



Take care of yourself. 9 steps to mental well-being

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What is mental health?



According to the World Health Organisation's (WHO) definition

Mental health is full physical, mental and social well-being allowing us to:

- cope with stress,
- realise your potential,
- do well at school and work,
- take decisions and build relationships,
- contribute to the development of the society and shape the world we live in.



Mental health is coming increasingly under threat



More and more people are suffering from mental disorders around the world. The pace of technological and civilizational change, workplace requirements, loosening social bonds, and in the recent years long-lasting stressful events, such as the pandemic or war in Ukraine, have been contributing to an increase in anxiety disorders, depression, professional burnout or suffering caused by isolation and loneliness.

Depression is already among the top global diseases, and the WHO forecasts that depression will be the most frequently diagnosed disease by 2030.



How to care for your mental health?



The good news is that you don't need:

- to take any extraordinary action turning your day upside down,
- a lot of money,
- advance technology or expensive equipment.

Here's what's sufficient in order to take care of your mental health:

- your decision that your health and needs are important for you and that you want to find time during the day and week, to take care of them, small steps,
- regularity – it is best to turn health-supporting activities into rituals that will be with you throughout the day or week.

Where to start?



It is best to start with a short trip in time.

Recall the time of your life where you felt best.

Most importantly recall:

- what your daily rhythm was like,
- how many hours of sleep you got,
- how much time you spent with your family and friends, and how,
- what activities and duties filled your day,
- how much time you had for your needs and hobbies alone.

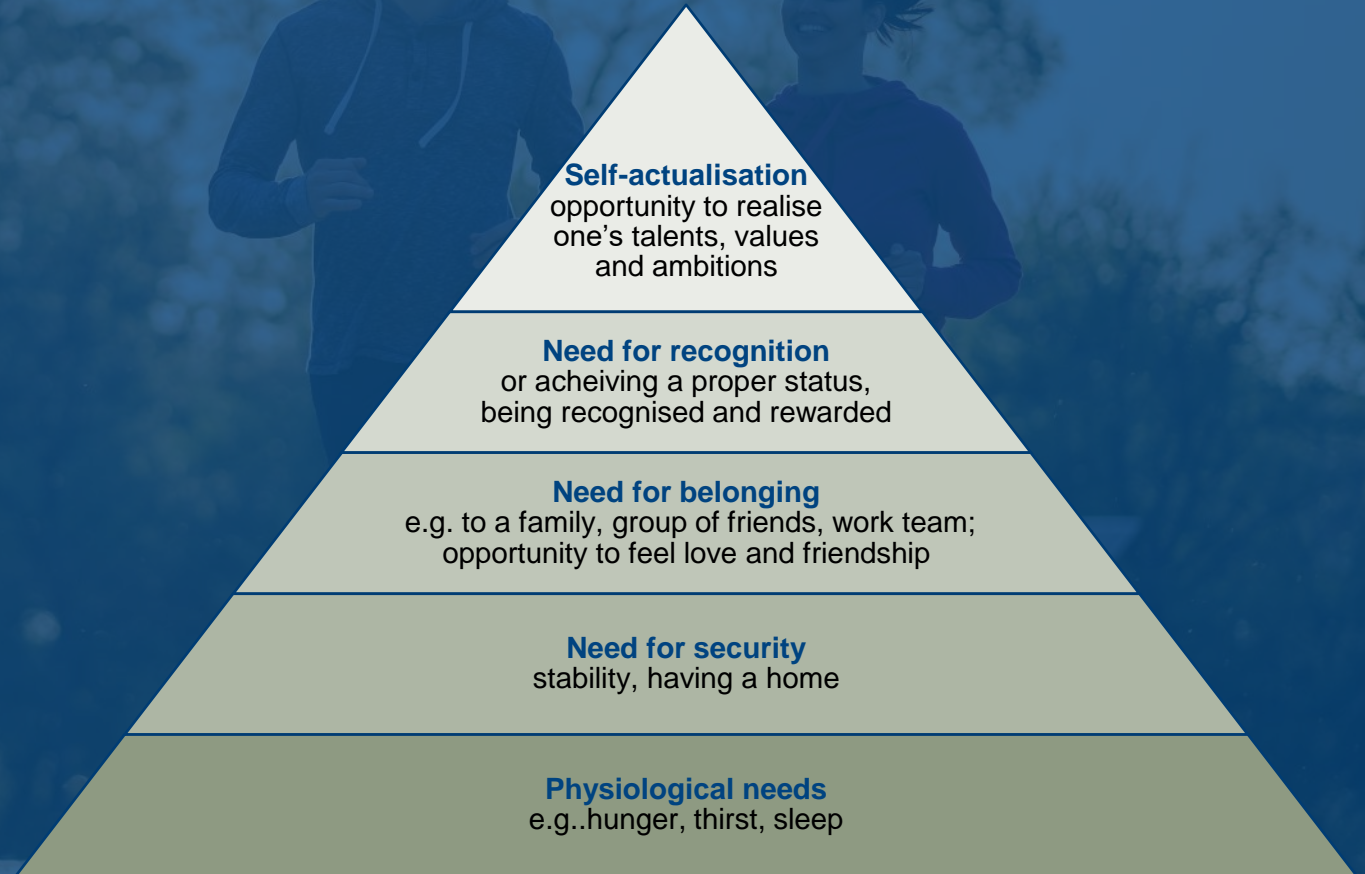
Do you say that yeah, it was great, but it's a thing of the past and your life looks completely different today and it cannot be relived?

Never mind, you don't need to change everything. Pick one of those good things of the past that could most improve your daily life comfort and start doing it again. This is enough for a step in the right direction to be taken; time will come for the next ones.

How do you cater for the 5 key needs?

According to the most well-known theory of hierarchy of human needs created by an American psychologist Abraham Maslow, the well-being of each of us requires the satisfaction of 5 key needs.

It is worth taking a look at your life from time to time and check which of them is currently the most neglected and take care of it. **It is the fastest way to experience the positive changes that will also have a beneficial effect on the other spheres of your life.**



9 steps to mental well-being



1. Take care of the fundamentals – sleep and food – This is your fuel for the entire day, having critical impact on your well-being. An adult person typically requires between 6 and 9 hours of sleep. Check how much you need in order to be get enough sleep, and organise your day so as enable it. Avoid fast or junk food as it only gives you with empty calories and may be addictive. Meals composed of natural, healthy ingredients will be conducive to your well-being.



2. Strive for balance in your life – Yes, strive – as balance, rather than being static, is a dynamic state being the outcome of your every day's and every week's efforts. Hence, make sure to not only concentrate on work and duties, but also find time for your family and friends, for rest and hobbies. This will allow you to cater for all the most important needs being part of your well-being.

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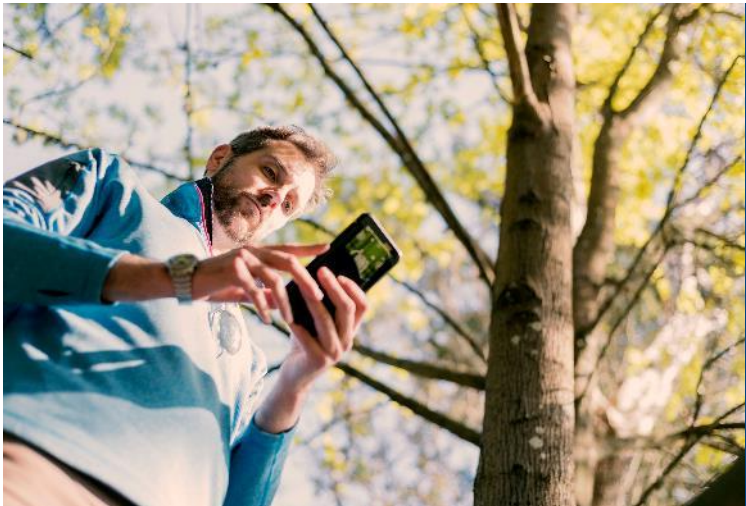
3. Move as you like – you don't have to run a marathon, (besides, extreme physical effort is not at all recommended), you don't even have to make 10 thousand steps a day – the latest research says that even 4.5 thousand steps a day is sufficient for maintaining good health. Pick an activity to which you won't have to force yourself, but enjoy pursuing it. WHO recommends that adults (18-64 years of age) should spend 150-300 minutes doing moderate physical activity per week or 75-150 high intensity physical activity per week, which is best spread over several days. Exercise has positive impact not only on physical, but also on mental health – it is an excellent way of releasing tension and reducing stress while also decreasing the symptoms of anxiety and depression. During physical activity endorphins, also known as the happiness hormones, are released. It is due to them that you feel great after recreational physical effort.



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4. Foster genuine relationships – forget about some 500 social media friends. This is fiction. Both research and life experience agree in that in reality we only need 3-5 friends to feel important, needed, loved and understood. Take care of this handful of closest people. Meet them face to face; call them instead of texting or emailing them. It is only such contact – when you see, hear and are close to each other – that has beneficial impact on your health. This can never be ensured by text messages.



5. Limit the time spent in social media – Apparently, they are used for social reasons. Yet, research shows clearly that long hours spent in social media lead to a sense of loneliness, isolation, reduced self-esteem and may contribute to developing depression. Decide how much time you want to spend there and for what reason you visit them.

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6. Solve problems and seek support for yourself

– Accumulating and unresolved work-related and personal problems lead to even greater problems – those related to mental and physical health. Don't bottle them up. Decide whether it is easier for you to talk about them with a person close to you or a specialist, such as psychologist, therapist or lawyer, and do it. This way, you will regain a sense of agency as well as receiving necessary support.



7. Spend time in nature – Although we live in a world pervaded by technology, our brains are still adapted to living in an environment in which our forefathers lived, i.e. in nature, and it is such environment that we long for. Yet, you don't have to go on an exotic vacation to feel it. An out-of-city excursion, gardening, walk in the park or walking barefoot on the grass will do, allowing you to relax deeply and feel again that you are part of nature.

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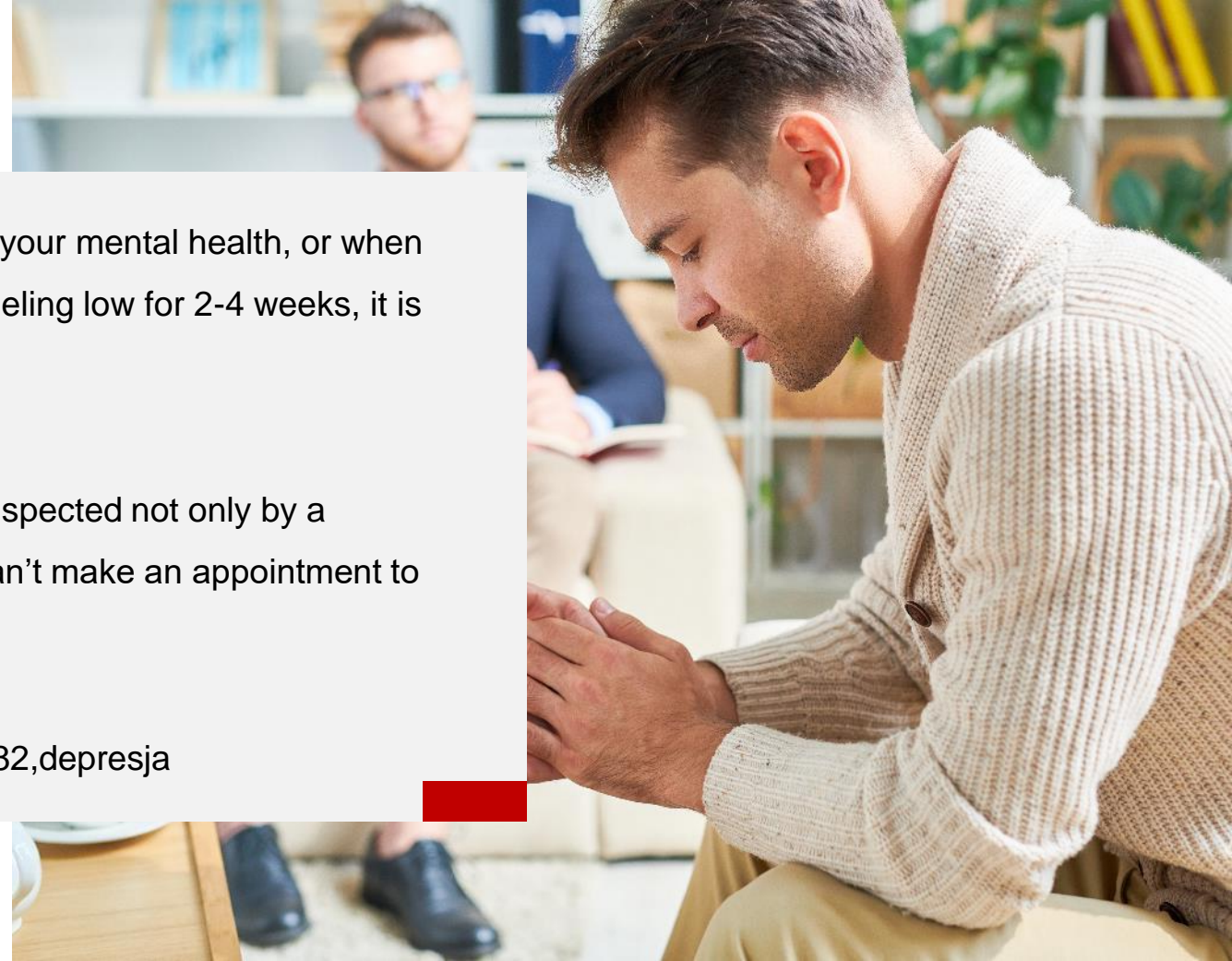


8. Develop yourself, try new things – Nothing deprives you of the joy of life after many years than regretting not having done something, getting cold feet. Discover and develop your talents; set goals, try the things you are interested in, and you'll keep a young mind for years. Do whatever brings you energy and makes you feel good. Joy is a reliable tip that you are pursuing something that is beneficial for you.



9. Meditate and have your rituals – According to research, everyday meditation is conducive to both physical and mental health. It helps reduce stress, calm down and relax deeply. If you want to check out whether meditation may be something for you, start with short, 5-minute meditations. Everyday rituals have a similarly positive effect on mental health – cherishing morning coffee, reading books before sleep, walking or gardening. They give us a sense of security, reduce anxiety and uncertainty, bring relief from overstimulation.

What should you worry about? When to seek medical advice?



See a doctor whenever you worry about the state of your mental health, or when your family or friends worry about you. If you keep feeling low for 2-4 weeks, it is recommended to consult a psychiatrist.

Remember, that depression may be diagnosed or suspected not only by a psychiatrist, but any doctor. For this reason, if you can't make an appointment to see a psychiatrist soon, see your physician first.

Source: www.mp.pl/pacjent/psychiatria/choroby/69882,depresja



Important telephone numbers



Anti-Depression Helpline of the Forum Against Depression, **tel. no. 22 594 91 00**

Helpline for Adults in Emotional Crisis **116 123**

Itaka – Anti-Depression Helpline, **tel. no. 22 484 88 01**

More psychological helplines can be found here:

<https://forumprzeciwdepresji.pl/wazne-telefony-antydepresyjne>

Source: World Health Organisation, Medycyna Praktyczna





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