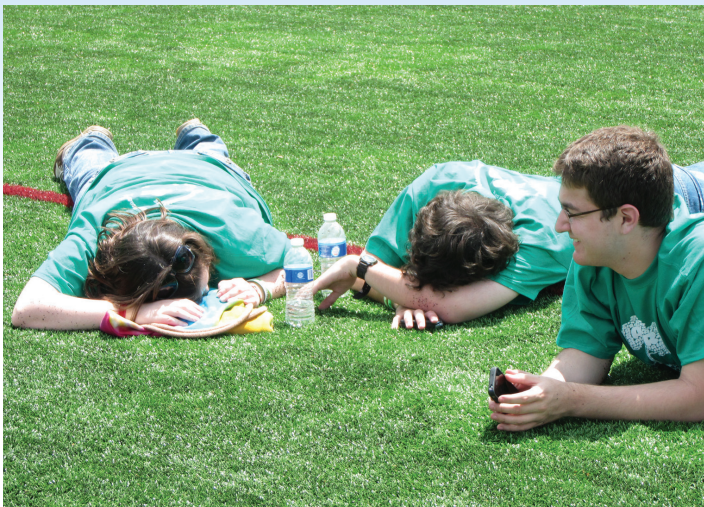




Are You Mentally Healthy?

Tips For Teens by a Teen

Can you cope with everyday stresses? Can you maintain fulfilling relationships? Do you feel good about yourself? Are you productive? Everyone can live a happy and healthy life. Read below to see how.



Sleep! Between completing homework and participating in afterschool activities, getting enough sleep is tough. But, teens need about eight to ten hours a night because inadequate sleep leads to moodiness and poor performance. To get enough sleep, set a sleep schedule, even on the weekends, and relax before your bedtime. You can do this!

Hang Out! With all your responsibilities, there may be no time to hang out with friends. Being with good friends makes us feel happy. Remember to make some time for your buddies.

Get Moving! With so many responsibilities, many teens are not exercising as much as they should. Although teens should exercise for about an hour each day, any amount of exercise will do. It doesn't have to be exhausting. You can walk with a friend, take a dance class, or join a sports team. Even chores count!

Eat Well! Since food is our nutrition and energy source, what we eat affects how we feel. Try to eat regularly from all the food groups, which include carbohydrates, vegetables, fruits, dairy and protein. Limit the amount of highly processed foods that are high in fat, sugar and salt.

Seek Help! High school can be hard at times. If you feel that you are having trouble functioning or that you are full of negative emotions, you are not alone. Since teens are encountering adult like stresses for the first time in their lives, there are many teens in the same boat. With help, you can become a happy, healthy person. Tell a parent, teacher or a guidance counselor about your feelings. They will discuss what is troubling you, provide advice for you to cope and, if they feel you need more assistance, help you contact a mental health professional.

Write out your Troubles! Studies have shown that while writing about emotions and the situations associated with them could be difficult to do at first, the long-term benefits far outweigh these initial struggles. There are not only emotional benefits, but also advantages for individuals' physical health. Individuals in the studies have demonstrated and reported decreased depression and stress, better overall psychological well-being, reduced blood pressure, improved immune system functions and fewer visits to doctors.

Be Creative! Whether you enjoy writing, painting, drawing or even coloring, exploring and expressing your creativity offers many health benefits. Being creative can be an emotional outlet and help solve problems and relieve stress by giving your mind something different to focus on. You don't need to be the next Jane Austen or Michelangelo – although you may discover a similar level of talent! Just go with the flow with a pen or pencil, paints or even crayons. In fact, coloring books for teens and adults are designed with stress relief in mind! Engaging in art fosters creative thinking, which you can apply to more creative endeavors, as well as finding solutions to challenges you may encounter at school, a job or in relationships.

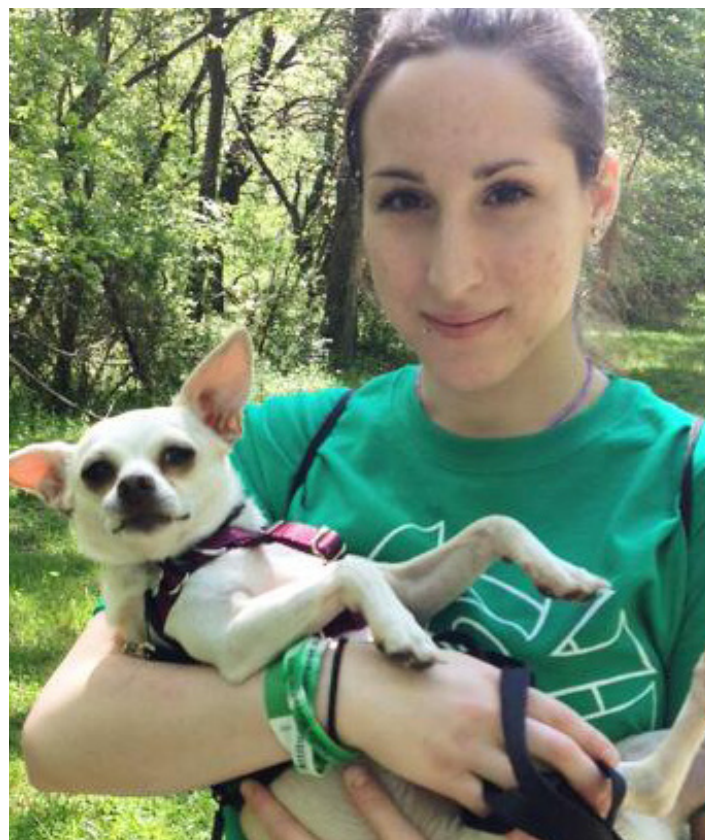
Hug Your Pet! Hugging your furry friend has lots of healing benefits. Looking at your pet causes a release of oxytocin (a feel-good brain chemical) in your brain. Petting furry pets releases serotonin and dopamine, good de-stressing brain chemicals. In addition, hugging your pet lowers the level of cortisol, the stress hormone. It is not only our furry friends that help us. Studies have shown that contemplation of fish in aquariums have a profound ability to lower blood pressure, calm the mind and alleviate anxiety.

Listen to your Favorite Music! Just like writing, music offers both mental and physical benefits. Research shows that listening to music helps relieve stress, reduce anxiety, improve performance in stressful situations and enhance mood. Physical benefits include reduced pain, improved sleep quality, increased motivation to exercise and, for calm music specifically, reduced eating – in a healthy way – because the relaxing music helps us eat more slowly so we will feel full with less food.

Music can also be a creative endeavor. If you play the piano, clarinet, guitar or any other instrument, you will also gain all of these mental and physical health benefits.

Volunteer! Helping others can help you feel happier and become healthier! It helps release stress, reduce depression and anxiety, and build confidence as you develop new skills and see how your volunteer efforts help others. Volunteering keeps you mentally stimulated and physically active, which can reduce risk of physical illnesses related to lack of exercise. It can also be fun and add to your social life, both with people you already know and new friends you will meet!

Feel and Express Gratitude! Volunteering can also help us feel more grateful for the wonderful people and positive things in our lives. We can reinforce our gratitude by writing down what we appreciate in our lives and writing



thank you notes to people who mean a lot to us. Research shows that this kind of writing increases brain activity within the limbic system, which regulates sleep, hunger, and other basic body functions. Expressing gratitude releases mood-enhancing neurochemicals; relieves anxiety and depression; and helps enhance resilience, the ability to “bounce back” after stressful events.

Relax! After a hectic day, everyone needs at least a few minutes to slow down and live in the moment. The timeless relaxation techniques are meditation, yoga, and muscle tension exercises. You can also listen to calming music or take a warm bubble bath.

Start the Conversation • Reverse an Attitude • SAVE A LIFE!

Contact AIR for More Information

Visit www.AttitudesInReverse.org • **Call** 609-945-3200 • **Write** info@AttitudesInReverse.org

PLEASE NOTE: AIR is not a counseling service. If you are in a crisis, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255) or the NJ Hopeline at 1-855-654-6735.

Sources: National Alliance on Mental Illness, Sleep Foundation, Sound-Mind Foundation

Funded by  **Bee Fit
with Tracy**