



WASHINGTON HEALTH SYSTEM
Center for Mental Health and Wellbeing

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



Mental Health and Heart Health

For years, doctors thought the connection between mental health and heart health was strictly behavioral – such as the person who is feeling down seeking relief from smoking, drinking or eating fatty foods.

That thinking has started to change. Research shows there could be physiological connections, too. The biological and chemical factors that trigger mental health issues also could influence heart disease.

“The head-heart connection should be on everyone’s radar,” said Barry Jacobs, Psy.D., a clinical psychologist and director of Behavioral Sciences at the Crozer-Keystone Family Medicine Residency Program in Springfield, Pa. “It’s not just being unhappy. It’s having biochemical changes that predispose people to have other health problems, including heart problems.”

Depression and Other Issues

Many forms of mental health issues can affect heart disease. There’s the temporary state of depression or a more severe, clinical case. You can also have varying levels of anxiety and stress, just to name a few of the most well-known problems.

Research does not firmly link stress and heart disease, but there’s a growing belief that it’s an additional risk factor, and maybe even more dangerous than some others, said Nieca Goldberg, M.D., medical director for the Joan H. Tisch Center for Women’s Health at NYU’s Langone Medical Center.

“Stress can increase hormones like adrenaline and cortisol, and can impact your blood pressure and heart rate,” she said.

Heart, Stroke Patients Must Be Wary

Having heart disease or stroke can cause anxiety or depression. It is important to handle these in a healthy way.”

“It’s not just that they want to smoke and eat,” Dr. Jacobs said. “They don’t have the energy to get out of bed and go to rehab and do the things they need to regain their physical health.”

It makes sense that someone might think, “I just had a heart attack, I should be depressed.” But minimizing their sadness, and dismissing it, could start them down a slippery slope.”

What should be done?

Start by discussing how you are feeling, both physically and mentally, with your healthcare provider. He or she will be able to help or refer you to the most appropriate care or provide the best place to start.

You should monitor yourself and your loved ones, especially those dealing with heart disease or stroke.

“Doctors are going to say, ‘Are you still smoking? How are you doing with your diet? Are you checking your blood pressure? How’s your mood been? Are you enjoying the same things that used to give you enjoyment?’” Dr. Jacobs said. “Whether someone is clinically depressed or just anxious, they need follow-up care.”

To read the full article, please visit: [Mental Health and Heart Health | American Heart Association](#)

**February
2022**

Month

- American Heart Month
- Black History Month
- International Boos Self-Esteem Month
- National Cancer Prevention Month
- Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month

Week

- National School Counseling Week (Feb. 6-10)
- Random Act of Kindness Week (Feb. 12-19)
- National Eating Disorder Awareness Week (Feb. 27-Mar. 5)

Day

- World Cancer Day (Feb. 4)
- Safer Internet Day (Feb. 7)
- National Make a Friend Day (Feb. 11)
- National Random Act of Kindness Day (Feb. 17)

To learn more visit:

<https://sacwellness.com/mental-health-awareness-calendar/>



Thankfulness: How Gratitude Can Help Your Health

Gratitude is more than a buzzword. It's a habit and practice that may actually change your perception of well-being.

Are you feeling overwhelmed by the coronavirus pandemic, all the changes it has brought to your life and everything you need to worry about to stay safe?

Or do you sometimes feel like you just can't catch a break? You know — the truck that cut you off, the weird feedback you got from your boss, the grocery item you need but is never on the store shelf? Do you sometimes feel negative and cynical?

Sure, we all do this a little, but doing it a lot can lead to depression¹, which is linked to poor heart health, more inflammation and even a weaker immune system.² Yikes!

Some neuroscience experts think our brains focus on negative information as a way to remember pain so we can avoid it in the future. They call this the "negativity bias."³

To balance out this natural tendency, we can practice gratitude.

"Gratitude is good medicine," says Robert A. Emmons, Ph.D., a professor of psychology at the University of California, Davis and author of *The Little Book of Gratitude*.

"Clinical trials indicate that the practice of gratitude can have dramatic and lasting effects in a person's life. It can lower blood pressure and improve immune function. ... Grateful people engage in more exercise, have better dietary behaviors, are less likely to smoke and abuse alcohol and have higher rates of medication adherence."⁴

Dang, being grateful is the gift that seriously keeps on giving, right? Who couldn't use all these benefits right now?

To read the full article, please visit: [Thankfulness: How Gratitude Can Help Your Health | American Heart Association](#)

Did You Know?

The Benefits of Gratitude

- Increased happiness
- Reduced depression
- Strength when facing adversity
- Improved physical health
- Community building

How to Foster Gratitude:

- Mindfulness
- Say thank you
- Journaling
- Start saying grace.
- Surround yourself with gratitude cues
- A little gratitude leads to more gratitude

To read the full article, please visit: [The Benefits of Gratitude and How to Foster More Gratitude in your Life \(webmd.com\)](#)



Dear Valued Referral Sources,

May your heart be full of gratitude and your Valentine's Day be full of love! Thank you for everything you have done to support our health system and mental health program. We appreciate you and your referrals.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Campbell, MSW, LSW

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Greene County Crisis Line: 1-800-417-9460

Washington County 24-Hour Crisis Hotline: 1-877-225-3567

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255

Greenbriar Treatment Facility: 1-800-637-4673

STTARS Sexual Assault Hotline (Greene & Washington): 1-888-480-7283