



# GUIDE TO BOOST YOUR MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

# ABSTRACT

Your mental health is an important part of your well-being. This aspect of your welfare determines how you're able to operate psychologically, emotionally, and socially among others.

Considering how much of a role your mental health plays in each aspect of your life, it's important to guard and improve psychological wellness using appropriate measures.

# INTRODUCTION

Mental wellbeing is an integral part of our overall health. Society often thinks of health as something biological and physical: the condition of our bodies, how healthy we eat, the physical exercise we do. A key component of health is missing from this, though. It's mental wellbeing, which encompasses our inner workings and the way we describe how we are in our lives.

Mental wellbeing, in general, is the state of thriving in various areas of life, such as in relationships, at work, play, and more, despite ups and downs. It's the knowledge that we are separate from our problems and the belief that we can handle those problems.

## I. Why Is Mental Health Important?



Because different circumstances can affect your mental health, we'll be highlighting risk factors and signs that may indicate mental distress. But most importantly, we'll dive into all of the benefits of having your mental health in its best shape.

## Risk Factors for Poor Mental Health

Mental health is described as a state of well-being where a person is able to cope with the normal stresses of life. This state permits productive work output and allows for meaningful contributions to society.

However, different circumstances exist that may affect the ability to handle life's curveballs. These factors may also disrupt daily activities, and the capacity to manage these changes.

The following factors, listed below, may affect mental well-being and could increase the risk of developing psychological disorders.

### Childhood Abuse

When a child is subjected to physical assault, sexual violence, emotional abuse, or neglect while growing up, it can lead to severe mental and emotional distress.

Abuse increases the risk of developing mental disorders like depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, or personality disorders.

Children who have been abused may eventually deal with alcohol and substance use issues. But beyond mental health challenges, child abuse may also lead to medical complications such as diabetes, stroke, and other forms of heart disease.

### The Environment

A strong contributor to mental well-being is the state of a person's usual environment. Adverse environmental circumstances can cause negative effects on psychological wellness.



For instance, weather conditions may influence an increase in suicide cases. Likewise, experiencing natural disasters firsthand can increase the chances of

developing PTSD. In certain cases, air pollution may produce negative effects on depression symptoms.

In contrast, living in a positive social environment can provide protection against mental challenges.

## Biology

Your biological makeup could determine the state of your well-being. A number of mental health disorders have been found to run in families and may be passed down to members.

These include conditions such as autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, bipolar disorder, depression, and schizophrenia.

## Lifestyle

Your lifestyle can also impact your mental health. Smoking, a poor diet, alcohol consumption, substance use, and risky sexual behavior may cause psychological harm. These behaviors have been linked to depression.

## Signs of Mental Health Problems

When mental health is compromised, it isn't always apparent to the individual or those around them. However, there are certain warning signs to look out for, that may signify negative changes for the well-being. These include:

- A switch in eating habits, whether over or undereating
- A noticeable reduction in energy levels
- Being more reclusive and shying away from others
- Feeling persistent despair
- Indulging in alcohol, tobacco, or other substances more than usual
- Experiencing unexplained confusion, anger, guilt, or worry
- Severe mood swings
- Picking fights with family and friends
- Hearing voices with no identifiable source
- Thinking of self-harm or causing harm to others
- Being unable to perform daily tasks with ease

## Benefits of Good Mental Health

Whether young or old, the importance of mental health for total well-being cannot be overstated. When psychological wellness is affected, it can cause negative

behaviors that may not only affect personal health but can also compromise relationships with others.

Below are some of the benefits of good mental health.

## A Stronger Ability to Cope With Life's Stressors

When mental and emotional states are at peak levels, the challenges of life can be easier to overcome.



Where alcohol/drugs, isolation, tantrums, or fighting may have been adopted to manage relationship disputes, financial woes, work challenges, and other life issues—a stable mental state can encourage healthier coping mechanisms.

## A Positive Self-Image

Mental health greatly correlates with personal feelings about oneself. Overall mental wellness plays a part in your self-esteem. Confidence can often be a good indicator of a healthy mental state.

A person whose mental health is flourishing is more likely to focus on the good in themselves. They will hone in on these qualities, and will generally have ambitions that strive for a healthy, happy life.

## Healthier Relationships

If your mental health is in good standing, you might be more capable of providing your friends and family with quality time, affection, and support. When you're not in emotional distress, it can be easier to show up and support the people you care about.

## Better Productivity

Dealing with depression or other mental health disorders can impact your productivity levels. If you feel mentally strong, it's more likely that you will be able to work more efficiently and provide higher quality work.

## Higher Quality of Life

When mental well-being thrives, your quality of life may improve. This can give room for greater participation in community building. For example, you may begin volunteering in soup kitchens, at food drives, shelters, etc.

You might also pick up new hobbies, and make new acquaintances, and travel to new cities.

## How to Maintain Mental Health and Well-Being

Because mental health is so important to general wellness, it's important that you take care of your mental health.

To keep mental health in shape, a few introductions to and changes to lifestyle practices may be required. These include:

- Taking up regular exercise
- Prioritizing rest and sleep on a daily basis
- Trying meditation
- Learning coping skills for life challenges
- Keeping in touch with loved ones
- Maintaining a positive outlook on life

Another proven way to improve and maintain mental well-being is through the guidance of a professional. Talk therapy can teach you healthier ways to interact with others and coping mechanisms to try during difficult times.



Therapy can also help you address some of your own negative behaviors and provide you with the tools to make some changes in your own life.



## II. 5 interior hacks to improve your mental health

These interior hacks will instantly give you a mood boost, as well as providing long-term benefits



These interior hacks can improve your mental health, with plenty of research to back up the claims that our living spaces affect our mood. This has never been truer than during the pandemic – our homes have become essential spaces to work and relax in, and people have never been more aware of the importance of the right environment to help them thrive.

We have asked mental health professionals\* to give us expert tips on improving wellbeing through interior design. Here's what they recommend.

- Sleep is essential to our mental health; find out how to sleep better in our guide

### 1. Declutter, declutter, declutter!

Research has found a direct link between clutter and increased levels of the stress hormone cortisol. In response, many people are adopting a minimal approach to their homes, not least thanks to the rising popularity of the Marie Kondo tidying up method.

### 2. Improve natural light

There's a wealth of evidence on the importance of natural light to everything from our immune systems to our sleep cycles. Natural light is essential to the correct regulation of the different hormones in our bodies, especially serotonin, which is very important to healthy sleep and maintaining good mental health.



To increase the light levels within your home, try keeping your blinds and curtains open during the day, use lighter colors within your interior design scheme, and add wall mirrors across from windows to diffuse light rays throughout the room.

### 3. Pay attention to color

It's no secret that different colors affect our mood differently. Whether you believe in color psychology or not, there's no denying that a well-chosen, tranquil color scheme just makes any room nicer to be in. Green and purple have been proven in scientific studies to lower heart rate and reduce stress. There's less research around other colors, but it makes sense to keep colors considered to be more stimulating – reds and yellows – out of the spaces where you want to relax.

### 4. Add round shapes to your decor

In the same way that delicate colour patterns can bring a sense of tranquillity, design schemes with soft-looking edges and geometric circle patterns can help us feel more relaxed. Research into the psychology of shapes revealed that people recognise round shapes, specifically circles, more positively than angular shapes.





It doesn't mean that everything in your home must be round, but adding soft rounded shapes to your existing decor will help make it a more relaxing space. It can be as simple as adding some round cushions to your sofa, or a round rug in your dining room.

## 5. Embrace the biophilic design trend

It may sound fancy, but the biophilic trend is everywhere, from our newly-found obsession with indoor plants to linking the indoors and the outdoors. Biophilic design looks for ways to bring people closer to nature, arguing that it makes us happier and healthier.

The biophilia effect was coined by biologist E. O. Wilson in the 1980s and referred to how humans need and gravitate towards nature. Findings (opens in new tab) confirm that bringing a touch of nature into your home can positively impact mental and physical health.

House plants have been proven to help your immune system, boost productivity and positively influence your mental health. It doesn't much matter what plant you choose – just looking at greenery has been shown to be good for us.

Another easy way to bring biophilic design into your home is to focus on natural materials such as wood, stone, and ceramic.

### III. How to Decorate with Indoor Plants to Add Fresh Energy to Your Space



Decorating with indoor plants has numerous benefits; they produce extra oxygen through photosynthesis, help reduce stress, and can even increase your productivity if you include them on your desk or in your home office.

You can start small, with just one or two houseplants on side tables, or you can go all out and create your own garden room filled with dozens of different plants. No matter how you decide to do it, decorating with houseplants helps bring the freshness of the outdoors in, and gives you a mini garden you can tend to all year round.

#### How to Decorate with Houseplants

When decorating with houseplants, there are some things to keep in mind. It's not just how they look in the room, you have to consider the plants' care and living conditions. For example, some plants will tolerate low light and thrive in tricky areas like your bathroom, while others need a spot by the window to grow. Here are a few tips to keep in mind as you bring more plants home:

#### Arrange in Odd Numbers

When you can, group plants in an odd number. Using an even number can look too symmetrical, causing the arrangement look more formal. Odd numbers give a more casual look.

#### Choose Different Sizes

Group plants together in different widths and heights. The differences in size give a more organic look than plants in the same size, which just looks uniform.



## Think About Leaf Shapes

Choose plants with different shapes and growth types. For example, place a squat, trailing plant (pothos), a fountainlike plant (dracaena), and a tall plant with upward leaves (fiddle-leaf fig tree) together for an arrangement that engenders interest and harmony.

## Include Plants With Colorful Leaves

Pay attention to the colors of the plants you choose. For a cohesive look, put plants together that have leaves of the same color. For more variety, go for plants with foliage in different colors.

## Use Plenty of Decorative Pots

As with plant colors, choosing pots can go one of two ways, based on personal preference. You can use pots with similar finishes and colors to make the arrangement look like a set. Or you can combine all your favorite pots in different materials and colors for an eclectic finish.



## Don't Forget Houseplant Care

When grouping houseplants, also consider their needs and condition preferences. For example, group plants that need humidity, such as ferns, closely with other plants that have the same needs to create a pocket of moisture. Also, take temperature and light needs into account—placing a shade-loving and a sun-loving plant in the same area of the home will make it hard for one (or both) to survive.

## Indoor Plant Drainage Tips

It's easy to fall into the trap of putting a houseplant into any attractive pot, but thinking about water drainage is very important for plant health. Some pots don't have a drainage hole in the bottom, which can leave your plants sitting in water. Other pots that do have drainage holes allow out too much water, which can leak onto your tables and floor. Luckily, there are many solutions to drainage issues that can make houseplant care a lot simpler.



If water is running right out of your pot, there's a simple solution to making it drain more slowly. Place a rock or shard of a broken pot over the drainage hole before planting. This won't block the hole completely, but will slow the water flow, allowing the plant to soak up what it needs.

Some pots are made with a saucer you can place under the planter to catch draining water. If you see water filling the saucer after watering, walk away from the plant for 10 minutes or so, then return and dump out the remaining water. This gives the soil a chance to get the amount of water it needs to stay moist.

Try using a plastic pot saucer and pebbles to create a humid base for a houseplant that craves moisture. Fill the bottom of the saucer with a layer of pebbles, then add about a half an inch of water. This keeps the pot from sitting in water, but makes moisture accessible, providing extra humidity.

If you feel like your plant is not retaining the moisture it needs, try surrounding the crown of the plant with moss. A dense layer of moss can hold moisture toward the top of the plant, making up for soil that just won't hold enough water.

## How to Repot Plants That Are Declining

Pay special attention to your houseplants and how their appearance changes. If they are too dry or too wet, the leaves will turn dry and brown or will start to yellow. One big sign of pests, like spider mites, is stickiness on the plant. If you notice a layer of sap on top of the leaves, determine whether a good rinse in a shower or under a hose can get rid of pests, or whether it's best to toss the plant to save the surrounding plants from infection.



If the dirt level in the pot is rising, and you haven't added extra soil, the plant may be getting root-bound (meaning that the roots have taken up all the available space in



the pot and might be forming a dense, coiled knot around the soil). No matter what issue your houseplant is facing, repotting is an opportunity to revive it.

The first step to repotting your houseplant is determining its new container. Preferably, you'll want one larger than the one it's been living in. Also, ensure that the pot you've chosen has good drainage. Add potting soil into the pot, filling it about a third of the way up, then place the plant in.

Bury the remainder of the plant's roots with soil and press the soil in to give the plant a sturdy base. Trim off any dead leaves or branches. Then, give the plant a good watering and put it in a place that has the light and humidity it needs so it can go back to brightening your day.

## IV. A Clean and Tidy Home Can Boost Your Mental Health—Here's Where to Start

Some symptoms of depression are well known: lethargy, a loss of interest in things you once found enjoyable, hopelessness, and deep sadness. But there are other depression warning signs you may not be aware of: stacks of dirty dishes in the sink; a towering pile of unfolded laundry that you washed days ago; boxes, wrappers, and bags dotting the disheveled landscape of your home.



We're all prone to messy moments, but when intense disorganization is accompanied by symptoms of high stress, anxiety, burnout, or depression, it's often an indicator that you may be struggling with your mental health.

It's no wonder that less-than-ideal mental well-being can often lead to unorganized surroundings. According to the *DSM-5*, the handbook that mental health professionals use to guide their diagnoses, the criteria for depression include a diminished motivation and interest in activities, a slow-down of physical movement, loss of energy, and indecisiveness—all things that usually come in handy in order to keep your home clean and organized.



Scientific studies frequently find correlations between mental wellness and clutter. For example, one 2016 study from the University of New Mexico found that clutter directly interfered with the participants' ability to feel pleasure in a space.

And the tricky part is, if you're grappling with your mental well-being, but still desire a clean, organized home, you may, unfortunately, find yourself trapped in a vicious cycle, something Natalie Christine Dattilo, PhD, clinical health psychologist and instructor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, calls a chicken-or-egg dilemma. "Recent studies have shown that clutter in our homes is associated with higher cortisol levels [our stress hormone], but it's still unclear which comes first," she says. "Is it that when we are under stress, our ability to maintain a well-organized home becomes impaired? Or when our home is in disarray, does that make us feel more stressed, overwhelmed, and anxious?"



She believes it's a combination of both—high stress prevents us from organizing our homes, but the clutter itself can also lead to stress.

Shira Gill, organizing expert and author of *Minimalista*, thinks clutter goes even further than taking an emotional toll on your mind, indirectly affecting other areas of our lives. She says clutter can additionally lead to relationship strains, along with financial stressors, which can include late fees on lost bills and overspending by buying duplicates. Clutter can also distract you from focusing on other priorities.

## The Positive Benefits of a Clean, Organized Home

Experts agree that tidy, organized spaces can improve mental health. Gill says that a well-edited home can create "a whole cascade of mental health benefits," which can include a sense of clarity and control, an improved quality of life, a boosted sense of confidence, an increase in productivity, and a more tranquil atmosphere.



But whether you're dealing with a mental health condition or not, organization takes time and commitment. It's just more difficult when you finally get yourself out of bed and you're faced with a choice: shower or fold laundry? Cleaning may feel like a superhuman effort, but know that even if it's simply putting a dish away, it can pay off in big ways for your psyche.

"Decluttering requires decision-making, emotion regulation, prioritization, and patience," Dattilo says. "We receive important cues about how we're doing by what we're doing, and when we maintain an organized home, we reinforce the message that we are worth the time, effort, and practice it takes to live in a cared-for and curated space. In the same way that a cluttered space can make us feel overwhelmed and anxious, a well-organized and tidy space can make us feel calm and safe."

### How to Get Organized—Especially if You're Struggling Start small—very small.

Even if you don't wrestle with serious anxiety or depression, the undertaking of tidying an entire room or bursting closet can be extremely overwhelming, Dattilo points out. Make your clean-up goals as small and doable as possible. There are two great ways to do this. One, break up a clean-up job into chunks by reducing the size or scope. Dattilo recommends "setting yourself up for success by starting with a drawer, a bookshelf, or the kitchen pantry."

Two, set a time limit and stop cleaning the second it's up. Try Gill's "the 15-minute win" trick. "Set a timer for 15 minutes and knock out a single drawer," she says. "When you successfully tackle one shelf, clear a surface, or edit a single drawer, you'll start to see yourself as someone capable of getting organized, and gain the energy and momentum to keep going, one small project at a time."

### Create simple systems.

When you're depressed, burned out, or anxious, it can be difficult to think clearly through all the "mental clutter" you're dealing with as well. That's why it's key to have

some straightforward systems in place that will make it easier to keep your spaces in order.

"Take note of the items you frequently misplace and create a clear and designated home for each one," Gill says. "For example, the keys can go on the small hook by the door, your phone can always be returned to the charging station in your office, and your sunglasses can live in your daily handbag when not in use. The key is to pick one intuitive and designated spot and commit to it."

### Cultivate a mindful approach.

Dattilo says organizing is a great chance to practice mindfulness. "Commit to 'single-tasking,' and give whatever you're doing the attention it deserves," she explains. "Make the process meaningful or interesting in some way. By approaching it this way, even the most mundane task becomes a little more interesting. And anything that increases our enjoyment of a task increases the likelihood that we will do it again."



### Ask yourself questions.

When you're decluttering with improved mental health as a goal, it's important to ask yourself questions that can help you focus on creating a space that supports your goal. Gill says the following questions are "rooted in abundant thinking" and will support you as you "keep things that are truly meaningful and functional for you in the present."

- Does this item support my current values and priorities?
- Does this item fit in with the vision I have for my ideal home?
- Could this item be useful/helpful for another person?
- Would I buy this item for full price today?
- Would it impact my daily life not to have this item?
- Is this item really worth the space it's taking up in my home?
- Is this item adding value to my life right now?

## Bask in the glory.

When you've organized the junk drawer or taken on the linen closet, and you've done this task while stressed or blue, take time to really celebrate yourself and your accomplishment. This was no small feat.

"Spend time in your clean space," Dattilo says. "Let yourself enjoy it. When we take care of our home in an intentional and loving way, we send an important message to ourselves that we are worth the time and effort it takes and that we are deserving of a comfortable and well-maintained living space."

## **V. Top 6 Cleaning Tasks To Help Improve Your Mood**

Did you know that just 20 minutes of cleaning can reduce your anxiety and stress levels by up to 20 per cent? Also, over 80 per cent of people feel more relaxed in a clean space, and 70 per cent become more productive.

This is because a clean home helps you feel more at peace with your external environment, which also calms your internal mind. You also feel more accomplished when you can finish your cleaning tasks, and your home looks spotless.



Out of the many cleaning tasks, decluttering is one of the best, as it helps improve your mental health and well-being by making you feel calmer and more at ease. Besides decluttering, here are five cleaning tasks given by bond cleaning experts in Adelaide that can make you feel good:

### Top 6 Cleaning Tasks

## 1. Clean And Organise Your Clutter

According to a study, people with messy, unorganised and cluttered spaces were more likely to be depressed and stressed. And people with more organised and tidy spaces were relaxed and peaceful. The concept of decluttering your home became even more popular during the pandemic as it positively affected mental health and well-being.

Besides this, removing this mess also helps you to focus on one task and stay productive as there are no distractions around you. Here are some ways you can declutter your space in five easy steps:

- Professional bond cleaners in Adelaide suggest that first, you should go from room to room, pick up any clutter on the floor, and place it in a basket.
- You can then organise this basket and put the items back in their respective rooms on shelves and cabinets.
- Next, throw any broken glasses pieces, scraps of paper, used-up bottles and products from each room in the trash.
- Now, you should stack all your magazines and books in your living room and office areas to be productive and focused.
- Lastly, you should place small desk organisers under your bathroom sink and kitchen shelves to sort all loose items. You can even name these organisers according to the items in it.

## 2. Wash All Your Dishes

The next cleaning task that will boost your mindfulness and make you feel more relaxed is washing your dishes.



- Put all your dishes in your dishwasher at night and then take them out in the morning and wipe them.

- You can also keep your dishes in your kitchen sink, plug the drain, and then fill it with warm water.
- Next, add three drops of dish soap and let it soak.
- You can wipe these dishes with a clean cloth after an hour, and all the stubborn food bits and dirt will come off easily.
- Seeing an empty kitchen sink and dishwasher will help you feel more mentally calm and productive.

### 3. Clean Your Kitchen

Your kitchen is one of the most used areas in your home; if it is dirty and disorganised, it can affect your entire mood. It is also necessary to keep your kitchen clean to maintain hygiene and prevent food poisoning. Bond cleaning experts in Adelaide suggest that you clean your kitchen daily in the following steps:

- First, start by clearing any clutter on the kitchen shelves and countertops and put back all items and tools.
- Next, spray one cup of distilled white vinegar mixed with two cups of warm water on your kitchen stove, countertops, sink and garbage disposal.
- The acid in the vinegar will not only get rid of dirt and food spills but also kill and prevent bacteria and germs.
- You can add a lemon to this solution to make your kitchen smell good.
- Wipe down all your surfaces and let them air dry.
- You should then vacuum your floors to eliminate loose food particles and dust and keep your kitchen free from allergens.

### 4. Spruce Up Your Bathroom

Did you know bacteria and germs can survive on bathroom surfaces for more than a week? This is why it is necessary to clean your bathroom regularly to prevent spreading infections. Besides these health benefits of cleaning, you will also feel happier when you see a neat and gleaming bathroom. You should clean your bathroom in the following quick steps to improve your mood instantly:





- Organise all loose items in your bathroom drawers and note down the items that need to be replaced or replenished.
- You should then wipe the surfaces, and bathroom sinks with a damp cloth dipped in lemon and vinegar.
- Leave the solution on for fifteen minutes and then wipe it dry with a clean microfiber cloth.
- Next, spray vinegar in the toilet bowl and tub for 15 mins and then wipe down the areas with a microfiber sponge.
- Lastly, cleaning professionals who offer end of lease cleaning in Adelaide recommend that you sweep and mop the floors with vinegar and lemon essential oils to make them smell fresh and good.

## 5. Wash And Fold Your Laundry

You should throw your dirty hamper in the laundry and wash it daily. This will help you stay more in control of your laundry, and you can immediately fold and put away your clothes. This will also help you sort your wardrobe and find clothes more easily, instantly making you feel more at ease.

## 6. Scrub Your Floors

Lastly, you should sweep and vacuum your floors so they are clean and free of dirt and grime. This activity will also help you burn calories and stay fit, releasing feel-good hormones and putting you in a better mood. Make sure you first sweep all loose dirt and grime away, then mop your floors with vinegar to clean and disinfect them.

You should also use a spoonful of baking soda to spot-treat stains instantly before they become hard to remove.

Therefore, it is time to put on some music and follow the above five steps to clean and declutter your home so that you feel more relaxed and destressed. If you have little time to perform all these tasks in one day, you can break them down over a week and carry them at your own pace and time.

## CONCLUSION

Your mental health state can have a profound impact on all areas of your life. If you're finding it difficult to address mental health concerns on your own, don't hesitate to seek help from a licensed therapist.

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