



Mental Health Hygiene Kit

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Who is this guide for	3
2. What this guide is not	5
3. What is Mental Health	6
4. The Importance of Maintaining Good Mental Health	7
5. The Benefits of Good Mental Health	9
6. Taking Care of Your Mental Health	10
7. Self Care	11
• Physical Self-care	12
• Emotional Self-care	13
• Creative Self-care	14
• Mental Self-care	15
8. Peer Support	16
9. Specialist Care	17
10. When to look for help	18
11. How to choose a therapist	19
12. Should you visit a Social worker, Psychiatrist, Clinical Psychologist or Counselling Psychologist?	20
13. Find Help Now	21



Who is this Guide for

This Guide can be used by a broad audience but is especially targeted at young adults aged between 17 to 25 years. The idea is to equip young adults with a toolkit to navigate the messy and complicated journey that they are grappling with. Given that they were already figuring out a highly challenging environment, Covid being thrown into the mix, has made matters worse. We hope this guide makes this easier. The aim of this Guide is to provide you with ideas, tips and resources to improve and maintain your mental health and well-being. Whatever your reason is to access this Guide, we hope you find it helpful.

The guide is divided into three parts -- self-care, community care and specialist care:

Self-care

Self-care starts with awareness, understanding, acceptance and hopefully leads to action. It is intended to make mental health a regular hygiene and housekeeping exercise that can put the individual in the centre of their own mental health and well-being.

Community care

As social animals we rely on our friends, peers, family and larger community to provide us with the psychological safety and emotional support that helps us when we are going through a crisis. Sometimes, the role they play is not to “do harm,” and create distress and trauma.

Specialist care

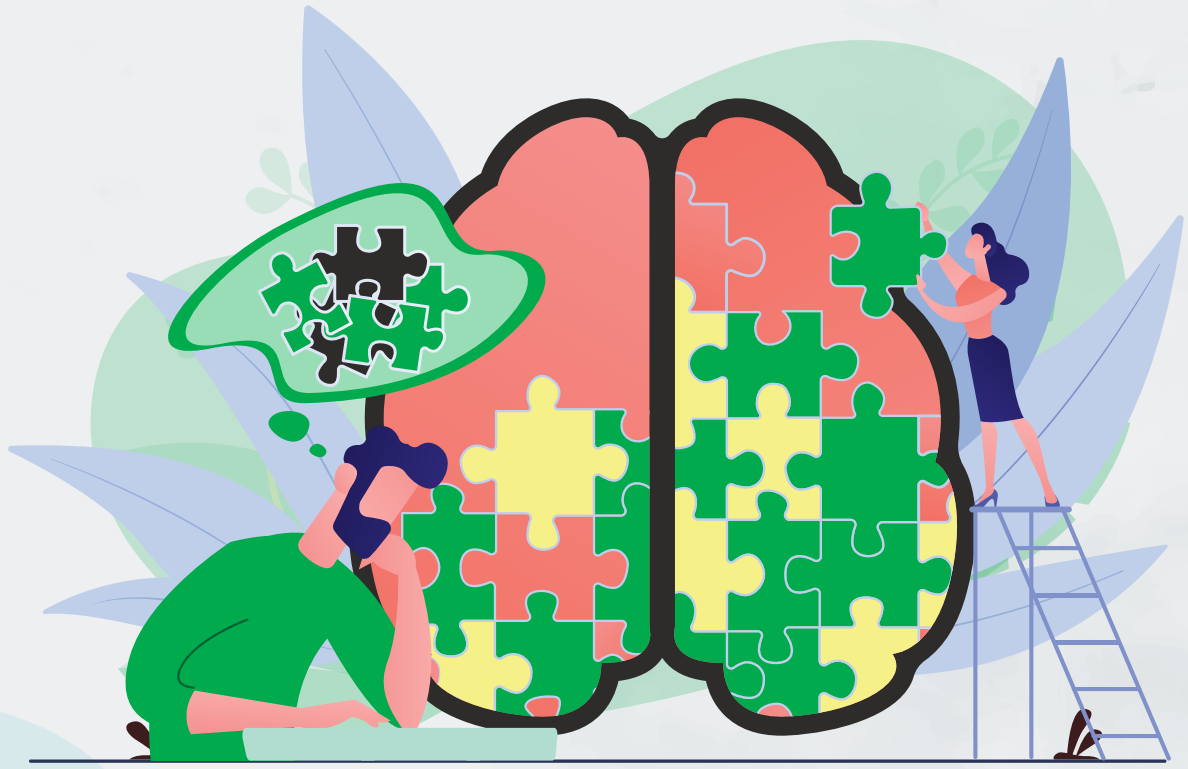
Just like with our body, our phones or laptops there's a limit that we or those around us can do when the mind is overwhelmed and cannot cope. This is when the professionals need to be called in, or reached out to, and get the specialised help that will help address the issue.



What this Guide is not

This Guide is designed to provide information, not medical advice.

Self-care and coping techniques work differently for each person. The idea is to pick and choose from things that make you feel good at the end of the day. It is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical help. If you think you're experiencing any mental health issue, kindly seek immediate professional guidance. You can refer to the end of this document for available resources from mental healthcare providers.



What is Mental Health

Before we begin discussing mental health along with the benefits and tips to leading a mentally healthy lifestyle, it is important to note the definition of 'Health' in itself. The WHO defines Health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."

Mental Health is defined as a "state of wellbeing where every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with normal stressors of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community." (defined by WHO)

Being mentally healthy is not just about not having a mental illness, stress or worry. In fact, feeling worried, sad or stressed is normal. Therefore, being mentally healthy is about being able to keep positive relationships with others, feel and manage a full range of emotions (even the less comfortable feelings such as anger, fear or sadness) and be able to handle challenges better without letting them overwhelm or drain us.

Importance of Maintaining Good Mental Health

In today's competitive academic landscape, you are faced with high expectations to make a mark in your fields and in your chosen career paths. Furthermore, the novel coronavirus pandemic has added a layer of stress and challenges.

You may be facing several roadblocks that could be hard to cope with. Some of them being:



Academic stress



Loneliness



Low self esteem



Bullying



Abuse



Relationship issues



Neuro developmental difficulties



Inability to meet high expectations



Stressful life events



It is important now, more than ever, to focus on maintaining your mental health hygiene, just like you would take care of your physical health.

More often than not, we only focus on the physical aspects of health and hygiene, not realising the fact that physical and mental health are deeply interconnected.

Benefits of Good Mental Health

Maintaining good mental health has more benefits than you can imagine. It not only helps you enjoy life and cope with the intense pressures and demands of career and academic expectations, but also steers you towards long term health benefits, both mentally and physically.

Some of the benefits of good mental health are:



Reduced anxiety



Mood improvement



Thought clarity



Increased self-esteem



Reduced risk of depression



Increased sense of calm



Improved relationships



Developed positive resilience

Stress is harmful for the body as well as for the mind. It leads to decreased concentration, increased feelings of anger, irritability, and fear. Making positive changes to your daily routine and mindset can go a long way in taking care of your overall mental health and well being.

Let us divide the many recreational and therapeutic activities that you can do, that could go on to help you lead a mental healthy lifestyle; into three parts :

Self care

Peer support
care

Specialist
care



Self care

Self care is incredibly important. Although self care looks different for different people, in general, the goal is to maintain your mental wellbeing so that you are able to cope with stressors, meet your emotional and physical needs, maintain relationships and find your work-life balance.

Research has consistently found that taking care of your own needs equips you to be fully present for others. Well, you can't pour from an empty cup!

Recognizing and attending to your physical, mental, emotional, social, creative needs may help prevent the effect of issues, such as fatigue, stress, and anxiety, and foster self-soothing, self-nurture, self-compassion, and self-discipline.

Here are four areas you could focus on, to inculcate the habit of self care:



Physical Self Care

We have all heard enough about how important it is to have a healthy diet, to be physically fit. As there are no two ways about this, here are some resources for you to practice simple physical self care exercises from the comfort of your living space. Physical self care techniques would help you feel energetic and healthy which often display immediate results.

Tip	Resource
Exercise	Cross Crawls Jumping Jacks
Yoga	App
Mindful walking	Guide for Adults Simple Guide for Mindful Walking
Good Sleep Hygiene	Instructions



Mental Self Care

Mental self care is important since it helps you declutter your mind and reduce stress. Indulge in activities that help you reconnect with yourself and provide you comfort while you navigate through important tasks. Here are some quick ideas that will help you do so:

Tip	Resource
Meditation	Mindfulness Meditation
	Chopra App
Journaling	Different kinds of Journaling
	Make your own Journal
	Happyfeed App
Affirmations	Prompts
	More prompts
Positive Self Talk	Positive Self Talk Journal
Create a Hope Box	Virtual Hope Box



Creative Self Care

Overwhelming feelings could make you feel like you “just want to let go”, below are a few techniques for you to be able to do just that. Creative self care techniques utilise expressive arts for you to let go of inhibitions. This helps you give yourself some space to immerse yourself and create something without having to worry about it looking “good”. What you create through creative self care is for “you”. These techniques are a great way to take a break from your routine and get in touch with yourself.

Tip	Resource
Mindful coloring	Mandala Coloring
Origami	Booklet
Scribbling	Scribble for Self Discovery
Indulge in Music	Mindful dancing
	Create a playlist (inspiration)



Emotional Self Care

Emotional self care could be understood as caring for your own emotional needs through recognising and nurturing your feelings. Taking care of your emotional health will help you navigate barriers caused by your environment or your own self-talk that may sometimes make you doubt yourself. Here are some resources that can help you get through such situations

Tip	Resource
Building your Emotional Resilience	Tips to build your resilience Guide to building emotional resilience
Prioritising to promote Self - Discipline	Sheet
Improving your emotional vocabulary	Feelings wheel
Learning to Set boundaries	5 Boundaries you need How to set Boundaries Boundaries Worksheet
Cultivating an Attitude for Gratitude	Gratitude Journal Gratitude Journal

Peer support care

Relationships and social connections provide us with a sense of belonging, which is essential for our mental wellbeing. Mental Health Professionals across the globe agree that affiliating with members of a group, gaining acceptance, attention and support from them provides us with a sense of belonging thereby improving our mental health. It helps us cope with feelings of loneliness, social anxiety, helplessness and even suicidal thoughts. Such groups could be online or offline, formal or informal, large or small, local or even international.

You can constantly bolster your mental health by involving yourself in community groups or clubs. You could also encourage your friends and family to join you. Here are some ideas:

Idea	Resource
Join groups for various mental health issues	Borderline Personality Disorder Obsessive Compulsive Disorder LGBTQIA+ issues Covid 19 Support group Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder Anxiety
Join a meditation club	Tergar Meditation Community Vipassana Meditation
Make online friends	Bumble BFF Pen Pal
Join a sub community	Peer groups for common interests, such as coffee, baking, wrist watches etc Fan clubs for artists, TV series
Join your neighbourhood sports club	Any sport you like from football to swimming

What can you do for others


Volunteering and extending your time and support to a cause you care about is something that will not only benefit others, but will also enrich your life in more ways than one.

Research has proven that people who volunteer regularly are healthier both physically and mentally. In addition to the health benefits, volunteering also gives you a sense of purpose - a fulfilling feeling of giving back to society.

There are several important causes that need volunteers to support the work that they are doing. Whether you're passionate about animal rights and safety, children's education, suicide prevention, or mental health awareness, to name a few, you can find a way to donate your time.

Here are some causes you can begin with :

Organization	Resource
Suicide Prevention India Foundation	https://www.spif.in/
Precious Paws Foundation	https://www.facebook.com/preciouspawsfoundation/
Teach for India	https://www.teachforindia.org/
The Live Laugh Love Foundation	https://fundraisers.giveindia.org/nonprofits/the-live-love-laugh-foundation
Manavlok	https://www.manavlok.org/
Indian Youth Club	https://www.indianyouthclub.org/
Agatsu Foundation	https://www.agatsufoundation.org/home
Alexis Group	https://www.alexis.in



Be it spending time with a friend, chatting with someone, joining a sports or activity club, engaging with like-minded people, or simply offering to help someone else - staying connected with your community can have many benefits for your mental health. It may also help you discover a new passion or interest, and teach you skills such as patience, kindness, and resilience.

Specialist care

When to seek help?

To begin with, it is important to understand that challenges are subjective and no two people can feel and react the same way to a given event. Therefore, seeking help when it comes to emotional difficulties completely depends on the requirements of the individual. Seeking help does not always mean that the “issues” that one bring in are “too big” demanding external support. Instead, to seek professional help from a mental health professional is oftentimes suggested as it could help an individual navigate through a situation while they are provided with an empathetic, non threatening and a non judgemental space. Such a space is created in the hope for those who are seeking help to be able to steer through the situation while being emotionally healthy. Additionally, it is suggested that those who do feel an overwhelming sense of worry, sadness, anger and the like to seek professional help only since the intent is such feelings could be managed with professional support.

What to look for in a therapist?

Finding a therapist in this age where there are several individuals who claim to be there “just to listen” and charge for the same makes it harder to recognize the need for and identify a certified mental health professional. Therapists are professionals with a specialized degree and their work is based on the core principles of confidentiality and ethics where it is their responsibility to make their clients feel safe.

Here's a link to help you understand how to choose the right therapist for yourself:

Should you visit a Social worker, Psychiatrist, Clinical Psychologist or Counselling Psychologist?

A psychiatrist holds a degree in medicine i.e, they finish their MBBS after which they go on to pursue a specialisation in the branch of psychiatry that deals with mental illnesses. This means that in India, psychiatrists are professionals who are certified to prescribe medication for mental illnesses.

A Clinical Psychologist holds an Mphil, a PsyD or a Phd in Clinical Psychology. They are professionals who are certified by the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) who grants them a number. Clinical Psychologists are professionals who are permitted to conduct assessments and provide clients with a diagnosis (provisional) if they are tested to be undergoing a specific disorder. Clinical Psychologists also take therapy for persons undergoing difficulties caused by mental illness.

A Counselling Psychologist holds a minimum of Masters degree with a specialization in counseling/clinical skills. Such professionals are trained in therapeutic methods that help clients who come with emotional/mental distress. They specialize in different therapeutic methods, and though counselling psychologists learn the same skills, every psychologist has a unique way of therapy which is centered around the requirements of their clients.

A Social Worker holds a minimum of Masters degree in Social Work (MSW). Such professionals utilize theories of human behaviour and social systems and intervene at the point of their clients (individuals, families, groups and communities) interacting with their environment. They work towards achieving social justice and maintaining rights and dignity of their clients. They work along with organizations to help their clients assess, resolve, prevent and reduce the impact of psycho-social, and mental health related issues.

Find help now

It can get overwhelming to find the right resources for your problems. Don't worry, we've got you! Here's an extensive but not exhaustive repository of mental health related resources.

It contains 8 sheets;

- (1) Helplines
- (2) Online/Chat based Counselling Services
- (3) Grief/ Bereavement Counsellors
- (4) Private Mental Health Professionals (therapists, psychiatrists, etc)
- (5) Private Mental Health Service Providers (hospitals, clinics, etc)
- (6) Government Hospitals with a Psychiatry Department
- (7) Group Therapy Providers
- (8) Queer Friendly Mental Health Practitioners.