

Safeguarding Mental Health: A Cornerstone to Healthy Living

Abdulahakeem Jimoh

Department of Biology, Medgar Evers College, USA

Citation: Abdulhakeem Jimoh. *Safeguarding Mental Health: A Cornerstone to Healthy Living*. *Ann Med Res Pub Health*. 2026;5(1):1-3.

Received Date: 06 August, 2026; **Accepted Date:** 08 August, 2026; **Published Date:** 10 August, 2026

***Corresponding author:** Abdulhakeem Jimoh, MD, MPH Department of Biology, Medgar Evers College, City University of New York, USA **ORCID:** [0009-0004-5277-0370](https://orcid.org/0009-0004-5277-0370)

Copyright: © Abdulhakeem Jimoh, Open Access 2026. This article, published in *Ann Med Res Pub Health* (AMRPH) (Attribution 4.0 International), as described by <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

ABSTRACT

Mental well-being is as important as physical well-being, yet many individuals have downplayed or overlooked the need to deliberately care for and protect it. Understanding the intricate nature and significance of sound mental wellness for human functioning will provide the added grit to align physical and mental wellness within the higher hierarchy of positive needs, and the protective diligence that enhances a productive, high-quality standard of living. Mental health is generally viewed as an essential element of behavioral health, which emphasizes the role of emotional, social, and psychological well-being in enabling an individual to learn optimally, manage life stressors efficiently, realize their full potential, and contribute meaningfully to society¹. The intent to justify the need for mental health protection alongside good physical health in the face of adversity speaks to the concept of holistic well-being. It is, however, pertinent to note that mental illnesses can precipitate physical illnesses, much as chronic physical illnesses can also culminate in mental illnesses.

Keywords: Mental health; Physical health; Behavioral health; Anxiety disorder; Major depression; Stress management

Methodology: An online search was conducted to retrieve CDC- and WHO-based publications on mental health components and management, as well as NIMH resources for major statistics. A general search of the databases via Mendeley was conducted to obtain comprehensive information on mental health and its ramifications.

INTRODUCTION

Mental illnesses are common in the United States, with an estimated 1 in every 5 adults, with a number as large as 59.3 million in 2022 associated with any mental illness, which represented about 23.1% of the adult population. The prevalence was higher in females, who accounted for 26.4% of the adult population, compared with 19.7% in males.¹⁻³

One root cause of mental illnesses can be traced to groups and individuals subjected to compromised conditions associated with a variety of social determinants of health, such as ethno-racial minorities, displaced individuals with housing challenges, and poverty.⁴ Academic challenges and rigorous demands of higher education may pose additional stress for students and can manifest in poor performance, anxiety, and other mental health challenges.⁵

Infections in the form of the COVID-19 pandemic complicated the global outlook on physical as well as mental health, bearing significant deficits which resulted from loss of income, fatality, unemployment, and displacement. The impact took a tremendous toll on the mental health of many people globally, with a well-documented global increase in the prevalence of depression and anxiety.⁶

Unemployment has played a big role in the manifestations of mental illnesses, as there is a positive correlation with prolonged unemployment and mental illnesses and significant dissociation when affected individuals return to work.⁷ Unemployed individuals find solace in temporarily gratifying risky behaviors such as drug and substance use exploration. Other notable terrains that are usually associated with unemployment due to the diminished quality of life are depression, bipolar disorder, and suicidal ideation in some cases.⁷ Gainful employment usually plays a

significant role in recovery from illness and promotes mental wellness.⁸ It is worth noting that poor mental health could have a cascading economic and financial impact that further worsens mental well-being and complicates preventive efforts.⁹

Exposure to chronic stress could result in an array of mental disorders. This may include stress from emotionally exhausting relationships, financial troubles, adverse childhood experiences, post-traumatic conditions, chronic drug addiction, and overbearing workloads and demands.¹⁰

DISCUSSION

The benefits of sound mental health can be achieved when individuals are aware of these benefits and work towards realizing them. The risk of both physical and mental illnesses is considerably lowered with the right state of mind as primary efforts toward prevention are consciously instituted. The immune system is at peak activity, providing the body with the necessary elements to fight diseases while optimizing an environment in which individuals can think, learn, and operate with great focus and precision.¹¹

Adaptation to life challenges becomes easier, leading to improved productivity, more regulated positive emotions, better stress management, and the ability to thrive in the face of disagreement. These changes could promote self-contentment and a greater sense of purposeful living.¹¹

Expression of mental illnesses could appear in the form of major depressive illness characterized by persistent sadness, inability to focus, low self-esteem, disruption in sleep patterns, feelings of emptiness, and, in extreme cases, complicated by suicidal ideation.¹²

Anxiety disorder, which represents a leading mental health disorder globally, in which individuals can experience physical illnesses, undue nervousness, and panic attacks, with varying forms of the disorder that could have detrimental effects on daily functioning.¹³ Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is another manifestation, which occurs as a consequence of previous exposure to violence, abuse, assaults, and traumatic experiences that often present with disturbing flashbacks and possible panic attacks.¹⁴ Psychotic disorders, bipolar disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorders, and personality disorders are others worthy of mentioning, even though some may be influenced by underlying genetic determinants.

Practical steps that protect one's mental health should be learned and implemented, as they can go a long way toward carving out a disease-free, peaceful, and enjoyable way of living. Effective stress management considers a stepwise approach to addressing tasks and daily challenges, unwinding after stressful engagements, meditation and relaxation techniques, setting realistic and attainable goals, setting boundaries during negative encounters, and effective relaxation routines. Ensuring adequate sleep, practicing gratitude for daily accomplishments, and connecting with loved ones and trusted allies could prove equally beneficial.¹⁵

Healthy nutrition, which limits excess sugar consumption, incorporates low-fat diets, adds lean proteins, and provides adequate amounts of vegetables and whole grains, may be a critical subject for consideration.¹⁶ Increasing physical activities, routine medical visits, avoidance of illegal drug usage, and smoking may hold a complementary advantage in sustaining qualitative health status.

CONCLUSION

It is obvious that attempts made to protect physical health go a long way in protecting mental health as well. Relevant education which increases awareness and cognizance of the major predisposing factors of mental illness is crucial in taking preventive steps and appropriate actions when symptoms present. The triad of good nutrition, effective stress management, and appropriate physical activity that stimulates both mind and body is essential for preventing physical and mental illnesses.¹⁷

Mental illnesses such as anxiety disorders, major depressive disorders, and psychotic disorders have a common place in our society due to the associated internalized stigma, thus preventing individuals from seeking professional help. Addressing the stigma concurrently while managing these conditions will eliminate individual struggles and produce excellent outcomes.¹⁸

Lastly, it is of paramount importance for individuals with mental health challenges to seek medical help from licensed professionals who can institute appropriate behavioral therapies and necessary medication treatments. Advocating for a collaborative model between mental health professionals and general practitioners will create better opportunities that facilitate comprehensive attention in managing mental health disorders.¹⁹

REFERENCES

1. Centers for disease control and prevention. About mental health. 2026.
2. Fiorillo A, de Girolamo G, Simunovic IF, et al. The relationship between physical and mental health: an update from the WPA working group on managing comorbidity of mental and physical health. *World Psychiatry*. 2023;22(1):169–170.
3. National Institute of Mental Health. Mental illness. 2026.
4. Kirkbride JB, Anglin DM, Colman I, et al. The social determinants of mental health and disorder: evidence, prevention and recommendations. *World Psychiatry*. 2024;23(1):58–90.
5. Córdova P, Gordillo PG, Mejía HN, et al. Academic stress as a predictor of mental health in university students. *Cogent Educ*. 2023;10(2).
6. World Health Organization. COVID–19 pandemic triggers 25% increase in prevalence of anxiety and depression worldwide. 2026.
7. Franke AG, Schmidt P, Neumann S. Association between unemployment and mental disorders: a narrative update of the literature. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2024;21(12):1698.
8. Modini M, Joyce S, Mykletun A, et al. The mental health benefits of employment: results of a systematic meta–review. *Australas Psychiatry*. 2016;24(4):331–336.
9. McDaid D, Park A La, Wahlbeck K. The economic case for the prevention of mental illness. *Annu Rev Public Health*. 2019;40(1):373–389.
10. Pedersen T. Causes of stress: types of stress, symptoms & tips. *Psych Central*. 2026.
11. Centers for disease control and prevention. About emotional well–being. 2026.
12. National Institute of Mental Health. Depression. 2026.
13. National Institute of Mental Health. Any anxiety disorder. 2026.
14. National Institute of Mental Health. Post–traumatic stress disorder. 2026.
15. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Managing stress. 2026.
16. Firth J, Gangwisch JE, Borsini A, et al. Food and mood: how do diet and nutrition affect mental wellbeing? *BMJ*. 2020;369:m2382.
17. Canadian Mental Health Association Toronto. Benefits of good mental health. 2026.
18. Arnaez JM, Krendl AC, McCormick BP, et al. The association of depression stigma with barriers to seeking mental health care: a cross–sectional analysis. *J Ment Health*. 2020;29(2):1–9.
19. Raney LE. Integrating primary care and behavioral health: the role of the psychiatrist in the collaborative care model. *FOCUS*. 2017;15(3):354–360.