

Join The Mental “Health Club”

Work At Keeping Your Mind As Fit & Sharp As Possible

Many people, seniors and caregivers alike, feel that the decline of mental health is a natural part of aging. While it is true that seniors are at a greater risk for mental illnesses, that doesn't mean it has to happen. In fact, many of the diseases that are considered to be inevitable are actually preventable, or at least treatable.

Good mental health habits and early diagnosis are the keys. Seniors should join their own mental “health club.” It's common in our society to focus on being physically fit. We exercise, eat better, talk to our doctor, get more sleep, etc. We should have the same type of regimen for mental fitness. Exercise and stimulate the brain daily. Do things you enjoy, reduce stress and focus on the positive. Also, do what many seniors don't do - talk to your doctor about cognitive and emotional issues. Consider her/him your own personal (mental fitness) trainer.



Almost like magic, a computer can connect a senior to the world, while also challenging the mind, sharpening decision making and stimulating activity.

Statistics & Findings

- ◆ It is estimated that 15% of those 60 years of age and older suffer from symptoms of mental illness.
- ◆ Depression is the most prevalent mental health problem among older adults.
 - ▶ 80% recovered from depression after receiving proper treatment.
- ◆ Medicare, which tends to set the standard for insurance benefits, covers only 50% of the costs of mental health services.
 - ▶ It is estimated that up to 63% of older adults with a mental disorder do not receive the services they need.
- ◆ Changes that come with aging can all impact one's mental health.
 - ▶ Changes in body and chemistry.
 - ▶ Changes in family and friendships.
 - ▶ Changes in living situations.

Sharpen The Mind

Seniors can practice good mental health habits. Here are some simple guidelines that can even be adapted to the abilities of the frail and the cognitively impaired.

- ◆ **Make decisions.** The process of working through information and situations, then reaching a conclusion, sharpens the mind and adds to one's independence.
- ◆ **Get going.** Movement and exercise help to keep the mind fit, as well as the body.
- ◆ **Communicate and socialize.** Interact with other people - talk, sign or write. Inquire, exchange ideas and express feelings. If you are alone, join in the activities of local senior centers, community clubs or church groups.
- ◆ **Keep learning.** You're never too old to try a new recipe, start a new hobby or listen to an interesting speaker. Stimulating the mind increases self-esteem, decreases boredom, adds excitement and builds confidence.

(Sources: American Assn. of Geriatric Psychology, American Psychiatric Assn., CDC)

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