


5 Minute Med School


Patients seem to really want two things: (1) an opinionated but quick overview of what ails them and (2) somebody they trust to go through the vast amount of health information out there and pick out the very best resources.


- Dr. Mike Evans MD, Health Design Lab.


Mental Health


5 Key Questions

 **Where do I start?** Define your core problem by filling out the PHQ survey (see Resources on the next page). Mental health is affected by many factors (your thinking style, life events, genetics, etc.), overlapping diagnoses (depression, anxiety, grief, etc.) and different vantage points (age, gender, culture, etc.) so it is good to start with something concrete.

 **What's an effective coping strategy?** We often get caught up looking for a magic key to all our problems and miss the obvious little things that help us cope. When I play tennis and I start playing badly, I simplify and say “watch the ball”. The same could be said for mental health – watch your “Key Actions” (see right).

 **Should I take an antidepressant?** A 2009^a review indicated that they are not worth a try in milder cases but worth a try in medium to severe cases of depression, anxiety, and other mental health diagnoses. Discuss with your doctor if they may be for you.

 **What about talk therapy?** It is effective for most, especially in the long run. There are many different types and therapists so it's hard to generalize but Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) seems to be the most useful. Other approaches such as interpersonal therapy, group classes, mindfulness, and behavioral therapy can also be helpful. See Resources on the next page for videos explaining CBT and other types of therapies.

 **What about alternative medicines?** None have been shown to be effective in higher quality trials. See Resources for a good overview of non-drug therapy.

Key Actions

Walk more. Or bike, or play hockey, or whatever you enjoy. The point is, a meta-analysis with 3,566 subjects showed exercise cut anxiety by 48%^b. A trial of graded exercise in people with depression showed low effort (3x/wk) dropped depression by 30%, whereas high dose activity (7x/wk) reduced depression by 47%^c.

Mingle. Mental health setbacks tend to cause people to isolate themselves and this can make their problems worse. Look at your week and make 2 or 3 “dates”. A walk, a movie, or any outing - with people that make you feel better, not worse.

Eat well. If you eat crap you will feel crappy.

Think well. Healthy thinking is looking at the world in a balanced way – not all positive, not all negative. See Resources for some helpful coping tips.





^a National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence - Clinical Guidelines (UK) 2009, ^bWipfli BM, et al, J Sport Exerc Psychol. 2008; 30(4):392–410. ^cKnubben K, et al, . Br J Sports Med. 2007; 41(1):29–33.



Best Resources

We've looked through the world's resources to bring you the best ones.



<p>Websites</p> 	<p>www.heretohelp.bc.ca/skills/managing-well-being I've linked to their skills section but this BC based site also has screening tests, interactive toolkits, and more. Their wellness modules are great, especially the one on healthy thinking.</p> <p>www.checkupfromtheneckup.ca This site helps you to assess where you are and find help if you need it - including Google map locations of local therapists.</p> <p>http://www.effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/index.cfm/search-for-guides-reviews-and-reports/?pageaction=displayproduct&productID=10 This is an excellent overview for people wondering about whether to start an antidepressant pill.</p>
<p>Books</p> 	<p>Anxiety & Phobia Workbook by Edmund Bourne (2000). Includes good diagnostic questionnaires to assess your type of anxiety.</p> <p>Mind over Mood by Greenberger & Padesky (1995). Takes you step by step through how your thoughts influence your mood and how to improve that cycle.</p> <p>Successful Problem Solving by McKay & Fanning (2002). Often the first step is just identifying the problem.</p>
<p>Videos</p> 	<p>www.nhs.uk/conditions/cognitive-behavioural-therapy/pages/introduction.aspx Dr. David Clark explains Cognitive Behavioral Therapy.</p> <p>www.nhs.uk/livewell/depression/pages/depression-support.aspx A video overview explaining the difference between having a bad day and being depressed, levels of depression, early warning signs and treatments available.</p>
<p>Tools</p> 	<p>http://drmikeevans.com/storage/PHQ%20longer%20version%20mental%20health%20screen.pdf This is the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ), a mental health screener meant to be filled out and then gone through with a clinician.</p> <p>http://www.sign.ac.uk/pdf/pat114.pdf An overview of the findings of a UK group looking at the data for non-drug therapy - including CBT, Art Therapy and yoga.</p> <p>www.patientslikeme.com/mood/community A pioneer in social networking health sites – includes Depression, anxiety, OCD and bipolar communities.</p>