

Mental Health Handbook

A handbook designed to help you care for your mental health

WELLNESS HANDBOOKS









Motivating and inspiring women to live happier lives through wellness and self-love

Mental Health Handbook

A handbook designed to help you care for your mental health



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NOT FOR SALE

Our eBooks are created with the intention of helping women lead more productive and happier lives. As such, they are free to download and share. However, if you would prefer a hard copy version, you can purchase one here.

ABOUT THE WRITER



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
1. <u>What is Mental Health?</u>	2
<u>2. How to Maintain Good Mental Health</u>	4
<u> 3. Positive Mental Health Habits</u>	5
<u>4. The Difference Between Mental Health and Mental Health Disorders</u>	19
5. Warning Signs of Mental Health Disorders	20
<u>6. The Prevalence of Mental Health Disorders</u>	22
7. Common Misconceptions about Mental Health	23
8. Treatment Options for Mental Health Disorders	25
<u>9. Seeking Professional Help for Mental Health</u>	2 6
<u>10. Techniques Used by Mental Health Professionals</u>	27
<u>11. The benefits of Therapy</u>	29
<u>12. The Stigma Associated with Mental Health</u>	31
<u>13. Support Systems for People with Mental Health</u> <u>Disorders</u>	32

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>14. How to Help Raise Mental Awareness</u>	33
<u>15. Mental Health Reminders</u>	34
<u>16. Learning to Choose your Battles</u>	35
17. Conclusion	37
Resources	38
<u>Founder's Note</u>	39
<u>More eBooks</u>	40

let's get started Q



INTRODUCTION

BEFORE WE START...

Disclaimer

This book is not a guide or solution to mental health disorders. The writer is not a psychologist or a mental health professional. If you suspect that you or anyone close to you is suffering from a mental health disorder, it is advisable to seek professional help. Options for that are listed <u>here.</u>

Mental health is essential to our overall wellness, yet it is often ignored or overlooked. Without good mental health, it is impossible to maintain a healthy and fulfilling life. This handbook covers the basics of mental health and gives tips on maintaining good mental health.

By following the tips in the handbook, you can make simple changes to your lifestyle that can make much difference in your mental health and overall well-being.



What is Mental Health?



Mental health is a state of overall well-being that encompasses the emotional, psychological, and social aspects of our lives. It's about how we think, feel, and behave daily. If you have good mental health, you're able to realize your own potential, work productively, manage the normal stresses of life, build healthy relationships, and make a positive contribution to your community. Poor mental health, on the other hand, can lead to issues such as anxiety, depression, and other mental health disorders.

The impact of mental health on daily life

Because our mental health affects the way we think, feel and behave, it has a significant impact on our daily life. When someone struggles with a mental health disorder, it can affect their ability to work, socialize, and enjoy life. For example, people who suffer from depression may struggle with getting out of bed in the morning, have difficulty concentrating at work, and lose interest in activities they once enjoyed. In the same vein, someone with an anxiety disorder may struggle with leaving the house or interacting with others, which can impact their ability to work or maintain relationships.

Additionally, poor mental health can also have a negative impact on your physical health.

-2-



Having good mental health is more than the absence of illness. Rather, it's a state of holistic well-being.



How to Maintain Good Mental Health



Habits are essentially patterns of behaviour that you repeat on a regular basis. These patterns can be either positive or negative. Positive habits can help you maintain good mental health, while negative habits can lead to poor mental health.

Habits are powerful because they can influence your thoughts, emotions, and behaviour. When you form positive habits, you create a structure in your life that supports your mental well-being. On the other hand, negative habits can lead to stress, anxiety, and depression.

Routine trackers are a great way of keeping track of your habits to ensure that you minimize unhealthy habits and increase healthy ones. WHEN YOU DO SOMETHING REPEATEDLY, EVEN UNCONSCIOUSLY, IT BECOMES A HABIT.

Good Mental Health Habits

Here are some habits that can help you maintain good mental health:







The next pages will tackle each of the habits in more detail to explain why they're helpful and how you can cultivate them to improve your mental health. Mental health journals can help you keep track of your habits.



It's OKAY to



Ask for personal space

PUT YOURSELF FIRST



Say No



take a break from everything





Choose your peace

Change your mind sometimes



Self-love & Acceptance



Self-love means having a high regard for your own well-being and happiness. It means taking care of your own needs and not sacrificing your well-being person to please others.

Research suggests that people with a high sense of self-love have a lower risk of developing anxiety or depression. This is because elements of self-love like self-compassion, self-care, and positive affirmations can help manage stress and anxiety. Constant selfdoubt and low self-esteem can lead to anxiety. Self-love helps you to develop a greater sense of worth, lessening the effects of trivial problems or minor failures on your mental health.

BE PROUD OF WHO YOU ARE

Be proud of who you are. Recognize and accept that there might be things you may not be good at, and focus more on what you can do well. We're all different. It's much healthier to accept that you're unique than to wish you were more like someone else. Feeling good about yourself boosts your confidence to learn new skills, visit new places and make new friends. Good selfesteem also helps you cope when things are difficult.

There is nothing wrong with wanting to change or improve certain aspects of yourself, but make sure that your expectations are realistic. If they are, then you can work toward the change in small steps. **#HABIT 2**

Talking about your Feelings



Keeping things bottled up is not good for your mental health. When you keep strong feelings inside you instead of talking it out, it stresses you mentally and may cause you to lash out at the worst moments. Talking can be a helpful way to cope with a problem you've been carrying around in your head for a while. Feeling listened to can also help you feel supported and validated. If you're not comfortable talking to anyone just yet, try journaling. Writing down your feelings is another way to "talk" without involving another person.

Remember that talking about your feelings is not a sign of weakness; it can help you clear your mind, release tension, and deal with difficult situations.



Positive social connections are essential for good mental health. When you spend time with family and friends, it can help you to reduce stress, improve your mood, and increase feelings of happiness and well-being. It is important to make time for social connections, even if it is just a quick phone call or text message each day. Building and maintaining strong relationships can help you feel more supported and connected, which is good for your mental health.



#HABIT 4 Letting go of Negativity

Letting go of negative situations and people is important for your mental health because negative situations can cause stress, anxiety, and other negative emotions that can take a toll on your mental well-being over time. You need to free yourself from the burden of negativity and focus on cultivating more positive experiences in your life. This can help to reduce stress, improve your mood, and promote a greater sense of overall well-being. Additionally, letting go of negativity helps you to develop better-coping mechanisms and resilience, which can be valuable skills for managing stress and adversity in the future.

STRATEGIES FOR LETTING GO OF NEGATIVITY

I. Identify negative people and situations: Take some time to reflect on the people and situations that bring your spirit down, and consider how they affect your mental health.

2. Set boundaries: Setting healthy boundaries is crucial when dealing with negative people and situations. Communicate your needs clearly and assertively, and don't be afraid to say "no" when necessary.

3. Surround yourself with positivity: Spending more time with supportive friends and family members is an act of self-love toward yourself, and great for your mental health.

Remember that it is not always easy to let go of negative people and situations, but it is an important step towards improving your mental health and overall well-being.

#HABIT 5

Protecting your Space



Protecting your space means not entertaining things that upset or stress you in your environment. You can indirectly add to your stress by engaging in activities or actions that make you unhappy.

One of the environments that can affect your mental health the most is social media. Following people you don't like or whose content constantly irritates or upset you add to your mental stress. Fill your following with people you like whose content you enjoy, and you will find yourself happier.

Another way is engaging with trolls on social media. Trolls are called trolls for a reason, and there is nothing you can do to change their minds. Your mute and block buttons are there also for a reason. Be best friends with them and block any negativity. Muting friends who constantly bring negative content to your timeline is another way of taking care of your mental health.

Finally, endeavour to take social media breaks from time to time for your mental health.

Apart from social media, other content you consume could also impact your mental health negatively. Avoid regularly reading or watching content that leave you feeling morose, dejected or unworthy.



Setting Realistic Goals and Priorities

#HABIT 6

Setting realistic goals and priorities can help improve mental health. Goals provide a sense of direction and purpose, while priorities help you focus on what is most important at any point in time. When you're setting your goals and priorities, be realistic and specific. This can help reduce stress and anxiety over achieving them and increase your feelings of accomplishment and fulfillment when you do achieve them.



- A lot of people find it difficult to ask for help; nevertheless, developing the habit of asking for help when needed may be good for your mental health in a variety of ways.
- For starters, it can alleviate feelings of isolation and loneliness, which are both known to negatively affect mental health.
- It can also help you manage stress by reducing the burden of responsibility when you share your problems with others.
- Furthermore, asking for help can help you create stronger connections with your friends and family, which is good for your general well-being.
- Finally, it can help you to gain new perspectives on your problems and discover solutions you might not have considered otherwise. Remember that no man is an island, and asking for assistance is not a sign of weakness.

#HABIT 8

Affirmations & Positive Self-talk



Affirmations and positive self-talk are important because they can help you to overcome negative beliefs and thought patterns, replacing them with more positive and empowering ones. When you repeat affirmations or engage in positive selftalk, you are essentially reprogramming your subconscious mind to focus on the positive aspects of your life, rather than the negative ones. This can help you to build confidence, increase your self-esteem, and develop a more positive outlook on life. Additionally, research has shown that positive self-talk can help to reduce stress and anxiety, improve your mood, and enhance your overall well-being.

Saying affirmations early in the morning before you get out of bed can boost your mood and energy for the day. Listening to, or saying affirmations before bed can also help you go to bed relaxed and empowered, which can help you sleep better.

Hang inspirational and motivational wall art in your living space as another way to boost your confidence and self-worth.

You can download free audio affirmations from our website <u>here</u>, or printable motivational wall art <u>here</u>.



Taking Scheduled Breaks

#HABIT 9



Taking scheduled breaks is an act of self-care and can significantly improve your mental health in several ways.

- 1. For one, it can aid in the reduction of stress and the prevention of burnout, both of which can have negative effects on your mental health.
- 2. Secondly, it can help you focus and be more productive, allowing you to work more efficiently and successfully.
- 3. It can also improve your general well-being by improving your mood and energy levels.
- 4. Finally, taking breaks can allow you to indulge in activities that you enjoy or find relaxing, such as meditation, reading, or spending time with loved ones, all of which can benefit your mental health.

To promote your mental health and wellness, prioritize selfcare and take regular breaks throughout the day.



Practicing #HABIT 10 Mindfulness and Meditation

Mindfulness and meditation are two techniques that can benefit your mental health. Mindfulness is being in the now and being non-judgmentally aware of one's thoughts and feelings, whereas meditation involves focusing attention on a specific object, idea, or action. Both practices have been shown to help people cope with stress, anxiety, and depression. They can also help with sleep and cognitive function. Set aside a few minutes each day to stay calm and focus on your breath to practice mindfulness and meditation to improve your mental health.

#HABIT 11





Sleep is necessary for mental wellness. Your brain absorbs information and consolidates memories when you sleep. Sleep deprivation can cause irritation, mood fluctuations, and difficulties concentrating. It is essential to obtain enough sleep to be able to maintain excellent mental health. Sleep Foundation recommends that adults get 7-9 hours of sleep every night. Establish a regular sleep routine, avoid caffeine and alcohol before bedtime, and create a relaxing sleep environment to improve sleep quality.





Eating Healthy



Food is necessary not only for physical health but also for mental wellness. Eating a well-balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats will help you maintain excellent mental health. Certain nutrients, such as omega-3 fatty acids, vitamin D, and B vitamins, have been shown in studies to improve mental health. A diet heavy in processed foods, sugar, and saturated fats, on the other hand, can contribute to poor mental health.





Engaging in hobbies and interests can help improve mental health. Because hobbies are activities we enjoy, they provide a sense of purpose, fulfillment, and happiness. This means that they can also help reduce stress and anxiety. Pursuing hobbies can also improve your social life by connecting you with others who share similar interests. To maintain good mental health, make time for activities that you enjoy, whether it is reading, painting, playing music, or gardening.



Caring for Others



Caring for others can benefit your mental health in several of ways. It can give you a sense of purpose and meaning in life, increasing your emotions of happiness and contentment. Furthermore, caring for others can build your social connections and relationships with others, which can help to alleviate feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Doing acts of kindness has also been proven in studies to enhance the production of neurotransmitters in the brain such as serotonin and dopamine, both of which are associated with emotions of pleasure and well-being. Taking the time to help others can also help to shift your attention away from your own challenges and struggles, which can relieve anxiety and stress.

You can incorporate caring for others into your daily life by volunteering some time at a local charity or community organization, checking up on a friend or family member who may be struggling, or simply making it a point to offer kind words or gestures to people in need.

When you take time to care for other people, it helps you to improve your own mental health while also helping to make the world a better place.

PART 4

The difference between mental health and mental health disorders

Mental health encompasses our overall well-being, including our emotional, psychological, and social health. However, mental health disorders are specific conditions that have a profound impact on our mental health, potentially leading to significant changes in our thoughts, feelings, and behaviour. Experts have coined various phrases such as "good mental health," "positive mental health," "mental well-being," and "subjective well-being" to stress that mental health is about wellness, not just illness. Others have used a continuum approach to illustrate the difference, with mental health situated at the positive end of the spectrum, characterized by feeling good and functioning well, while mental health conditions (or mental illness) occupy the negative end, characterized by symptoms that affect individuals' thoughts, feelings, and behaviour.

Examples of mental health disorders include anxiety disorders, depression, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia. It's essential to prioritize mental health to prevent or manage mental health disorders and maintain a healthy and fulfilling life.



Warning signs of mental health disorders

It is estimated that 50% of mental illness begins **by age 14.** Recognizing the warning signs of a mental health disorder is crucial for getting help and receiving proper treatment early. Some common warning signs include:

- Inability to function as you normally did.
- Feeling sad or down for an extended period of time.
- Losing interest in partaking in general activities and activities you once enjoyed.
- Odd, uncharacteristic or strange behaviour.
- Changes in appetite or sleep patterns.
- Feeling anxious or worried most of the time.
- Difficulty in thinking logically, concentrating or making decisions.
- Feeling disconnected from yourself or your surroundings.
- Constantly feeling irritable or angry.
- Thoughts of self-harm or suicide.
- Constant feelings of pessimism.

Just one or two of these symptoms alone may not be an indication of a mental health disorder. However, it may require further evaluation. If you or someone you know is experiencing several of these symptoms, it is advisable to seek help from a mental health professional.

YOU ARE MALONE

will be affected by mental or neurological disorders at some point in their lives

I IN 4 PEOPLE

-World Health Organisation



PART 6

The prevalence of Mental Health Disorders

Mental health disorders are more common than you might think. According to the World Health Organization, 1 in 4 people in the world will be affected by mental or neurological disorders at some point in their lives. These disorders can range from mild to severe and can impact a person's ability to function in daily life. Some common mental health disorders include anxiety disorders, mood disorders, psychotic disorders, eating disorders, and personality disorders.

It is important to note that mental health disorders are not a sign of weakness or personal failure. They are medical conditions that require treatment, just like any other health condition. It is also important to recognize that mental health disorders can affect anyone, regardless of age, gender, race, or socioeconomic status.



-22-

THAN JUSA OKAT

PART 7

Common Misconceptions about Mental Health



There are many misconceptions and stigmas surrounding mental health that can prevent individuals from seeking help or receiving proper treatment. The most common misconceptions are:

1. Mental Health disorders are rare.

One common misconception is that mental health disorders are rare or uncommon. As mentioned earlier, mental health disorders are actually quite prevalent and according to the World Health Orgnisation, affects one in every four peolple.

2. Mental Health disorders are a result of personal weakness.

Another misconception is that mental health disorders are a result of personal weakness or lack of willpower. This is simply not true. Mental health disorders are medical conditions that require treatment, just like any other health condition.

3. People should be left to handle their mental health problems

Just as you would expect to receive help from friends or family if you are bleeding or unconscious, you should not feel as if you have to handle everything by yourself and reject help for mental health issues when it is offered. Having people who care about you around helps to improve mental health and makes it easier to get help for disorders.



4. Mental Health challenges affect only a certain group of people.

Anybody at all can struggle from mental health disorders regardless of class, age or position. It is important to take care of your mental health and be alert for the signs so that you or anyone close to you who may be affected can get help. Getting help early can make a world of difference.

5. Getting help for mental health makes you weak.

Mental health, just like physical health, adds to your general well-being. It is difficult to go about your daily routine and be productive and happy if you have mental health problems. Just as you seek medical attention when you're physically ill, you should make sure your mental health is healthy and seek help when you see signs that suggest that it may not be.

6. Mental Health disorders are not treatable

Finally, there is a misconception that mental health disorders are not treatable. This is also not true. While some mental health disorders may be more challenging to treat than others, there are a variety of effective treatments available, including therapy, medication, and lifestyle changes.



Treatment Options for Mental Health Disorders

There are a variety of treatment options available for mental health disorders. They include:

- **Therapy:** talking to a mental health professional can be very helpful in treating mental health issues. Therapy can take many forms, including cognitive-behavioural therapy, psychodynamic therapy, and behavioural therapy.
- Medication: some mental health disorders can be treated with medication, such as antidepressants or antipsychotics. It is important to work with a psychiatrist to determine the right medication and dosage for your specific needs.
- Lifestyle changes: making changes to your lifestyle, such as exercising regularly, eating a healthy diet, and getting enough sleep, can also be helpful in improving mental health.

The right treatment plan for your specific needs can only be determined by working with a mental health professional.



PART 9

Seeking Professional Help for Mental Health



If you or someone you know is struggling with mental health issues, it is important to seek professional help. There are many different types of mental health professionals who can provide support and treatment, including:

- **Psychiatrists:** medical doctors who specialize in mental health disorders and can prescribe medication.
- **Clinical & Occupational Psychologists:** mental health professionals who can provide therapy and counselling.
- **Counsellors:** professionals who can provide therapy and counselling.
- **Psychotherapists:** professionals who have undergone specialist training in psychotherapy and use talk therapy to treat people for emotional problems and mental illnesses.
- Well-Being Practitioners: are trained to assess and support people with common mental health problems; primarily depression and anxiety disorders.

It is important to find a mental health professional who is a good fit for you and your specific needs. This may require some research or trial and error, but it is worth it to find the right support. There is a list of websites where you can find a therapist worldwide on our <u>resources page</u>.



Some Techniques used by Mental Health Professionals



Mental health professionals use different methods to help their patients. Below are some techniques and approaches that mental health professionals employ to help their patients.

- **Individual therapy:** also known as psychotherapy or counselling, involves individuals working one-on-one with a trained therapist to explore mental health concerns.
- **Family therapy:** therapy that involves working with couples and families to improve communication and resolve conflicts.
- **Group therapy:** In this type of therapy, professionals lead therapy sessions for groups of individuals who share similar mental health concerns.

Some of the techniques employed in individual therapy are:

- **Psychodynamic therapy:** therapy that focuses on understanding the unconscious thoughts and feelings that contribute to your actions. Useful for addressing conditions such as depression, anxiety, eating disorders, etc.
- **Cognitive-behavioural therepy:** this kind of therapy involves helping people to identify and change negative thought patterns and behaviours. Useful for addressing



conditions such as anxiety and phobias, eating disorders substance use disorders, OCD, insomnia, etc.

- Behavioural therapy: focuses on understanding behaviour patterns that develop from things you learned in the past which contribute to negative reactions and responses that affect your mental health. Useful for addressing substance use disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), oppositional and defiant behaviours, phobias, etc.
- Humanistic therapy: involves helping you understand how your worldview affects the choices you make that cause distress and therapists offer guidance and support to help you achieve your goals and be your true self without interpreting your feelings for you. Useful for addressing self-esteem issues, difficulty coping with chronic health concerns, effects of trauma, depression, relationship issues

Other types of therapy techniques and methods include play therapy, creative art therapy, animal-assisted therapy and music therapy. Read <u>here</u> for the full and detailed list of therapy methods.

It is important to note that most professionals use an integrative approach that involves a combination of different techniques. The techniques employed depend on your needs and the situation being tackled. Your therapist will work with you to determine what would suit you best.



PART 11

The Benefits of Therapy



1. Gives you a safe space

Therapy can provide a safe space by offering a confidential and non-judgmental environment where you can freely express your thoughts and emotions without fear of being judged or rejected. A skilled therapist can create a safe and supportive atmosphere that allows you to open up and explore your deepest concerns and fears. This safe space can be especially helpful for people who may not feel comfortable sharing their thoughts or feelings with friends or family members.

2. Provides mental clarity

Therapy provides mental clarity because it helps you to identify and understand your feelings and emotions better. A skilled therapist can provide a safe and non-judgmental space for you to explore your thoughts and experiences, which can lead to increased self-awareness and give you a better understanding of your own motivations and behaviours. This increased clarity can help you make more informed decisions, set appropriate boundaries, and develop healthier coping mechanisms. Additionally, therapy can provide tools and techniques for managing stress and anxiety, which can further contribute to mental clarity and overall well-being.



3. Saying your fears out loud make them less scary

Saying your fears out loud in therapy can be a powerful way to confront and overcome them. Sharing your fears with a trained therapist helps you to gain a new perspective on them and learn healthy ways to manage them. It can also help you identify the underlying causes of your anxiety or stress, letting you address them directly and develop coping strategies that work for you.

In addition, sharing your fears in a safe and supportive environment can help to reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness, and promote feelings of connection and understanding. Ultimately, confronting your fears in therapy can help you build confidence and resilience, leading to better mental health and well-being. Some fears once said aloud, are already less scary.

4. Gives your life some order and help you know yourself better

Therapy can give your life order by helping you to identify your priorities, values, and goals. The right therapist can help you to organize your thoughts and develop a plan of action that aligns with your personal values and goals, helping you to prioritize what is important.

Therapy can also help you explore your thoughts and feelings and gain a better understanding of your own strengths and weaknesses, which can lead to increased self-awareness. This increased self-awareness enables you to set appropriate boundaries, make better choices, and more informed decisions.



Unfortunately, there is still a lot of stigma surrounding mental health disorders. This can prevent people from seeking help or receiving proper treatment. It is important to recognize that mental health disorders are medical conditions that require treatment, just like any other health condition.

Raising awareness about mental health and reducing stigma can help people feel more comfortable seeking help and receiving treatment. This can include talking openly about mental health, sharing personal experiences, and advocating for mental health resources and support.





Support Systems for People with Mental Health Disorders

Having a strong support system can be very beneficial for people with mental health disorders. This can include family members, friends, support groups, and mental health professionals. It is important to have people in your life whom you can talk to and who can provide emotional support.

Mental health professionals can provide guidance and support, and can also help connect individuals with community resources.

Support groups can also be very helpful, as they provide a space for people to connect with others who are going through similar experiences. They could be physical or online, created and managed by mental health professionals, or led by peers.





How to Help in Raising Awareness about Mental Health

Raising awareness about mental health is crucial for reducing stigma and ensuring that individuals receive the support and treatment they need. There are many ways to raise awareness about mental health, including:

- Sharing personal experiences: sharing your own experiences with mental health can help reduce stigma and encourage others to seek help.
- Advocating for mental health resources: advocating for mental health resources and support can help ensure that people have access to the help they need.
- Educating others: educating others about mental health and the importance of seeking help can also be helpful in reducing stigma.



-33-



PART 15

Mental Health Reminders



When you feel lke	
Comparing yourself	Embrace your uniqueness
Instead of	
Burning out at work	Take intentional breaks
When you start	
Doubting yourself	Remember how far you've come
When you're	
Feeling lonely	Talk to a loved one
When you feel like	
Giving Up	Pause and try again tomorrow



PART 16

Learning to Choose your Battles

One of the best things you can do for your mental health is to understand that you can't control everything around you. Trying to change things that are beyond your control can frustrate and stress you, taking a toll on your mental health. Know the things that you can control and focus on those.

🖕 Things You Can Control

- O1. Your attitude and mindset
- 02. Personal choices and decisions
- 03. Time management and daily routines
- 04. Setting and pursuing personal goals
- 05. Your response to challenges and setbacks

Things You Can't Control

- O1. The actions and choices of other people
- 02. The outcomes of your efforts
- 03. What other people think of you
- 04. The past and its effects on your present
- 05. The opinions and judgments of others

Final Reminders





















Conclusion



Mental health is an essential aspect of your overall wellness, and it requires attention and care. Understanding mental health is crucial for maintaining a healthy and fulfilling life. By recognizing the warning signs of mental health disorders, seeking professional help where needed, and finding coping mechanisms that work for you, you can prioritize your mental health and improve your overall well-being.

Remember, mental health disorders are not a sign of weakness or personal failure. They are medical conditions that require treatment, and there is help available.





Resources

The resources used to write this book are:

<u>World Health Organisation</u> <u>Sleep Foundation</u> <u>American Psychaitric Association</u> <u>Unicef Parenting</u> <u>Psychology Today</u>

Find a Mental Health Professional

<u>Better Help</u> <u>International Therapist Directory</u> <u>Good Therapy</u> <u>Zen Care</u>

Resource Downloads

<u>Affirmation audios</u> <u>Printable Downloads</u>

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THANK YOU FOR READING!



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MORE INFO ON WWW.BETTERTHANJUSTOKAY.COM

I hope that this ebook will be beneficial in helping you have better mental health. For the best outcome, please download the mental health workbook as well so that you can keep track of your habits and mental health. I wish you the absolute best in your endeavours, and a life that is better than just okay.

Stephanie Antwi

Founder, Better Than Just Okay

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