, or mental health battles, all while creating beautiful artworks to share with the world.

[Inspire.com](#) - A social network for patients and caregivers to connect, share, and learn from each other about medical conditions, treatment, and support.

[LoveKnitting.com](#) - LoveKnitting is a global community for makers. We're dedicated to creating a place where your projects are celebrated, advice is shared and it's easy to buy supplies.

[TheMighty.com](#) - A safe, supportive online community for people facing health challenges and the people who care for them.

## **CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS & CAREGIVING**

[CaregiverAction.org](#) - Education, peer support, and resources for family caregivers.

[ChoicesInRecovery.com](#) - Support and information for people with Schizophrenia, Schizoaffective, and Bipolar Disorder and their caregivers, including resources for having conversations with treatment professionals.

[HeadsUpGuys.org](#) - Information and resources for men dealing with depression.

[Lung.org](#) - The American Lung Association provides information and resources around lung diseases, air quality, and tobacco cessation.

[MoreThanMyDiagnosis.com](#) - Stories and advice from people who either live with mental health issues or care for someone who does.

[WomenHeart.org](#) - Information and support about heart disease designed especially for women.

# END NOTES

## ANIMAL COMPANIONSHIP

<sup>1</sup> 2017-2018 APPA National Pet Owners Survey. [https://americanpetproducts.org/pubs\\_survey.asp](https://americanpetproducts.org/pubs_survey.asp)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Wilkin, Christa L., Paul Fairlie, and Souha R. Ezzedeen. "Who let the dogs in? A look at pet-friendly workplaces." *International Journal of Workplace Health Management* 9.1 (2016): 96-109.

<sup>4</sup> Levine, Glenn N., et al. "Pet ownership and cardiovascular risk: a scientific statement from the American Heart Association." *Circulation* 127.23 (2013): 2353-2363.

<sup>5</sup> Barker, Sandra B., et al. "Exploratory study of stress-buffering response patterns from interaction with a therapy dog." *Anthrozoös* 23.1 (2010): 79-91.

<sup>6</sup> Antonacopoulos, Nikolina M. Duvall, and Timothy A. Pychyl. "An Examination of the Potential Role of Pet Ownership, Human Social Support and Pet Attachment in the Psychological Health of Individuals Living Alone." *Anthrozoös* 23, no. 1 (March 2010): 37-54.

<sup>7</sup> Orlandi, M., Trangeled, K., Mambrini, A., Tagliani, M., Ferrarini, A., Zanetti, L., Tartarini, R., Pacetti, P., & Cantore, M. (2007). Pet therapy effects on oncological day hospital patients undergoing chemotherapy treatment. *Anticancer Research*, 27(6C), 4301-4303.

<sup>8</sup> Gagnon, Johanne, et al. "Implementing a hospital-based animal therapy program for children with cancer: a descriptive study." *Canadian Oncology Nursing Journal/Revue canadienne de soins infirmiers en oncologie* 14.4 (2004): 217-222.

<sup>9</sup> Annick Maujean, Christopher A. Pepping & Elizabeth Kendall (2015) A Systematic Review of Randomized Controlled Trials of Animal-Assisted Therapy on Psychosocial Outcomes, *Anthrozoös*, 28:1, 23-36

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

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Special thanks to our partners at the Human Animal Bond Research Institute (HABRI).

## SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION

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## SOCIAL CONNECTION AND RECREATION

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# ANIMAL COMPANIONSHIP

The company of animals – whether as pets or service animals – can have a profound impact on a person’s quality of life and ability to recover from illnesses.

## NEARLY 70% OF U.S. HOUSEHOLDS (84.6 MILLION) OWN A PET.<sup>1</sup>

### Of households with pets:<sup>2</sup>

- 80% believe their pets bring them happiness and emotional support;
- 55% believe their pets reduce anxiety and depression; and
- 66% believe their pets relieve stress.



## PET-FRIENDLY WORKPLACES ARE GOOD FOR BUSINESS



### Workplaces that adopt pet-friendly policies can experience benefits like:<sup>3</sup>

- Attracting more job candidates;
- Keeping their employees longer;
- Better employee health; and
- Increased productivity among workers.

## WHAT DOES THE SCIENCE SAY ABOUT PETS AND HEALTH?

### Pet ownership can help:

- Improve cardiovascular health and physical activity;<sup>4</sup>
- Decrease stress and lower blood pressure;<sup>5</sup> and
- Reduce loneliness, which increases the risk of developing many chronic health conditions.<sup>6</sup>



## ANIMALS HELP PEOPLE WITH MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

In people with cancer, animal-assisted interventions (i.e. therapy, education, activities) play a role in reducing anxiety, depression and aggression during treatment.<sup>7,8</sup>



For people receiving treatment for mental illnesses, animal-assisted interventions reduce anger, anxiety, depression, and general distress, while improving the ability to socialize.<sup>9</sup>

Animal interactions have the ability to help people who are critically ill by reducing stress, anxiety, and boredom; improving mood; and reducing heart rate and blood pressure.<sup>10</sup>



For people being treated for HIV, those who own dogs show fewer symptoms of depression and are better at taking medications —likely because of the routines that come with dog ownership.<sup>11</sup>



## SERVICE DOGS CAN MAKE A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE



The majority of people with diabetes who own Diabetic Alert Dogs are less worried about extreme changes in insulin levels, and experience improved quality of life and the ability to participate in physical activities.<sup>12</sup>



People who are hearing impaired showed long-term reductions in depression after getting a service dog.<sup>13</sup>



Veterans with PTSD reported decreases in depression, social isolation, anxiety, and alcohol abuse, while also reporting improved sleep and better coping with flashbacks after being paired with service dogs.<sup>14,15</sup>



Additionally, service dogs may help lighten the responsibilities of caregivers by assisting those with disabilities to accomplish everyday tasks and alerting to symptoms of chronic health conditions.

## SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH #4MIND4BODY

Mental Health America has created a space where people can learn from each other about what they do to stay well.

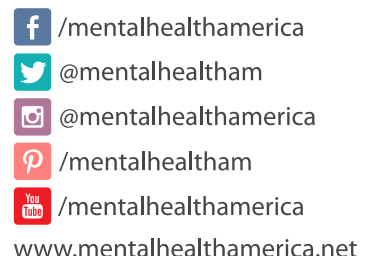
Share pics of your pets or other animals in your life and tell us how they impact your health by posting with #4mind4body.

We'll collect your Twitter and Instagram posts at [mentalhealthamerica.net/4mind4body](http://mentalhealthamerica.net/4mind4body). You can also post directly and anonymously to the site if you would like.

## ARE YOU STRUGGLING?

If you are taking steps to care for your mind, body, and soul but still feel like you are struggling with your mental health, visit [www.mhascreening.org](http://www.mhascreening.org) to check your symptoms. It's free, confidential, and anonymous. Once you have your results, MHA will give you information and help you find tools and resources to feel better.

For a complete list of sources, please visit [bit.ly/4mind4bodyAnimals](http://bit.ly/4mind4bodyAnimals).





# SPIRITUALITY & RELIGION

Regardless of whether you rely on meditation, yoga or religion, caring for your soul is an important part of taking care of yourself that can improve physical and mental health along the way.

## DEFINING SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS

Spirituality may mean a little something different to everyone. In one study, spiritual was defined as being connected to something larger than oneself, and feelings of peace, well-being or a sense of wonder about the universe. Being religious related to how personally important the ideas of an organized religion are to a person and how often they attended services. Of Americans who participated in the study:<sup>1</sup>

**29%** are both spiritual and religious

**18%** are spiritual but not religious

**31%** are neither spiritual nor religious

**22%** are not spiritual but are religious

## RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL ACTIVITIES CAN AFFECT BODY CHEMISTRY AND BRAIN ACTIVITY



Spiritual practices like meditation are linked to increased levels of feel-good chemicals like serotonin, dopamine, and endorphins; and decreased levels of cortisol and noradrenaline, which are associated with stress.<sup>2</sup>



Research has found that the areas of the brain associated with reward and positive feelings are activated when devout followers of a religion read scripture.<sup>3</sup>

## MENTAL HEALTH CAN BENEFIT FROM BEING SPIRITUAL OR RELIGIOUS



One study found that people who attended religious services monthly showed a 22% lower risk of depression.<sup>4</sup>



U.S. military veterans who identified themselves as being highly religious or spiritual showed high levels of gratitude, purpose in life, and post-traumatic growth, and lower risk of depression, suicidal thinking, and alcohol abuse than their lesser or non-spiritual/religious peers.<sup>5</sup>



In a study of people receiving treatment at a mental health facility, more than 80% used religious beliefs or activities to cope with daily difficulties or frustrations; 65% reported that religion helped them to cope with symptom severity, and 30% indicated that religion gave them purpose to keep living.<sup>6</sup>

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR PEOPLE WITH CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS AND CAREGIVERS



In people born with heart diseases, being religious or spiritual led to healthier behaviors, better quality of life, and higher life satisfaction.<sup>6</sup>



Spiritual and religious beliefs related to meaning, peace, and faith were associated with reduced suicide risk and better mental health in people getting dialysis treatments.<sup>7</sup>



Having a sense of meaning, purpose, or connection to something larger than oneself is associated with positive mental health outcomes in people receiving cancer treatment.<sup>8</sup>



Faith communities can provide social connections and support to individuals living with chronic illnesses and those who care for them. Some religious organizations have respite programs available to assist with caregiving.

### SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH #4MIND4BODY

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Share your favorite inspirational verses and tell us how you incorporate spirituality or religion into your life by posting with #4mind4body.






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# HUMOR

Finding humor in the circumstances of life can lift moods with laughter and help people to better deal with and overcome difficult experiences.

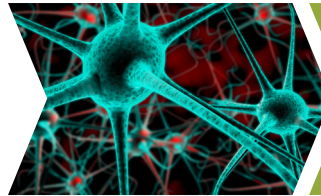
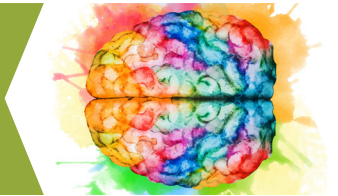
## WHAT HAPPENS TO OUR BODIES WHEN WE LAUGH?

Levels of stress hormones decrease.<sup>1</sup>



Your heart, lungs, and muscles are stimulated.<sup>2</sup>

There is increased activity in parts of the brain's reward system.<sup>3,4</sup>



Endorphins—the body's natural pain blockers—are released.<sup>5</sup>

## INCORPORATING HUMOR INTO YOUR DAILY LIFE HAS MANY POTENTIAL BENEFITS

A stronger immune system<sup>6</sup>



Improved mood and anxiety relief<sup>7</sup>

Better interactions with others<sup>8</sup>



Less burnout on the job<sup>9</sup>

## HUMOR AND LAUGHTER REDUCE THE RISK OF DEVELOPING CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS

Stress and the hormones it produces can do a lot of damage to the mind and body over time. Since humor and laughter reduce the amounts of these hormones, it has also been shown that they can help reduce the risk of blood clots, heart conditions, and other stress-related diseases.<sup>10,11</sup>



## 10 TIPS FOR INCORPORATING HUMOR INTO YOUR LIFE



List three funny things that happened to you each day.<sup>12</sup>

Find a TV show or movie that tickles your funny bone.



Watch stand-up comedy. There are lots of options to watch online or on television and if you can get to a live show – even better!<sup>13</sup>

Reach out to someone who gets your sense of humor. Share the funny things that have happened to you recently or reminisce.



Get online. Comics, memes, YouTube videos, blogs—if it gets you to laugh or smile, spend 15 minutes or so to check it out.

Have a game night. Charades is a classic, and there are also plenty of newer card and board games that are designed with humor in mind.



Try laughter yoga.

Read a funny book.



Spend time with an animal or a child. Their antics are almost always good for a laugh.

Incorporate funny things into your environment. It could be a goofy photo; a page-a-day calendar; or a mug with a witty saying or cartoon.



## SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH #4MIND4BODY

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Tell us how you incorporate humor and laughter into your life or share something you find funny by posting with #4mind4body.






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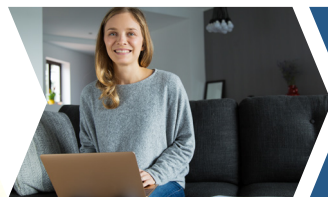


# WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Work allows you to provide for yourself and your family while also serving a purpose in the community, but when it takes over your life, it can negatively affect your health.

## WORK-LIFE BALANCE IS IMPORTANT

Of adults employed full time in the U.S., nearly 40% reported working at least 50 hours per week, and 18% work 60 hours or more.<sup>1</sup>



People who feel they have good work-life balance are more satisfied with their job and their life, and experience fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety.<sup>2</sup>

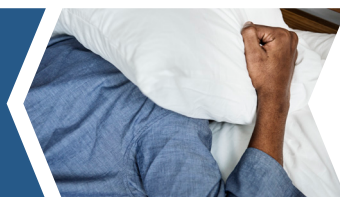
## WHAT WE'VE LEARNED FROM MHA'S WORK HEALTH SURVEY™

More than half of people who responded to MHA's Work Health Survey say that they do unhealthy things (e.g. drinking, drug use, lashing out at others) to cope with workplace stress.



Over 75% of people are afraid of getting punished for taking a day off to attend to their mental health.

More than two-thirds of people have had their sleep negatively affected by workplace issues.

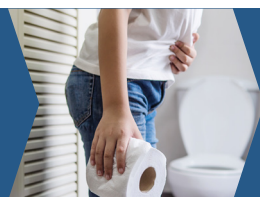


People who work in manufacturing, retail, and food/beverage jobs were most likely to report that work stress "Always or Often" impacted their personal relationships.

## HEALTH SUFFERS WHEN WORK TAKES OVER YOUR LIFE



The mental and physical health impacts of workplace burnout and stress are estimated to cost as much as \$190 billion per year (\$6,025 per second) in healthcare spending in the U.S.<sup>4</sup>



Poor work-life balance increases your risk for health conditions like sleep problems, digestive disorders, and mental health problems. This is especially true for people who work longer shifts or on nights and weekends.<sup>5</sup>



Working overtime increases the likelihood of having symptoms of depression, especially in men.<sup>6</sup>

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR PEOPLE WITH CHRONIC CONDITIONS AND CAREGIVERS

For people with chronic illnesses, balancing the demands of work while also caring for your health can be difficult, but laws like the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Family Medical Leave Act are designed to protect the jobs of people with disabilities or medical concerns. Talk to your HR representative and your boss about your health care coverage and what accommodations can be made to help you manage – such as working from home or shifting your hours – so that you are better able to tend to your health.



In studies of people who had been diagnosed with cancer, those who believed that their employers would be accommodating to their treatment were more likely to return to work.<sup>7</sup>



A survey of people with diabetes and rheumatoid arthritis found that self-acceptance, understanding and support from coworkers and management, adaptations to workflow and work environment, and adequate benefits were among some of the most important factors when it came to their ability to keep on working.<sup>8</sup>



Research about caregivers is unclear as to whether paid employment has more of a positive or negative impact on the caregiver's well-being. However, one study found that among caregivers who work, caregiving responsibilities caused women to miss work twice as often as men.<sup>9</sup>

### SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH #4MIND4BODY

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# SOCIAL CONNECTIONS & RECREATION

Finding other people to relate to and doing things that bring you enjoyment are great ways to improve your mood and overall mental health.

## LONELINESS IS BAD FOR HEALTH

Being lonely can cause the same amount of damage to your lifespan as smoking 15 cigarettes a day and is more dangerous to health than obesity.<sup>1</sup>



Loneliness is associated with a higher risk of high blood pressure in older people.<sup>2</sup>

Poor social supports make it harder to recover from mental illnesses, while a strong social support system improves overall outcomes and the ability to bounce back from stress.<sup>3</sup>



Women with breast cancer who have weak support systems before treatment have more pain and symptoms of depression over time.<sup>4</sup>

## SOCIAL INTERACTION AND RECREATION ARE ALL AROUND GOOD FOR YOU

People with strong social relationships are 50% more likely to live longer.<sup>5</sup>



People who do things in nature have better perceptions of their own emotional well-being.<sup>6</sup>

Taking a vacation can help you to feel happier and less stressed for a while. Even short vacations help!<sup>7</sup>



Adolescents who participate in sports have lower odds of suffering from depression or thinking about suicide, likely because sports increase self-esteem and social support.<sup>8</sup>

One study showed that people who participated in leisure activities like reading, playing board games, playing musical instruments, and dancing were less likely to develop dementia.<sup>9</sup>



Participating in outdoor recreation decreases symptoms of depression in people with disabilities.<sup>10</sup>

People with schizophrenia and other serious mental illnesses who participated in MHA's *It's My Life* Social Self Directed Care Program experienced increased quality of life across 12 different measures and a drastic reduction in hospitalization rates.



## CONSIDERATIONS FOR CAREGIVERS



Feelings of loneliness and isolation are common among caregivers.<sup>11</sup>



Adult day care and other respite programs can help reduce the demands on caregivers which may improve morale and allow more time for social and recreational activities.<sup>12</sup>

## TIPS FOR FINDING FRIENDS AND THINGS TO DO



Look for rec sports leagues in your community. Softball and kickball are common. You may be able to find other games like bocce ball or shuffleboard as well.

Check [meetup.com](http://meetup.com). The website has groups all over the country that are based around specific activities or interest areas.



Volunteer! [Volunteermatch.org](http://Volunteermatch.org) has a database of opportunities across a variety of causes, all across the country.

Take a class. Check out your local parks and recreation department or look at national chain stores like Michaels or Home Depot that offer how-to classes.



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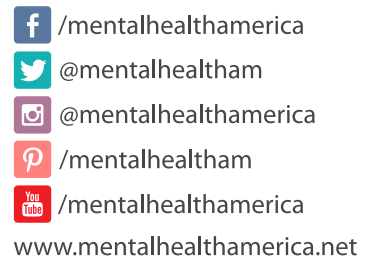
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## ARE YOU STRUGGLING?

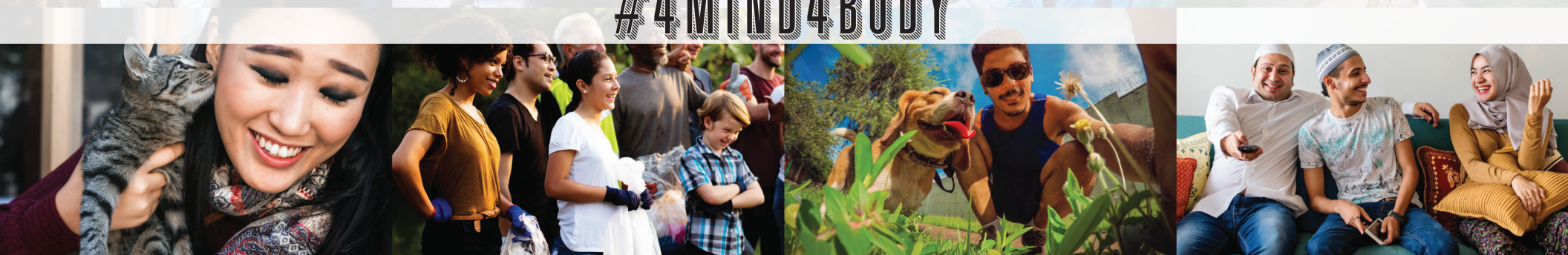
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For a complete list of sources, please visit [bit.ly/4mind4bodySocial](http://bit.ly/4mind4bodySocial).





# #4MIND4BODY



## SUN MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT



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<p><b>1</b></p> <p>Switch up your exercise regimen. Try a dance class or a new sport. Exercising with other people can enhance its stress-reducing benefits.</p>	<p><b>2</b></p> <p>Experiment with a new recipe, write a poem, paint or try a Pinterest project. Creativity and overall well-being are linked. LoveKnitting.com is a good source of inspiration.</p>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p>Feeling stressed? Smile. It may not be the easiest thing to do, but smiling can help to lower your heart rate and calm you down.</p>	<p><b>4</b></p> <p>Do something with friends and family - have a cookout, go to a park, or play a game. People are 12 times more likely to feel happy on days that they spend 6-7 hours with friends and family.</p>
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<p><b>5</b></p> <p>Consider finding a place of worship. One study found that people who attended religious services monthly showed a 22% lower risk of depression.</p>	<p><b>6</b></p> <p>Visit <a href="http://bit.ly/4mind4body">bit.ly/4mind4body</a> to see what other people are doing to work wellness into their lifestyles.</p>	<p><b>7</b></p> <p>Take 30 minutes to go for a walk in nature - it could be a stroll through a park, or a hike in the woods. Being in nature can increase energy levels, reduce depression, and boost well-being.</p>	<p><b>8</b></p> <p>List three funny things that happened to you each day this week. Doing this regularly has been shown to enhance happiness and reduce depressive symptoms.</p>	<p><b>9</b></p> <p>Set up a getaway. It could be a road trip with friends or a trip to the tropics. The act of planning a vacation and having something to look forward to can boost your overall happiness for up to 8 weeks!</p>	<p><b>10</b></p> <p>Make a point to not answer work emails over the weekend. Setting boundaries is important for establishing work-life balance.</p>	<p><b>11</b></p> <p>Get connected - share a meal with someone or pick up the phone. Studies show that good relationships make the difference between very happy and less happy people.</p>
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<p><b>12</b></p> <p>It's Mother's Day. Pick up some flowers for Mom. Studies show that being surrounded by nature is a mood booster and thanking her for her support can boost your mood and hers.</p>	<p><b>13</b></p> <p>Plan out your week to make sure you're tending to both personal and professional obligations. People who feel they have good work-life balance experience fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety.</p>	<p><b>14</b></p> <p>Feeling in a rut? Think back and laugh at something silly you've done. Remember, everyone deserves a break and we're often hardest on ourselves.</p>	<p><b>15</b></p> <p>Get comfortable and read a good book. Reading can help relieve stress and tension.</p>	<p><b>16</b></p> <p>Has something been bothering you? Let it all out...on paper. Writing about upsetting experiences can reduce symptoms of depression.</p>	<p><b>17</b></p> <p>Watch a comedy or visit a funny website. Laughter boosts the immune system and can reduce anxiety.</p>	<p><b>18</b></p> <p>Try meditation. Spiritual practices like meditation are linked to increased levels of feel-good chemicals and decreased levels of chemicals associated with stress.</p>
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<p><b>19</b></p> <p>Aim to get 7 to 8 hours of sleep each night this week. People who get enough sleep are more likely to succeed at their daily tasks.</p>	<p><b>20</b></p> <p>Do some coloring for about 20 minutes to help you clear your mind. No crayons? No problem! Download an app from our partners at <a href="http://www.colorthrapy.app">www.colorthrapy.app</a>.</p>	<p><b>21</b></p> <p>Add some green to your office or home (if you don't have much of a green thumb, try a succulent). Seeing plants can reduce stress and anxiety..</p>	<p><b>22</b></p> <p>Incorporate something funny into your environment for a daily dose of humor. It could be a goofy picture of your friends, family or pets; a page-a-day calendar; or a mug with a witty saying or cartoon.</p>	<p><b>23</b></p> <p>Make a list of activities you enjoy. Set aside time each week to focus on yourself and what makes you happy.</p>	<p><b>24</b></p> <p>Don't wonder about your mental health! Take a screen at <a href="http://MHAScreening.org">MHAScreening.org</a> and get the tools you need.</p>	<p><b>25</b></p> <p>This weekend try being a tourist in your own town. Often times people only explore attractions on trips, but you may be surprised what cool things are in your own backyard.</p>
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<p><b>26</b></p> <p>Try prepping your meals or picking out your clothes for the work week. You'll save some time in the mornings, have a sense of control about the week ahead, and have more time in the evenings for yourself.</p>	<p><b>27</b></p> <p>Give yourself a break! Take 10 minutes out of your day for a walk. Small breaks (and exercise) improve your ability to deal with stress.</p>	<p><b>28</b></p> <p>Work your strengths at work. Do something you're good at to build self-confidence, then tackle a tougher task. You've got this!</p>	<p><b>29</b></p> <p>Time with animals lowers stress hormones and boosts oxytocin - which stimulates feelings of happiness. If you don't have a pet, hang out with a friend who does or volunteer at a shelter.</p>	<p><b>30</b></p> <p>Take a few minutes to breathe deeply - in through your nose and out through your mouth. Try this technique: Pretend you're taking a giant whiff of a bouquet of flowers, then pretend to blow out a candle.</p>	<p><b>31</b></p> <p>Tell your goals to someone you trust and ask them to help you stick with a plan. Studies show that social support helps you achieve your goals.</p>
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## SHARE WITH #4MIND4BODY

Mental Health America has created a space where people can learn from each other about what they do to stay well.

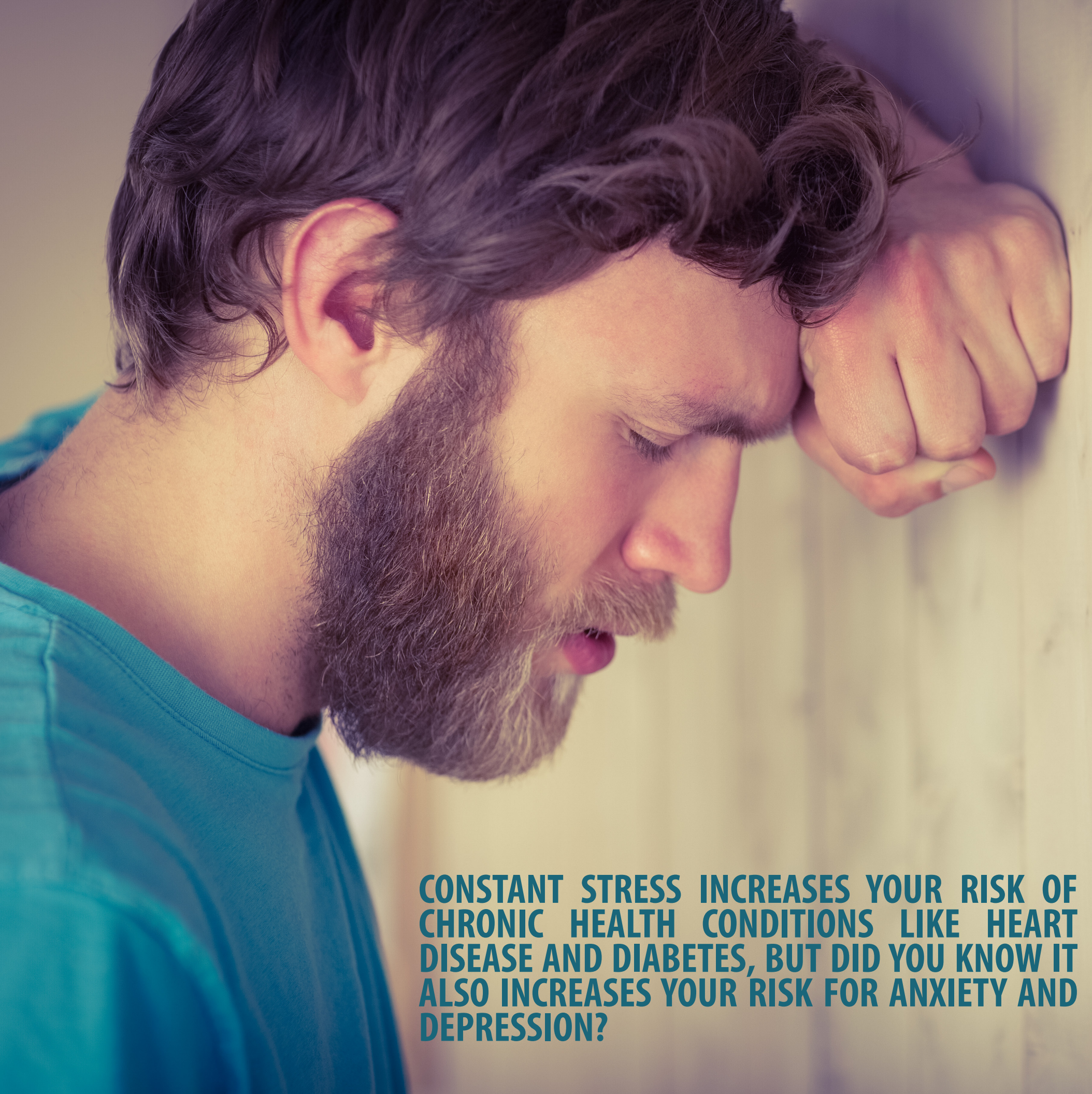
Show us how you're putting the tips from this calendar into practice by posting with #4mind4body.

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**CONSTANT STRESS INCREASES YOUR RISK OF CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS LIKE HEART DISEASE AND DIABETES, BUT DID YOU KNOW IT ALSO INCREASES YOUR RISK FOR ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION?**

**80% OF PEOPLE WITH CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS WHO TAKE A SCREEN AT [MHASCREENING.ORG](https://mhascreening.org) ALSO HAVE MODERATE TO SEVERE SYMPTOMS OF A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION.**

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**WHEN CARING FOR THE ONES YOU LOVE, IT'S ALSO IMPORTANT TO CARE FOR YOURSELF – 4MIND4BODY.**



**If you are taking steps to care for your mind, body, and soul but still feel like you are struggling with your mental health, visit [MHAScreening.org](https://MHAScreening.org) to check your symptoms.**

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**For those caring for someone living with a mental illness, visit [ChoicesInRecovery.com](https://ChoicesInRecovery.com) for resources and support.**