

# Why do Physical and Mental Issues Persist Despite the Awareness Behind Them?

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## ABSTRACT

This paper will be addressing the issues regarding mental and physical health and why these issues continue to persist and pose a problem in our lives, despite the growing awareness about them. At first, this paper initiates a discussion regarding mental health, how it impacts our life and why it continues to be an issue in today's times despite the increasing awareness around it. It then provides suggestions on how we can tackle this issue and lessen its impact and recommend ways to improve and enhance the quality of our life. Secondly, it will focus on physical health, the importance of physical wellbeing and its impact on the quality of life. This paper will also discuss its growing importance and why issues with regards to poor lifestyle choices still persist and what we can do to combat it. Finally, it will provide concluding remarks on the above topics discussed in this paper.

**Keywords:** Mental health, physical health, lifestyle, anxiety, depression.

**Subject:** Sociology

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## INTRODUCTION

The recent pandemic has taught us many lessons; however the greatest lesson we have learnt is not to take our health for granted. COVID-19 has affected daily life in unprecedented ways. Data studies on mental and physical health before and during and after the pandemic, has revealed the dramatic changes in physical activity, sleep, time use, and mental health. Health includes both mental and physical health, since both are of utmost importance and an imbalance in either can cause havoc in one's daily life.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

- State of the Research: Physical and Mental Health Benefits of Mindfulness-Based Interventions for Children and Adolescents
  1. Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Keck School of Medicine, University of Southern California, 2250 Alcazar Street, CSC, Suite 2200, Los Angeles, CA 90033, USA
  2. Institute of Positive Psychology and Education, Australian Catholic University, North Sydney, New South Wales, Australia
- Physical activity and mental health in children and adolescents: a review of reviews
  1. Correspondence to Professor Stuart Biddle, Physical Activity and Public Health, School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences, Loughborough University, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 3TU, UK; (Iboro)
- The High Prevalence of Poor Physical Health and Unhealthy Lifestyle Behaviours in Individuals with Severe Mental Illness - David Scott , BHM (Hons), PhD & Brenda Happell, PhD, RN Pages 589-597 | Published online: (Tandfonline, 23 Aug 2011)

## DISCUSSION

### □ Mental Health

#### Introduction to Mental Health

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being (Medlineplus, 2022). It affects how we think, feel, and act as we cope with life and also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make

choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood and aging. Therefore, any imbalance in our mental health can impair our day-to-day life to a great extent. What the eye cannot see but the head and heart can feel and often it is a feeling of hopelessness that causes the affected person to suffer to an extent that he/she is unable to perform his/her day-to-day activities and function poorly at work, school and in the family. This is what roughly 10 percent of America's teenagers and young adults are facing today. Depression has been acknowledged as a leading cause of disability worldwide and is a major contributor to the overall global burden of disease.

### **The Importance of Mental Health**

An individual's mental health plays a vital role in shaping a healthy society and nation. The recent pandemic has impacted our lives in an extraordinary way and has posed many challenges in our day-to-day lives. However, one of the greatest impacts of the pandemic has been seen on the physical and mental health of humanity. The first year of the COVID-19 pandemic has seen an increase of almost 25% in anxiety and depression across the world according to a scientific brief released by the World Health Organization (WHO) in March 2022 (WHO, 2022). The brief also highlights who has been most affected and summarizes the effect of the pandemic on the availability of mental health services and how this has changed during the pandemic. Concerns about potential increases in mental health conditions had already prompted 90% of countries surveyed to include mental health and psychosocial support in their COVID-19 response plans, but major gaps and concerns remain (WHO, 2022). However, a huge majority of students, businessmen, teachers, doctors, to name a few suffer from health issues directly, which has an impact on one's physical well-being and if left untreated could ultimately lead to severe health concern.

### **Suggestions on Tackling Mental Health Issues**

In 2020, the WHO published its guidelines on '*Doing What Matters in Times of Stress: An Illustrated Guide*', which is a simple illustrated document highlighting various causes of stress and anxiety and a for coping with this adversity. This guide aims to equip people with practical skills to help cope with stress. The most important aspect of coping with mental health issues is to focus on physical wellbeing. This includes getting regular exercise and rest as well as ensuring that our diet and nutrition is adequate.

Fortunately, there has been a steady increase in the awareness behind these problems and how to combat them. World Mental Health Day was first observed on October 10, 1992, initiated by the World Federation for Mental Health, a global organization with participation by over 150 member nations (WHO, 2022). Every year, this day is observed around the world to raise awareness about the significance of mental wellness. The day highlights the significance of how the efforts in this direction and how more needs to be done. This is of utmost importance in recent times as according to the WHO, depression is one of the leading causes of disability, and suicide is the fourth leading cause of death among those in the 15 to 29 age group (WHO, 2021).

## **Physical Health**

### **Introduction to Physical Health**

This section attempts to address the topic of physical health; the issues surrounding it, why it still persists and what we can do to combat it. Firstly, physical health is characterized as the state of your body, taking into account everything ranging from the absence of illness to your degree of fitness. For total well-being, physical health is essential, and it can be impacted by many factors such as eating habits, degree of exercise, and actions (such as smoking) (Eupati.eu). Many issues surround physical health, which are influenced by several factors, for example, the degree of exercise, lack of motivation, the type of food, environment, and stress. This in turn leads to health conditions such as diabetes, obesity, cancer, and heart disease. Physical health issues also persist because of lack of awareness in underdeveloped and poverty-stricken places around the world.

### **Importance of Physical Health**

It is a known fact that that Mental health and physical health are closely connected and what is good for the body is often good for the mind. Physical activity is very important and is established to have mental health benefits. These are published in the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans and include improved brain health and cognitive function, a reduced risk of anxiety and depression, and improved sleep and overall quality of life. Increasing physical activity directly contributes to improved mental health and better overall health and well-being.

### **Suggestions on tackling Physical Health Issues**

Studies have proven that even small amounts of physical activity can immediately reduce symptoms of anxiety in adults and older adults. Research suggests that increased physical activity, can improve depression symptoms experienced by people across the lifespan and engaging in regular physical activity has also been shown to reduce the risk of developing depression in children and adults. We can combat physical health issues in many ways, some of which I will mention below. Going for walks or jogs, where we can start off slow with low intensity walks, walk for

five to ten minutes at a time daily. Once we have been able to do that, we can gradually go for higher intensity walks for 10 to 20 minutes. This can help maintain proper physical health by releasing endorphins (happy-hormones) and burning calories. Eating healthily is also very essential to have proper physical health. Our diet should include fruits, vegetables, carbohydrates, fibre, proteins, fats, and dairy. Healthy eating has many benefits such as strengthening our bodies, and mind since a healthy mind resides within a healthy body.

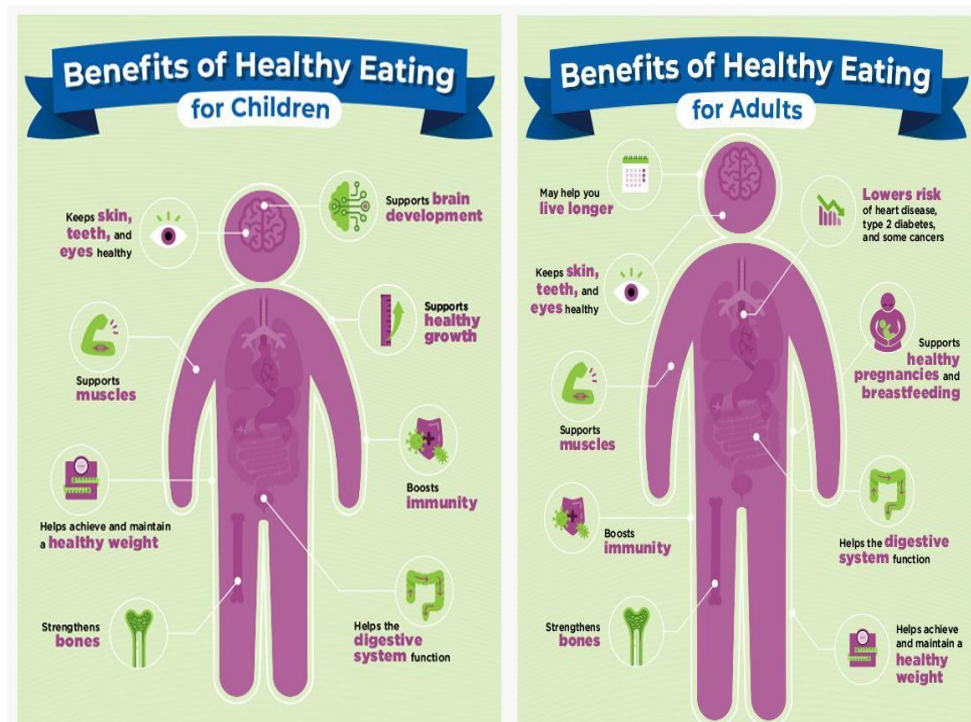


Figure 1: Benefits of Healthy Eating for Children and Adults

### CONCLUSION

We hereby conclude that in order to lead a healthy life, we need to focus on mental and physical health as both are equally important and an imbalance in either one can seriously impact our lives. The WHO has rightly stated that *“Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”*

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