




Mental Health & Well-being Guide for Youth Work

Created during the Erasmus+ training course "Healthy Minds, Resilient Communities: Promoting Mental Well-being in Youth Work" (Project Number: 2025-1-DE04-KA153-YOU-000298797)

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▼ Introduction



Mental health is at the heart of strong, resilient communities.

Welcome to this guide, created during an Erasmus+ training course focused on promoting mental well-being in youth work.

Funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union, it reflects the experiences, knowledge, and collaborative efforts of participants who came together to explore mental health and well-being in youth work.

This guide is designed for youth workers, educators, and anyone interested in promoting mental well-being among young people, offering insights and approaches developed throughout the training.

Participating countries and partner organizations

- Youth Line Germany - Germany
 - YOUTH LINE GR AMKE - Greece
 - TERRA AVANZA - Spain
 - Fiatalok Tere Egyesület - Hungary
 - Asociatia "Tomorrow Hub" - Romania
 - Youth Line Bulgaria - Bulgaria
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▼ Understanding Mental Health

Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realise their abilities, learn effectively, and work productively.

Mental health conditions include mental disorders and psychosocial disabilities, as well as other mental states associated with significant distress, impairment in functioning, or risk of self-harm.

In 2019, approximately **970 million people worldwide** were living with a mental disorder, with anxiety and depression being the most common. Mental health conditions can affect all areas of life, including relationships with family, friends, and the wider community. They can also impact experiences at school and in the workplace.

Why is mental health important?



Mental health is essential for our overall quality of life.

Globally, mental disorders account for **1 in 6 years lived with disability**, and people with severe mental health conditions may die **10 to 20 years earlier** than the general population.

Mental health challenges can also increase the risk of suicide and exposure to human rights violations.

(Source: World Health Organization - WHO)

Mental well-being influences how we think, feel, act, and connect with others. Since it is present in every aspect of our lives, learning how to take care of it is essential.

How can this guide help?

This guide is designed to support individuals in understanding and managing their mental well-being.

Inside, you will find:

- Practical tools and exercises
- Creative methods, including music and reflection
- Step-by-step approaches to managing mental health challenges
- Activities that can be applied in youth work and everyday life

👉 As you go through the guide, you will find sections that connect to different tools and activities.



This guide aims to support you in navigating mental health challenges, building resilience, and creating more supportive environments for yourself and others.

▼ Mental Health Across Countries



Mental health is discussed differently across countries, but awareness is growing - especially among young people.

▼ 🇧🇬 Bulgaria



Discussion: Increasing openness among youth; older generations still influenced by past stigma.



Support: NGOs, helplines, school psychologists.



Challenges: Stigma, lack of awareness, financial barriers.



Positive: Growing awareness and strong NGO presence.

▼ 🇩🇪 Germany



Discussion: Relatively open and normalized.



Support: Doctors, NGOs, therapy services.



Challenges: Long waiting times and access gaps.



Positive: Strong support systems and openness.

▼ 🇬🇷 Greece

- 🧠 Discussion: Increasing visibility, especially among young people.
- 🆘 Support: Public healthcare, private therapists, NGOs (limited accessibility).
- ⚠️ Challenges: Economic barriers, high unemployment, long working hours, limited access to affordable services, lower well-being indicators.
- ✅ Positive: Growing awareness, more open discussions, increasing focus on mental health in public conversations.

▼ 🇭🇺 Hungary

- 🧠 Discussion: Generational gap; youth more open than older generations.
- 🆘 Support: Universities, public healthcare, private therapy.
- ⚠️ Challenges: High costs, long waitlists, over-reliance on medication.
- ✅ Positive: School and policy-based health initiatives.

▼ 🇷🇴 Romania

- 🧠 Discussion: Emerging topic, especially in urban areas; less present in rural areas.
- 🆘 Support: NGOs, public services, private therapists, church.
- ⚠️ Challenges: Stigma, limited access, lack of information.
- ✅ Positive: Active NGOs and growing awareness.

▼ 🇪🇸 Spain

- 🧠 Discussion: More open, especially among young people, though stigma still exists.
- 🆘 Support: Public healthcare, schools, NGOs, private psychologists.
- ⚠️ Challenges: Long waiting times, shortage of specialists, high costs.
- ✅ Positive: Increased awareness and youth-focused programs.

🌍 Overall Reflection

🤝 Mental health awareness is growing, but access, affordability, and stigma remain key challenges.

Common challenges: Long waiting times, high costs, lack of specialists, stigma.

Positive trends: Increased awareness, youth engagement, NGO support.

🤝 Learning from different countries helps us build more inclusive and supportive communities.

▼ Mental Health Myths

💡 Understanding common myths helps reduce stigma and create a more supportive and informed environment.

- **“Mental health problems are rare”** → ❌ False
Mental health challenges are common and affect people of all ages and backgrounds.
- **“Strong people don’t struggle with mental health”** → ❌ False
Experiencing difficulties does not mean weakness - it is part of being human.
- **“You can just ‘snap out of it’”** → ❌ False
Mental health challenges are not a choice and often require time, support, and care.
- **“Only adults experience mental health issues”** → ❌ False
Young people also face mental health challenges and need support.
- **“Talking about mental health makes it worse”** → ❌ False
Open conversations can reduce stress, increase understanding, and encourage seeking help.



Breaking these myths is an important step toward building empathy, awareness, and supportive communities.

▼ Understanding Your Boundaries



This activity is designed to help you reflect on your personal and professional boundaries when working with others. There are no right or wrong answers - the goal is to become more aware of your reactions, needs, and limits.

How to use this activity

For each statement, choose the answer that best reflects your experience:

- **1 - Strongly Disagree**
- **2 - Disagree**
- **3 - Neutral**
- **4 - Agree**
- **5 - Strongly Agree**



Emotional Boundaries

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I like to be alone when I feel overwhelmed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I need time before I talk about difficult emotions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I prefer someone to stay close to me when I'm upset.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel comfortable sharing personal experiences with young people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Professional Boundaries

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I feel confident saying "this is outside my role."	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I believe being a "good" youth worker means always being available.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel guilty when I take time off.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I find it hard to stop thinking about young people's problems after work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel responsible for other people's emotions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I worry about being too involved in young people's lives.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I worry about being too distant in my role.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Support & Communication

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I feel comfortable asking for help or supervision.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel relieved when I can share responsibility with others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I trust my ability to know when to refer to professionals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel pressure to have the right answers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Personal Boundaries & Awareness

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I can notice when my body signals that a boundary is crossed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I find it easy to say "no" when I'm tired.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel calm when someone is very emotional.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am comfortable with silence when emotions are present.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel supported when someone just listens without responding.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel supported when someone asks questions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



This activity is not about right or wrong answers - it is about increasing your awareness of your personal and professional boundaries.

Understanding your responses

Mostly 4-5 (Agree / Strongly Agree)

You likely have **strong awareness of your boundaries** in this area.

- You recognise your needs and limits
- You are able to respond to situations with clarity
- You may feel more confident in your role

 Reflection:

How can you maintain these boundaries in challenging situations?

Mostly 3 (Neutral)

You may be **uncertain or still exploring your boundaries**.

- You might adapt depending on the situation
- Some boundaries may not be fully clear yet

 Reflection:

In which situations do you feel unsure about your limits?

Mostly 1-2 (Disagree / Strongly Disagree)

You may find it **challenging to recognise or express your boundaries** in this area.

- You might feel overwhelmed or unsure how to respond
- You may prioritise others' needs over your own

 Reflection:

What small steps could help you strengthen your boundaries?



Look for patterns

Instead of focusing on one answer, look at the bigger picture:

- Which category felt easiest for you?
- Which category felt most challenging?
- Are there differences between your personal and professional boundaries?



Final reflection

Take a moment to think about:

- What did you learn about yourself?
 - What surprised you?
 - What is one boundary you would like to improve or protect more?
-



Healthy boundaries are not about creating distance - they are about building safe, respectful, and sustainable relationships.

▼ Your Guide to Better Well-being



Small daily habits like movement, nutrition, and rest play a key role in supporting mental well-being.



 **These elements form the foundation of mental health and overall well-being.**

▼ Weekly Movement Planner

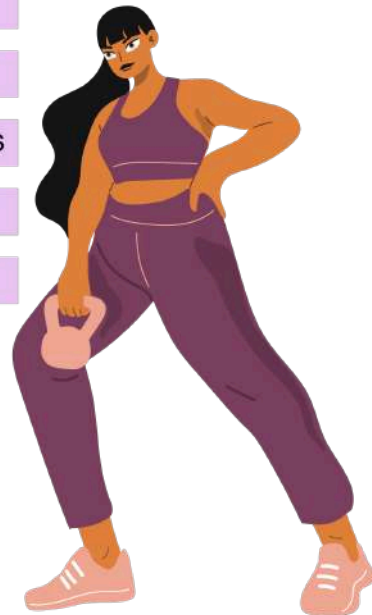


Regular physical activity supports both physical and mental well-being. This planner helps you build a simple and sustainable routine.

Day	Focus	Exercises
Monday	Upper Body (Push)	Warm-up, Push-ups, Bench Press, Incline Dumbbell Press
Tuesday	Upper Body (Pull)	Warm-up, Pull-ups, Romanian Deadlift, Dumbbell Rows
Wednesday	Upper Body (Back)	Seated Cable Row, Lat Pulldowns
Thursday	Cardio & Mobility	Stretching, Tempo Run, Chest, Shoulders
Friday	Cardio & Mobility	Stretching, Tempo Run, Chest, Shoulders
Saturday	Cardio & Mobility	Stretching, Tempo Run, Chest, Shoulders

Exercise Details:

- PUSH-UPS – 3 SETS × 10 REPS
- BENCH PRESS – 4 SETS × 10 REPS
- INCLINE DUMBBELL PRESS – 4 SETS × 10 REPS
- CHEST DIPS – 4 SETS × 10 REPS
- PULL-UPS – 4 SETS × 10 REPS
- RDL – 4 SETS × 10 REPS
- DUMBBELL ROWS – 4 SETS × 10 REPS
- SEATED CABLE ROW – 4 SETS × 10 REPS
- LAT PULLDOWNS – 4 SETS × 10 REPS



How to use this planner effectively

- Choose activities that fit your energy level
- Start small and stay consistent
- Adapt the plan to your own needs
- Focus on how movement makes you feel



Consistency matters more than intensity. Small steps lead to long-term results

▼ Mindful Yoga

Different types of mindfulness, such as yoga or breathing exercises, can help manage everyday stress. Many of these practices can be done during a lunch break or at any point in your daily routine, helping to create a sense of calm and reset the nervous system.

Here is a gentle yoga flow for you to try. When doing the poses, focus on what feels good for your body on a given day, and try to sync your movement with your breath.

Yoga sequence from Ayurveda Parkschlösschen:



1. Easy Pose
Close the eyes, deeply inhale and exhale



2. Cow, seated inhale



3. Cat, seated exhale



4. Stretched upper body, seated 5 long breaths

5 x repetitions



5. Side bend, seated 5 long breaths, both sides



6. Half butterfly 12 long breaths, both sides



7. Seated forward bend 10 long breaths



8. Seated spinal twist 10 long breaths, both sides



9. Tree, reclined hold for 1-2 minutes, both sides



10. Crocodile, left hold for 1-2 minutes



12. Crocodile, right hold for 1-2 minutes



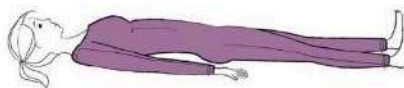
11. Crane 5 long breaths



13. Crane, circle the legs 10-15 x in both directions



14. Banana, reclined hold for 1-2 minutes, both sides



15. Corpse 5-10 minutes, or for as long as you wish

While in corpse pose, take a moment for a calming meditation. Gently bring your attention to your breath and allow your mind to settle.

- Breathe in through your nose for 4 seconds
- Hold for 7 seconds
- Exhale slowly through your mouth for 8 seconds

▼ **Healthy Food**



▼ Healthy Plate Rule



Your Guide to Creating Balanced Meals.

Vegetables and fruits are rich in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants that support both physical and mental health. They help regulate energy levels, improve digestion, and contribute

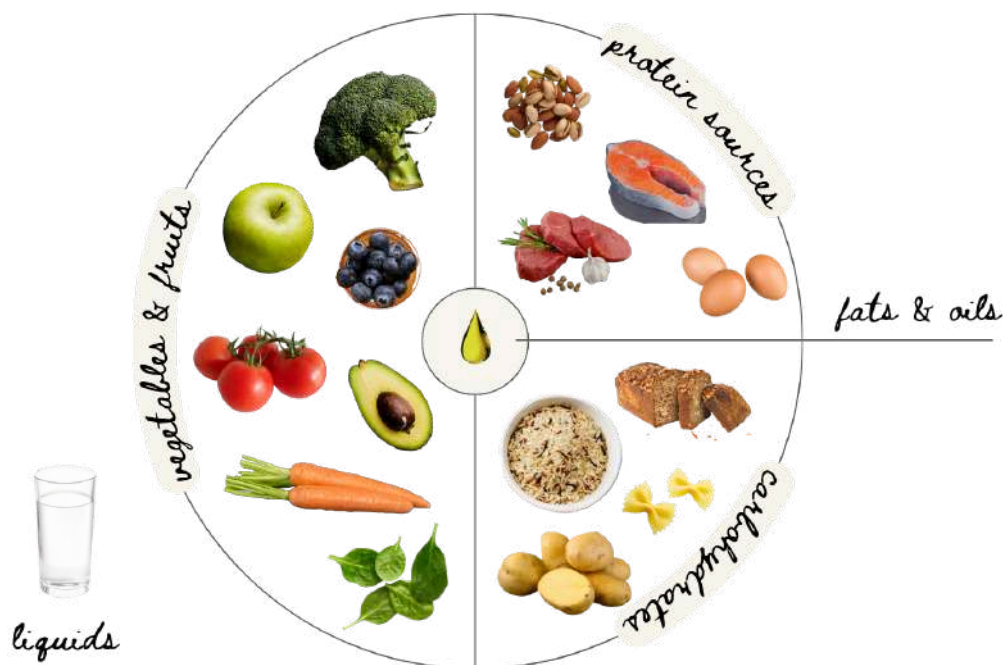
to overall well-being. Including a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables in your daily meals can support brain function and help maintain a balanced mood.


Protein sources are essential for building and repairing tissues, supporting muscle growth, and maintaining overall health. They also play an important role in brain function and help keep you feeling full and energized throughout the day. Including a variety of protein sources, such as legumes, dairy, eggs, fish, or meat, can support both physical and mental well-being.

Carbohydrates are the body's main source of energy, helping to fuel both physical activity and brain function. They support concentration, mood, and overall energy levels throughout the day. Choosing complex carbohydrates, such as whole grains, fruits, and vegetables, can provide steady energy and support overall well-being.

Fats and oils are essential for brain function, hormone regulation, and overall health. Healthy fats, such as those found in nuts, seeds, avocados, and olive oil, support concentration, memory, and mood. Including the right types of fats in your diet can help maintain energy levels and support long-term well-being.

Staying hydrated is essential for both physical and mental health. Water supports concentration, energy levels, and the proper functioning of the body and brain. Drinking enough fluids throughout the day can help improve focus, reduce fatigue, and support overall well-being.



 Small, balanced choices each day can support your energy, mood, and overall well-being.

▼ Meal Plan



This is an example of a simple daily meal plan that supports balanced nutrition and overall well-being.



breakfast

Oatmeal with banana

Oatmeal with banana is a simple and nutritious breakfast that provides long-lasting energy to start the day. Oats are a great source of fiber, supporting digestion and helping you feel full, while bananas add natural sweetness and important nutrients like potassium. This combination supports both physical energy and mental focus.

lunch

Salad with rice and boiled eggs

A salad with rice and boiled eggs is a balanced and nourishing lunch that provides both energy and essential nutrients. Rice offers a steady source of carbohydrates for sustained energy, while eggs provide high-quality protein to support muscle health and keep you feeling full. Combined with fresh vegetables, this meal supports overall wellbeing, helping to maintain focus and energy throughout the day.



snack

Oatmeal with berries

Oatmeal with berries is a nutritious and satisfying snack that provides a balance of fiber, natural sugars, and antioxidants. Oats support steady energy levels, while berries add vitamins and help protect the body through their antioxidant properties. This snack can help maintain focus and prevent energy drops between meals.



dinner

Fish and asparagus

Fish with asparagus is a light and nutritious dinner that supports overall health and recovery. Fish provides high-quality protein and healthy fats that support brain function and heart health, while asparagus adds vitamins, minerals, and fiber. This combination helps promote a balanced diet and supports both physical and mental wellbeing.



Balanced meals throughout the day help maintain energy, support focus, and promote both physical and mental well-being.

▼ Healthy Habits: What to Do



Small daily actions can make a big difference in supporting your mental and physical well-being.

Do talk about your feelings

Sharing with a trusted friend, family member, teacher, or counselor helps reduce stress.

Do take care of your body

Sleep well, eat regularly, stay hydrated, and move your body - mental health is physical too.

Do set realistic goals

Small steps count. Progress doesn't have to be perfect to be real.

Do practice stress-management skills

Try breathing exercises, journaling, mindfulness, meditation or prayer, or creative activities.

Do stay connected

Healthy relationships build emotional strength - check in with others and let them check in on you.

Do ask for help early

Reaching out is a sign of strength, not weakness.

Do take breaks when needed

Rest is productive. Burnout helps no one.

Do be kind to yourself

Treat yourself the way you would treat a close friend.



Focus on progress, not perfection - small, consistent actions can make a big difference.

▼ Healthy Habits: What to Avoid



Being aware of unhelpful habits is an important step towards protecting your mental and physical well-being.

Don't ignore your emotions

Bottling things up often makes stress and anxiety worse.

Don't compare yourself to others

Social media shows highlights, not real life.

Don't shame yourself for struggling

Mental health challenges are common and valid.

Don't rely on alcohol, drugs, or risky behavior to cope

These may numb feelings temporarily, but increase problems in the long term.

Don't isolate yourself for long periods

Alone time is okay - total withdrawal is not.

Don't overload yourself

Saying "yes" to everything can damage your well-being.

Don't spread stigma or judge others

Words matter. Support saves lives.

Don't wait until things feel unbearable to seek help

Early support makes recovery easier.



Avoiding these habits is not about being perfect - it's about becoming more aware and making healthier choices over time.

▼ How to Support Others



Supporting others does not mean having all the answers - it means being present, understanding, and respectful.

- **Listen without interrupting**
Give the person space to express themselves without rushing or correcting them.
- **Avoid judging or giving quick solutions**
Sometimes people need to be heard more than they need advice.
- **Show empathy and understanding**
Try to understand their feelings, even if you don't fully relate to their experience.
- **Encourage seeking professional help**
If needed, gently suggest reaching out to a counselor, psychologist, or trusted adult.
- **Respect boundaries**
Support others, but also recognize your own limits - you are not responsible for fixing everything.
- **Be patient**
Everyone processes emotions differently and at their own pace.



Sometimes, the most powerful support is simply being there.

▼ Signs Someone Might Be Struggling



Recognizing these signs can help you offer support early and respond with care.

- **Sudden changes in mood or behaviour**
For example, becoming unusually quiet, angry, or withdrawn.
- **Withdrawal from friends or activities**
Losing interest in things they usually enjoy.
- **Constant fatigue or low energy**
Feeling tired all the time or lacking motivation.
- **Difficulty concentrating**
Struggling to focus at school, work, or in conversations.
- **Changes in sleep or eating habits**
Sleeping too much or too little, changes in appetite.
- **Expressions of hopelessness or distress**
Talking negatively about themselves or the future.



If you notice these signs, gently check in, listen without judgment, and encourage seeking support.

▼ Positive Reflection Exercise



This simple activity helps you focus on positive experiences and can improve mood and overall well-being.



Time Needed

About 10 minutes a day for at least one week.



How to do it

For at least one week, each day write down **three things that went well** and explain why they went well.

Writing them down on paper (or digitally) is important, as it is more effective than just thinking about them.

These can be small, everyday moments or bigger achievements. For example:

- "I got out of bed today."
- "My grandparents were happy when I brought them groceries."
- "I earned a promotion at work."

Many people find it helpful to do this before bed so it becomes part of a daily routine.

While you write, try this:

- **Give it a title**
For example: "I got a compliment on something I've been working hard on."
- **Describe what happened**
Include where you were, what you did or said, and what others did or said if they were involved.
- **Reflect on how it made you feel**
Think about how you felt at the time and how you feel now as you remember it.
- **Think about why it happened**
What contributed to this positive moment? What was your role?
- **Write in your own style**
Don't worry about grammar or spelling - include as much detail as you like.

Tip

If you notice yourself focusing on negative thoughts, gently bring your attention back to the positive moment and the feelings it created.

It may take some practice, but it becomes easier over time and can significantly improve your mood.



Small positive reflections like this can help shift your perspective and build a more balanced and optimistic mindset.

▼ Key takeaways



The most important messages from this guide - simple, practical, and worth remembering.

- **Mental health is part of everyday life**
It influences how we think, feel, and connect with others.
- **Small habits matter**
Daily actions like movement, rest, and reflection support long-term well-being.
- **Awareness is the first step**
Understanding your emotions, boundaries, and needs helps you take better care of yourself.
- **You are not alone**
Many people experience similar challenges, and support is always available.
- **Supporting others matters**
Listening, showing empathy, and being present can make a real difference.

- **It's okay to ask for help**

Seeking support is a sign of strength, not weakness.



Even small steps towards caring for yourself and others can create meaningful change.

▼ Conclusion



Mental health is something we build every day through small actions, habits, and connections.

Mental health is not something we take care of only in difficult moments - it is something we nurture every day.

Throughout this guide, you have explored what mental health means, reflected on your own boundaries, and discovered practical tools to support your well-being. You have also learned how to recognize when someone might be struggling and how to offer support in a thoughtful and respectful way.

From movement and nutrition to mindfulness, reflection, and connection, each element plays a role in creating a balanced and healthy life.

There is no single "right way" to take care of mental health. What matters most is awareness, consistency, and finding what works for you.

As youth workers, educators, or individuals, we all have the ability to create supportive environments - for ourselves and for others. By reducing stigma, encouraging open conversations, and practicing empathy, we contribute to stronger and more resilient communities.



Taking care of your mental health - and supporting others - is an ongoing journey, and every small step matters.

▼ Your Next Step



Take a moment to reflect and choose one small action you can take after reading this guide.

- **One habit I will start:**

- **One habit I want to improve:**


- **One thing I will stop or reduce:**

- **One person I can talk to:**


-
- **One thing I will try this week:**

 - **One activity that makes me feel good:**

 - **One way I will take care of myself:**

 You don't need to change everything at once - one small step is enough to begin.

▼ Support & Resources

 If you or someone you know is struggling, reaching out for support is a strong and important step.

International Support

- **Emergency number (EU): 112**
- **Emergency number (many countries): 911 / 999 (depending on location)**

Mental Health Support


- Local mental health hotlines (check your country's services)
- Youth support helplines
- School or university counselors
- Local psychologists or mental health professionals

Online Resources

- World Health Organization (WHO) - Mental Health
- Mental Health Europe
- Local youth organizations and NGOs

Support in Your Community

- Talk to a trusted friend or family member
- Reach out to a youth worker or mentor
- Join support groups or community spaces

 **You are not alone. Support is available, and asking for help is a sign of strength - not weakness.**

▼ Contacts

 [Website](#)

 [Instagram](#)

 [Facebook](#)

 [LinkedIn](#)

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