



PREVENTION & WELLNESS

SLEEP & MENTAL HEALTH

California Department of Developmental Services



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A healthy lifestyle means making choices that help your health. Think about how to be healthy in all areas of your life, including the food you eat, exercise, sleep, and handling stress. It also means being proactive, like going to the doctor and dentist. It is important to make healthy choices in all these areas of our lives and understand how they may prevent or reduce serious health problems.

Helpful Tips to Improve Emotional Health

Everyone has days when we feel stressed, sad, or upset.

If you notice that you are feeling sad, stressed, or overwhelmed, tell someone that you trust. This is very important if you notice you are feeling this way more than is usual for you.

Find activities that you like doing and can do on an ongoing basis to maintain your wellness.

Know the things that might be causing you to feel stressed or unhappy and practice some self-care.



Try journaling or writing in a notebook how you are feeling either with words or pictures.

Stop yourself when you start thinking negative thoughts and give yourself a genuine compliment.

Unplug from email and social media and do something else with your hands, like trying a new healthy recipe.

[Unwind and take breaks](#) when you are stressed or upset.



Helpful Tips to Improve Emotional Health (Continued)

Talk to your support team about your mental health, especially if you feel like you need support. Ask about resources and support options that are available to you.

Take deep breaths when you are stressed or anxious. Here are two methods:

Inhale to a count of four, hold the air in for a count of four, exhale to a count of four, hold your lungs empty for a count of four, repeat.

Breathe in and imagine the air is filled with a sense of peace and calm. Breathe out and imagine breathing out stress and tension.

Stay connected with others, including friends and family.

Call someone, arrange for a visit, or write them a letter, text, or email.

Source: Health Care for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Helpful Tips to Improve Sleep

Set and stick to a stress-free and relaxing routine at bedtime. Going to bed at the same time at night and waking up at the same time in the morning can help you get better sleep.

Make your bedroom a sleep-inducing environment.

A quiet, dark, and cool (between 60-75 degrees) place can help with sound sleep.

Avoid caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine four to six hours before bed.

Finish dinner several hours before bedtime.

If you get hungry after dinner, eat a light snack but avoid foods that cause indigestion such as dairy, carbohydrates, or sugar.

Some medications may affect sleep so consult with your physician about taking medication earlier in the evening if this might be a factor.

Exercise can help you fall asleep faster and sleep more soundly.

Finish exercising at least three hours before bedtime.

Source: Division of Sleep Medicine at Harvard Medical School

