

PRACTICAL TIPS

- 1. Look for activities you enjoy.** Regularly doing something that makes you feel good is important for your mental well-being. Below we have included a number of suggestions for actions to try or lifestyle choices to make, but it's important to find activities that appeal to you.
- 2. Seek out meaningful connections with others in your community.** Start by getting to know your neighbors. The [2018 AARP survey](#) found that the more often adults age 50 and over socialized, the higher their mental well-being scores.
- 3. Aim to get enough high-quality sleep.** Maintain a regular schedule where your sleep/wake hours do not fluctuate, and avoid watching TV in bed. Stay away from all digital screens before bedtime. Studies have found that the LED light emitted by digital screens may prevent the brain from releasing the sleep hormone melatonin. (For more tips on getting good sleep, see the GCBH Brain Sleep Connection report).
- 4. Eat healthy foods.** Experiment with different fruits, vegetables, and healthy proteins to create a healthy diet. The 2018 AARP survey found that men and women age 50 and over who reported eating more nutritious and well-balanced meals also had higher mental well-being scores than those who said they rarely ate nutritious meals. (For detailed information on nutrition and brain health, see the [GCBH Brain Food](#) report.)
- 5. Find opportunities to exercise, particularly outdoors.** Explore green spaces in your neighborhood and community, including state and national parks. Also, try gardening. Digging in the dirt can be a great way to relieve stress, get exercise, and promote mental well-being.
- 6. Become a regular volunteer in the community.** Those who volunteer tend to have less anxiety, depression, loneliness, and social isolation, as well as a sense of purpose in life. The 2018 AARP survey found that adults age 50 or older who volunteer at least once a year have higher mental well-being scores than those who don't volunteer at least once a year. Consider taking a leadership role in a group or organization of which you are a part.
- 7. Learn new things by yourself or with others.** Find an interesting topic and learn as much as you can about it at your local library. Take a course at a community college, through Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes, Senior University or University of the Third Age in Europe. Or try out one of the many free or inexpensive online courses. Rekindle hobbies that brought you joy as a youngster, or consider trying a new hobby.
- 8. Express gratitude.** Begin or end your day by thinking of things for which you are grateful. Consider keeping a gratitude journal. Research finds that gratitude reduces depression and anxiety, lowers stress and increases happiness and empathy.
- 9. Practice the art of forgiveness.** Positive psychology research has found that forgiving oneself and others promotes life satisfaction and self-esteem.
- 10. Set aside 15 minutes each day for yourself.** Use this time to meditate if you can. This can involve sitting quietly for a few minutes and focusing on taking deep, calming breaths. There are smartphone apps and web pages for guided meditation that can help.
- 11. Discover or re-join a faith-based group to explore your spirituality.**
- 12. Consider joining a choir or singing group, or attend a symphony or choir series.** Music can be a powerful mood lifter.
- 13. Look for things that make you laugh.** Explore humorous movies, books, or online videos. Laughter triggers the secretion of "feel good" hormones such as endorphins, dopamine, and serotonin, which can relieve stress and reduce tension and anxiety—even lessen pain.
- 14. Take breaks from e-mail and social media.** Consider turning off notifications. Put your smart phone in another room and turn off the volume to help focus on a task. Consider checking social media (Facebook, Instagram, etc.) on a schedule and avoiding smart phones during meals.
- 15. Declutter your life.** Donate old clothes and books that no longer bring you pleasure. Clean out closets. Toss old magazines and catalogs. Throw away or shred mail, bills, and letters that you don't need.
- 16. If you are drinking more than a moderate amount of alcohol, cut back.** Moderate consumption is defined by the GCBH as generally one drink per day for women and two drinks per day for men. (See the [GCBH Brain Food](#) report.)
- 17. Do not be afraid to seek help from a health professional if you have concerns about your mental health.** Conditions such as anxiety and depression are common and can be treated.