



MAY

# Connecting Mental and Physical Health

## Overcoming Mental Health Obstacles & Achieving Wellness

In recent years, mental health advocacy has become just as prevalent as physical health advocacy. Often, mental and physical health are thought of as separate entities, but in actuality, they are connected. To achieve a higher level of well-being, it is important to understand the effect each has on the other.

### WHY THIS CONNECTION MATTERS

Positive mental health is linked to a reduced risk of strokes and heart attacks. Conversely, poor mental health can lead to harmful choices and can negatively affect your physical wellbeing. For example, those with compromised mental health are...

- More likely to smoke
- More likely to have issues sleeping
- More likely to develop chronic diseases
- Less likely to prioritize self-care

On the other hand, how you physically feel has a direct impact on your mental wellbeing. Chronic conditions and serious diagnoses tend to be associated with anxiety, stress, and depression. These feelings typically are a result of stigmas and fears surrounding the condition. Approximately one-third of people with serious medical conditions have symptoms of depression.

### HOW TO IMPROVE MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

Maintaining and actively working to improve your overall health is beneficial short- and long-term. The advantage of mental and physical health being dependent on each other is that when you improve one, you improve the other. There are many ways you can enhance your wellbeing.

- **Exercise regularly.** Exercise is commonly used to boost both mood and physical health. Additionally, your head space improves through exercise as your brain releases endorphins, feel-good chemicals. Studies have shown that people who walk briskly for 2.5 hours a week had a lower risk of depression than those who didn't exercise. Ultimately, what matters most is movement not intensity.
- **Eat nutritiously.** Eating a balanced diet helps your body function properly. It is important to be mindful of the seven major nutrient groups when planning your diet: carbohydrates, proteins, dietary fibers, and more can significantly impact our overall health. Conditions like dementia and depression are affected by what you consume. Certain foods influence the prevention, development, and management of these conditions.
- **Develop helpful coping strategies.** Stress and anxiety negatively affect your mental and physical health, so it is a good idea to determine ways to manage them. Consider meditating, journaling, or attending counseling to prevent stress and anxiety from derailing your wellness goals.

Improving your mental and physical health takes motivation and dedication. Try including a friend or household member in your journey to help you stay committed.

As 2022 continues to unfold, Creative Benefits, Inc. will send you valuable information and resources to help you prioritize your mental health and wellbeing.