

**LIVE YOUR LIFE WELL: TIPS  
FOR POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH**

MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA IN MONTGOMERY

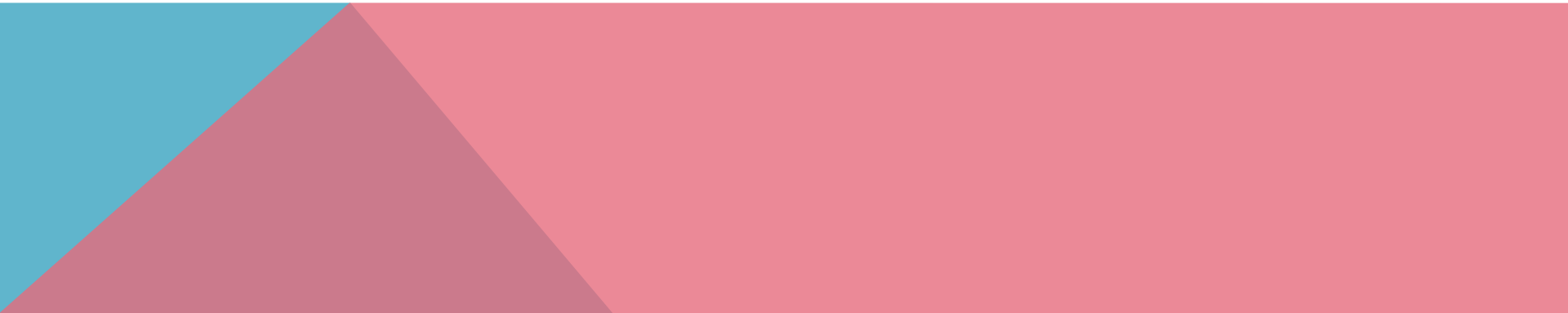
# TIPS FOR POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH

1. Connect with Others	6. Create Joy and Satisfaction
2. Stay Positive	7. Eat Well
3. Get Physically Active	8. Take Care of Your Spirit
4. Help Others	9. Deal Better with Hard Times
5. Get Enough Sleep	10. Get Professional Help if Necessary

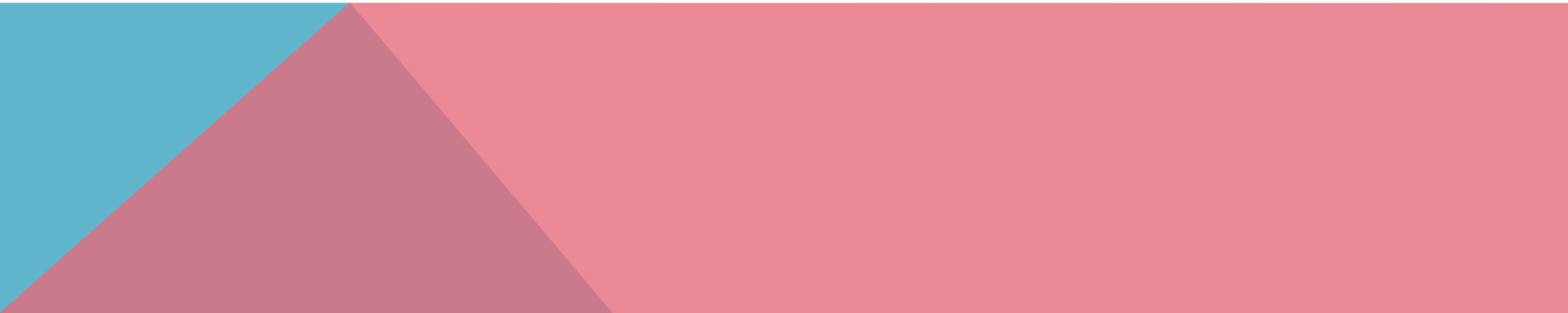
# **\*CONNECT WITH OTHERS\***

**\*Mental Health America found that 71 percent of people surveyed turned to friends or family in times of stress or depression.**

**\*Humans are social animals: We crave feeling supported, valued and connected.**



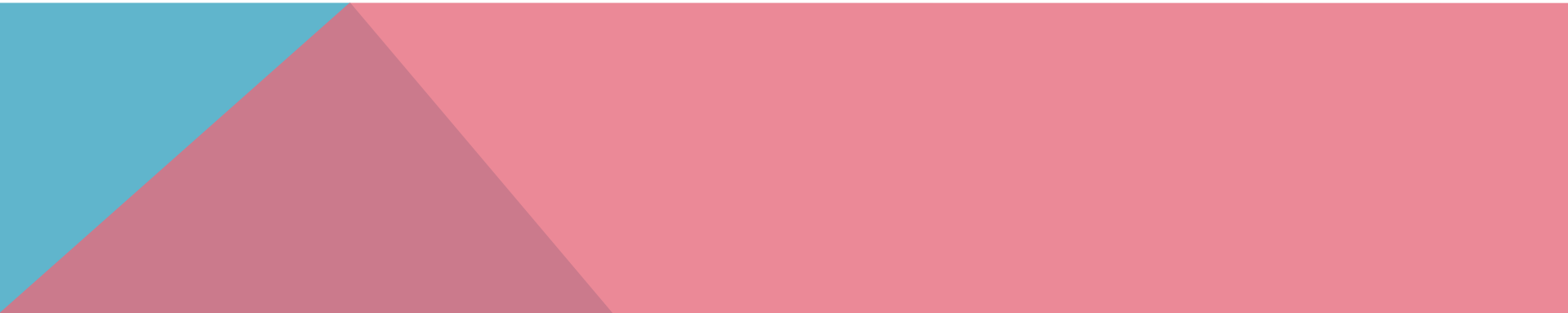
# **RESEARCH POINTS TO THE BENEFITS OF SOCIAL CONNECTION:**

- \*Increased happiness. In one compelling study, a key difference between very happy people and less-happy people was good relationships.**
  - \*Better health. Loneliness was associated with a higher risk of high blood pressure in a recent study of older people.**
  - \*A longer life. People with strong social and community ties were two to three times less likely to die during a 9-year study.**
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# **\*STAY POSITIVE\***

**\*Thinking negatively can drag down our moods, our actions and even our health.**

**\*Experts say it's worthwhile—and possible—to learn how to think more positively.**



# **CONSIDER WHAT RESEARCHERS FOUND ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF STAYING POSITIVE:**

- \*People who were pessimistic had a nearly 20 percent higher risk of dying over a 30-year period than those who were optimistic.**
  - \*People who kept track of their gratitude once a week were more upbeat and had fewer physical complaints than others.**
  - \*People who obsessively repeated negative thoughts and behaviors were able to change their unhealthy patterns—and their brain activity actually changed too.**
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# \*GET PHYSICALLY ACTIVE\*


**Pump up your resolve by considering that exercise can:**

- prevent heart disease and high blood pressure
- lower your risk for stroke, osteoporosis, colon cancer and diabetes
- improve your sleep
- increase your energy
- decrease some kinds of pain
- boost your immune system
- help with weight management

# GET PHYSICALLY ACTIVE

Exercise matters for your mood too!

**Millions of people and researchers have found it:**

- decreases stress, anger and tension
  - reduces anxiety and depression
  - offers a greater sense of well-being
  - relieves pent-up muscle tension
  - stimulates feel-good hormones
  - burns off stress hormones
  - increases blood flow to the brain
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# \*HELP OTHERS\*


Research indicates that those who consistently help other people experience less depression, greater calm, fewer pains and better health. They may even live longer.

## Consider some recent research:


- Students who performed five acts of kindness a day increased their happiness
- Providing emotional support to others significantly decreased the harmful health effects of certain kinds of stress among older people
- People who donated money to charity got a boost in a feel-good part of the brain, as revealed in brain imaging research

# DOING GOOD CAN MAKE YOU FEEL GOOD!


It might:

- remind you that you're relatively lucky
  - make you feel connected to others
  - help you feel needed and effective
  - take your mind off your own worries for a while
  - make you feel generous
  - add a sense of purpose and meaning to your life
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# **\*GET ENOUGH SLEEP\***

- \*Research shows that you're more likely to succeed at your tasks—and enjoy greater well-being—if you get some serious shuteye.**
  - \*Nearly two-thirds of Americans say they lose sleep because of stress. That's especially unfortunate because sleep combats some of the fallout of stress, and poor sleep has been linked to significant problems.**
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# POOR SLEEP PROBLEMS

- \*greater risk of depression and anxiety**
  - \*increased risk of heart disease and cancer**
  - \*impaired memory**
  - \*reduced immune system functioning**
  - \*weight gain**
  - \*greater likelihood of accidents**
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# **\*CREATE JOY AND SATISFACTION\***

**Chances are, you simply deserve some joy and satisfaction. But if you prefer, you can think about the serious side of fun. Experts say good feelings can boost your ability to bounce back from stress, solve problems, think flexibly and even fight disease.**

# **STUDIES SHOW THAT:**

- \*Laughing decreases pain, may help your heart and lungs, promotes muscle relaxation and can reduce anxiety.**
  - \*Positive emotions can decrease stress hormones and build emotional strength.**
  - \*Leisure activities offer a distraction from problems, a sense of competence and many other benefits. For example, twins who participated in leisure activities were less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease or dementia than their fellow twins in one study.**
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# **\*EAT WELL\***

**Among other benefits, good food can:**

- boost your energy
- lower the risk of developing certain diseases
- provide fuel to your brain
- counteract the impact of stress on your body
- affect mood-related body chemicals

# \*TAKE CARE OF YOUR SPIRIT\*

**Spirituality can provide a:**

- reassuring belief in a greater force or being
- sense of purpose and meaning
- focus on your own or universal wisdom
- way to understand suffering
- connection with others
- reminder of the good in the world




# SCIENCE AND SPIRITUALITY

**Consider some of the science on religion and spirituality:**

- People who meditate have increased activity in a "feel-good" area of the brain
- People with strong religious beliefs recovered faster from heart surgery than people with weaker faith
- People who didn't attend religious services died significantly younger than those who attended more than once a week

# MEDITATION AND PRAYER

- \*Deep Breathing.** Sit or lie down comfortably. Rest your hands on your stomach. Slowly count to four while inhaling through your nose. Feel your stomach rise. Hold your breath for a second. Slowly count to four while you exhale, preferably through pursed lips to control the breath. Your stomach will fall slowly. Repeat a few times.
  - \*Mindfulness Meditation.** Focus on your breath. Notice anything that passes through your awareness without judgment. If your mind starts to tackle your to-do list, just return to focusing on your breath.
  - \*Visualization.** Close your eyes, relax and imagine a peaceful place, like a forest. Engage all your senses: Hear the crunching leaves, smell the damp soil, feel the breeze.
  - \*Repeating a mantra.** Sit quietly and pick any meaningful or soothing word, phrase or sound. You can repeat the mantra aloud or silently. Experts say the repetition creates a physical relaxation response.
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# \*DEAL BETTER WITH HARD TIMES\*

**The research shows that:**


- People who spent time writing about a difficult event had better health and less depression. Writers' grades even improved, and they found jobs more quickly
- People facing stress felt less depressed after problem-solving
- People who often focus on the positives in their lives are less upset by difficult memories

# THERAPEUTIC WRITING


## Some thoughts to get started writing:

- Set aside 15 minutes a day for a few days to write about the event and how it made you feel
- Don't worry about grammar or artistry. This is just for you.
- Stick with it. At first writing about an upsetting experience may be painful, but over time it can help you get past the upset. Keep in mind, though, that if yours is an especially disturbing event, like rape or domestic violence, you might want to do this work with a therapist.


# TACKLE YOUR PROBLEMS

- \*Write down the problems involved. On paper they may seem more manageable than swirling in your head.**
  - \*List as many solutions as possible. For now, silence your internal judge. You can reject options later.**
  - \*Assess your list. Try asking yourself how you'd like this situation to end. Which options likely will get you there? You also can weigh pros and cons.**
  - \*Accept reasonably good solutions. Research suggests that searching for a perfect option breeds disappointment.**
  - \*Once you pick some solutions, break them into reasonable chunks and make a concrete plan. You might set yourself some specific deadlines too.**
  - \*Don't get discouraged if the first solution you try doesn't pan out. Try another one on your list.**
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# SHIFT YOUR THINKING

- \*Ask yourself how realistic your worry is. Our imaginations can take us into situations that may never develop.**
  - \*Set aside "worry" time each day. Then whenever a negative thought intrudes, tell yourself to wait until the set time. You may feel better by then.**
  - \*Focus on the good aspects of your life.**
  - \*Look at tough times as an opportunity to learn, grow or improve your situation. Maybe you've seen how supportive your friends are or learned how strong you can be in a tough time.**
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## GET SUPPORT

- \*Ask someone to give you a hand with any pressing tasks if you're overextended. You can reciprocate at a quieter time.**
  - \*Don't be afraid to ask for advice. No one knows everything.**
  - \*Get emotional support. Crying, sharing your frustrations or otherwise venting can release tension, relieve stress and help you move on. Consider getting professional help if you need it.**
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# **\*GET PROFESSIONAL HELP IF YOU NEED IT\***

## **Mental Health America in Montgomery**

- 262-5500

## **Montgomery Area Mental Health Authority**

- 279-7830

## **River Region Psychiatry Associates**

- 270-5502

## **Grandview Behavioral Health Center**

- 409-9242

## **Lighthouse Counseling Center**

- 651-0036

## **Samaritan Counseling Center**

262-7787

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