



THE  
**verywell**  
**mind**  
**podcast**

WITH THERAPIST  
**Amy Morin**

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## 150 - Friday Fix: Simple Tips for Improving Your Mental Health

Welcome to *The Verywell Mind Podcast*! I'm Amy Morin, editor-in-chief of Verywell Mind. I'm also a psychotherapist and a best-selling author of four books on mental strength.

You're listening to the Friday Fix. Every Friday, I share a quick mental strength strategy that can help fix the thoughts, feelings, and actions that hold you back in life.

And the fun part is we record the show from a sailboat in the Florida Keys.

Now, let's dive into today's episode!

Today I'm talking about the simple things you can do to improve your mental health.

We conducted some research at Verywell Mind a few months ago and discovered that most people say they value taking care of their mental health just as much as they value caring for their physical health. Yet, most people also said they put most of their time into caring for their physical health rather than their mental health.

I suspect this is partly because most people don't really know how to care for their mental health. It's not something we've talked about much as a society—at least not until recently.

Growing up, we had physical education class where we learned about caring for our physical health. And our health class focused mostly on physical health issues.

We didn't learn about depression or strategies for managing anger.

Since the pandemic, many people—including athletes and celebrities—have stepped forward to talk about their mental health and the resources available.

For the first time, many people realized what their go-to coping skills were.

Things you may have taken for granted, like having coffee with a friend or going to the gym, may have been key components to helping you stay mentally healthy.

In the absence of those things, you may have noticed your mental health worsened.

Pandemic aside, however, many people wonder how to best take care of their mental health.

In the past, we reserved therapy for times when people were already struggling with their mental health. Insurance companies only paid for treatment when someone had a diagnosable mental illness. Fortunately, times are changing and we're realizing that seeing a mental health professional can also be used as a way to prevent mental health problems.

We're also recognizing that there are many things we can do to be proactive about improving our mental health on an everyday basis.

Here are just a few ways you can improve your mental health:

### **1. Take care of your body.**

Eating a healthy diet, getting plenty of sleep, and getting medical treatment are just a few things you can do to take care of your body. There's a huge link between your mind and your body and it's impossible to manage your mental health if you're neglecting your physical health.

So quite often, the things you do for your body count as doing things for your mind too.

### **2. Spend time with good people.**

The people you spend time with make a huge impact on your mental health. So it's important to have people in your life who support you.

It's equally important that you aren't exposed to people who take a toll on your mental health.

If you're being verbally abused by someone, for example, all the best strategies in the world probably won't improve your mental health. You may need to remove yourself from a toxic relationship or an unhealthy environment.

Finding healthy people is key to being your best. Whether that means you spend time with people from your church or your friends, it's important to have people in your life who are good for your mental health.

### **3. Spend time in nature.**

Spending all your time indoors or staring at screens can take a serious toll on your psychological well-being.

Being in nature is good for your mental health. Go for a walk in the woods, visit a park, or sit on a bench by the lake.

Even a quick walk outside at lunch time can be good for your mind. Studies show going for a walk in nature rejuvenates your mind.

Research also shows looking at the ocean reduces stress, which isn't surprising right?

But if you don't live near the ocean or you don't have a forest in your backyard, there are still things you can do. In fact, just looking at a picture of nature might help.

Researchers found that hospital patients who have a window view of a greenspace get better faster than patients who don't. They heal from surgeries faster and report lower levels of pain.

So the researchers gave patients who didn't have a view a picture of a landscape. And guess what? They started healing faster too. They reported lower levels of pain. Maybe the best news is, it wasn't just physical pain. They also reported lower levels of emotional pain.

So you might go for a walk outside for 20 minutes a day, hang a beautiful mountain scene photo in your living room, or make a tropical ocean picture the background photo on your phone.

### **4. Get physical activity.**

Physical activity is good for your mental health. Both aerobic exercise and strength training have mental health benefits.

You don't have to go to the gym and participate in a class or lift weights to get the benefits. Jogging, swimming, walking, dancing, and gardening have been found to reduce anxiety and depression.

Exercise also improves self-esteem, helps your brain work better, increases alertness and reduces stress.

Thirty minutes of exercise three to five days per week is enough to create mental health benefits.

### **5. Do something that helps you relax.**

Participate in activities that help you relax and genuinely help you unwind.

Mindlessly scrolling through social media or passively watching TV might not be all that relaxing.

Real relaxation might stem from doing an art project or playing a game with a family member.

Leisure activities that you love can really help you take a break from everything going on in your life.

Create time for relaxation strategies and fun activities in your schedule. You might tell yourself you don't have time to do these things. But it will cost you a lot more time if you don't pause and take care of your mental health.

Think of fun and relaxation like an investment. If you invest time into caring for your mental health now, you'll feel better and perform better later.

### **6. Work on something you've been putting off.**

As your mental health declines, your motivation will likely decline too. This might cause you to put off doing things, like household chores or daily tasks. The more you put those things off, the more you might dread doing and the worse you might feel.

So it's important to push yourself to tackle something on your to-do list even when you don't feel like it.

A sense of accomplishment can help you feel better.

If you struggle to motivate yourself to get things done, try the 10-minute rule. Commit to doing something for 10 minutes and give yourself permission to quit at the 10-minute mark.

You'll likely find that once you reach 10 minutes, it's easier to keep going. Getting started is usually the hardest part. But once you get set in motion, it's easier to keep that momentum going. And when you get something done, you'll likely feel a little better.

## **7. Act contrary to how you feel.**

Your brain lies to you a lot. This is especially true when your mental health is on the decline.

Depression will tell you that you'll feel better if you stay in bed. Anxiety will tell you to avoid a problem rather than solve it.

Listening to those lies will keep you stuck. No one ever feels better after staying in bed with depression for a week straight. And no one's anxiety ever gets better over the long-term because they pretended their problems didn't exist.

So sometimes, you have to behave contrary to how you feel. You might feel like staying in bed, but getting up and moving is the best thing for you. You might feel like avoiding your problems, but tackling them head-on is what will actually help.

So sometimes it's important to take a look at the thoughts and feelings that are fueling your behavior and act contrary to how you feel. Do what's best for you even when you don't feel like it and you'll shift your emotional state and your mindset.

So those are things you can do to improve your mental health: take care of your body, spend time with good people, spend time in nature, get physical activity, do something that helps you relax, tackle things you've been putting off, and behave contrary to how you feel.

If you want more tips for managing your mental health, check out our website [VerywellMind.com](https://www.verywellmind.com). We're the biggest mental health website in the world, and our site offers tons of free content about how to improve your mental health and how to get help if you need it.

If you know someone who could benefit from hearing this message, share it with them. Simply sharing a link to this episode could help someone feel better and grow stronger. Do you want free access to my online course? It's called "10 Mental Strength Exercises That Will Help You Reach Your Greatest Potential." To get your free pass, all you have to do is leave us a review on Apple Podcasts. Then, send us a screenshot of your review. Our email address is [podcast@verywell.com](mailto:podcast@verywell.com). We'll reply with your all-access pass to the course.

Thank you for hanging out with me today and listening to *The Verywell Mind Podcast!*

And as always, a big thank you to my show's producer (who sometimes makes me laugh so hard that I cry), Nick Valentin.