

Cultivating positive mental health

Good mental health is not about the absence of a mental health condition or illness, it's about feeling good about ourselves and being able to deal with life's challenges in a positive and healthy way. Our day-to-day mental health can change, as it is influenced by a range of factors, including life events, workplace issues, our physical health and social and economic conditions. People can have poor mental health without having a diagnosed mental illness.

Five ways to boost your mental health

1. **Ease up on self-criticism.** What you think about yourself affects the way you feel. For example, when something goes wrong, try not to use harsh and negative self-talk, such as "I can't seem to do anything right here! Maybe I'm not the right person for this assignment!" Instead, try to use more positive language that supports your feelings of self-worth and learning opportunities – "Adapting to different customs is tough and I'm bound to make a few blunders, but I'm getting the hang of things so I can do it.."
2. **Do things that bring you joy.** Moving away from family and friends and leaving familiar pastimes behind can leave expats feeling isolated. Find time for fun. If playing your favourite sport is not possible, learn a sport popular in your new location. Get involved with the expat or faith community, volunteer or explore your new location with your family.
3. **Build a supportive social network.** It's difficult to share your problems, seek advice or find support when family and old friends live far away. Therefore, it's important for expats to build a social network in their new location, either with other expats or - even better - with locals from the host country which can create opportunities to experience new cultures while developing new friendships!
4. **Maintain a healthy lifestyle.** Sounds easy, but it can be challenging to eat well when you're suddenly surrounded by unfamiliar foods. It's also difficult find ways to stay active or manage the stress of relocation in a new environment. Seek advice from fellow expats and locals on how to prepare unfamiliar foods and get creative! No matter where we live, a healthy lifestyle prepares our bodies and our minds to deal with stressful situations.

Finally, know when to reach out for help. **Contact us** for more information, resources and support in your area.