



# Mental Health Overview

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we feel, think, and act. It 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.

## What is a mental illness?

Someone has a mental illness when they have one or more symptoms that affect their thoughts, feelings or behaviors. These symptoms must cause difficulty with life's normal demands and routines. Mental illness is sometimes caused by a direct event, but can occur "out of the blue".

## Heart health and mental health are connected:

- Mental illness and stress are significant risk factors for heart disease.
- Mental illness and stress can trigger heart attacks.
- Mental illness and stress can be a barrier to healthcare and heart healthy activities.

## Early Warning Signs

Not sure if you or someone you know is living with mental health problems? One or more of the following feelings or behaviors can be an early warning sign of a mental illness:

- Confused thinking
- Social withdrawal
- Major changes in eating, sleeping, or social habits
- Strong feelings of anger
- Growing inability to cope with daily problems and activities
- Unexplained physical complaints
- Alcohol or Substance use

## Mental Health and Wellness

Ways to maintain positive mental health include:

- Getting professional help if you need it
- Getting physically active
- Eating healthy
- Connecting with others
- Relaxation exercises
- Getting enough sleep
- Learning more about the brain





Community Heart  
Health Actions for  
Latinos at Risk

## Lista de Referencias de Salud Mental Mental Health Referral List

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***Dahlia Campus for Health and  
Well-Being  
(Mental Health Center of Denver)***  
3401 Eudora Street  
Denver, CO 80207  
T: (303) 300-6333

***Wellshire Behavioral Services  
(Mental Health Center of Denver)***  
4141 E Dickenson Place  
Denver, CO 80222  
T: (202) 504-6565

***Clinica Tepeyac***  
507 Lincoln St.  
Denver, CO 80216  
T: (303) 458-5302  
[www.clinicatepeyac.org](http://www.clinicatepeyac.org)

***Aurora Mental Health Center /  
El Centro de Salud***  
(varias ubicaciones)  
T: (303) 617-2300  
<https://www.aumhc.org>

***Heart Centered Counseling***  
Servicios de salud mental por teléfono.  
T: (970)310-3406  
<https://heartcenteredcounselors.com/>

***Recovery Center  
(Mental Health Center of Denver)***  
4455 E 12<sup>th</sup> Ave,  
Denver, CO 80220  
T: (303) 504-7700

***El Centro de las Familias  
(Mental Health Center of Denver)***  
75 Meade Street  
Denver, CO 80219  
T: (303) 504-7900

***Servicios de la Raza***  
4055 Tejon St.  
Denver, CO 80211  
T: (303)458-5851  
[www.serviciosdelaraza.org](http://www.serviciosdelaraza.org)

***Colorado Crisis Services***  
Servicios de crisis sin cita previa  
abiertos las 24 horas del día.  
T: 1-844-93-8255  
<http://coloradocrisisservices.org/>

***Línea Nacional para la Prevención  
del Suicidio***  
En Inglés: 1-800-273-8255  
En Español: 1-888-628-9454  
[www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)





## 10 Relaxation Exercises to Reduce Stress

1. **MEDITATE:** SIT UP STRAIGHT WITH BOTH FEET ON THE FLOOR. CLOSE YOUR EYES. FOCUS YOUR ATTENTION ON RECITING -- OUT LOUD OR SILENTLY -- A POSITIVE MANTRA SUCH AS "I FEEL AT PEACE" OR "I LOVE MYSELF." PLACE ONE HAND ON YOUR BELLY TO SYNC THE MANTRA WITH YOUR BREATHS. LET ANY DISTRACTING THOUGHTS FLOAT BY LIKE CLOUDS.
2. **BREATHE DEEPLY:** TAKE A 5-MINUTE BREAK AND FOCUS ON YOUR BREATHING. SIT UP STRAIGHT, EYES CLOSED, WITH A HAND ON YOUR BELLY. SLOWLY INHALE THROUGH YOUR NOSE, FEELING THE BREATH START IN YOUR ABDOMEN AND WORK ITS WAY TO THE TOP OF YOUR HEAD. REVERSE THE PROCESS AS YOU EXHALE THROUGH YOUR MOUTH.
3. **BE PRESENT:** TAKE 5 MINUTES AND FOCUS ON ONLY ONE BEHAVIOR WITH AWARENESS. NOTICE HOW THE AIR FEELS ON YOUR FACE WHEN YOU'RE WALKING AND HOW YOUR FEET FEEL HITTING THE GROUND. ENJOY THE TEXTURE AND TASTE OF EACH BITE OF FOOD. WHEN YOU SPEND TIME IN THE MOMENT AND FOCUS ON YOUR SENSES, YOU SHOULD FEEL LESS TENSE.
4. **REACH OUT:** YOUR SOCIAL CIRCLE IS ONE OF YOUR BEST TOOLS FOR HANDLING STRESS. TALK TO OTHERS -- PREFERABLY FACE TO FACE, OR AT LEAST ON THE PHONE. SHARE WHAT'S GOING ON. YOU CAN GET A FRESH PERSPECTIVE WHILE KEEPING YOUR CONNECTION STRONG.
5. **TUNE INTO YOUR BODY:** MENTALLY SCAN YOUR BODY TO GET A SENSE OF HOW STRESS AFFECTS IT EACH DAY. LIE ON YOUR BACK, OR SIT WITH YOUR FEET ON THE FLOOR. START AT YOUR TOES AND WORK YOUR WAY UP TO YOUR SCALP, NOTICING HOW YOUR BODY FEELS.

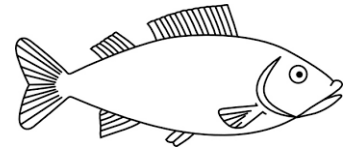


6. **DECOMPRESS:** PLACE A WARM HEAT WRAP AROUND YOUR NECK AND SHOULDERS FOR 10 MINUTES. CLOSE YOUR EYES AND RELAX YOUR FACE, NECK, UPPER CHEST, AND BACK MUSCLES. REMOVE THE WRAP, AND USE A TENNIS BALL OR FOAM ROLLER TO MASSAGE AWAY TENSION.
  
7. **LAUGH OUT LOUD:** A GOOD BELLY LAUGH DOESN'T JUST LIGHTEN THE LOAD MENTALLY. IT LOWERS CORTISOL, YOUR BODY'S STRESS HORMONE, AND BOOSTS BRAIN CHEMICALS CALLED ENDORPHINS, WHICH HELP YOUR MOOD. LIGHTEN UP BY TUNING IN TO YOUR FAVORITE SITCOM OR VIDEO, READING THE COMICS, OR CHATTING WITH SOMEONE WHO MAKES YOU SMILE.
  
8. **CRANK UP THE TUNES:** LISTENING TO SOOTHING MUSIC CAN LOWER BLOOD PRESSURE, HEART RATE, AND ANXIETY. CREATE A PLAYLIST OF SONGS OR NATURE SOUNDS (THE OCEAN, A BUBBLING BROOK, BIRDS CHIRPING), AND ALLOW YOUR MIND TO FOCUS ON THE DIFFERENT MELODIES, INSTRUMENTS, OR SINGERS IN THE PIECE. YOU ALSO CAN BLOW OFF STEAM BY ROCKING OUT TO MORE UPBEAT TUNES -- OR SINGING AT THE TOP OF YOUR LUNGS!
  
9. **GET MOVING:** YOU DON'T HAVE TO RUN IN ORDER TO GET A RUNNER'S HIGH. ALL FORMS OF EXERCISE, INCLUDING YOGA AND WALKING, CAN EASE DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY BY HELPING THE BRAIN RELEASE FEEL-GOOD CHEMICALS AND BY GIVING YOUR BODY A CHANCE TO PRACTICE DEALING WITH STRESS. YOU CAN GO FOR A QUICK WALK AROUND THE BLOCK, TAKE THE STAIRS UP AND DOWN A FEW FLIGHTS, OR DO SOME STRETCHING EXERCISES LIKE HEAD ROLLS AND SHOULDER SHRUGS.
  
10. **CELEBRATE:** DON'T FORGET TO CELEBRATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS LIKE MASTERING A NEW TASK AT WORK OR A NEW HOBBY.



## Brain Healthy Foods

FISH HAS HEALTHY FAT, CALLED OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS, THAT HELPS OUR BRAIN PRODUCE CHEMICALS RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR MOOD. FISH CAN HELP REDUCE SOME SYMPTOMS OF SOME MENTAL HEALTH ILLNESSES LIKE DEPRESSION.



WHOLE GRAINS HELP US FEEL FULL LONGER AND PROVIDE A STEADY SOURCE OF FUEL FOR THE BRAIN AND BODY. HEALTHY SOURCES OF WHOLE GRAINS INCLUDE WHOLE WHEAT BREAD, OATS AND WILD RICE.

PROTEIN INFLUENCES MOOD BY PRODUCING A BRAIN CHEMICAL CALLED SEROTONIN. LEAN PROTEIN, LIKE FISH, TURKEY, CHICKEN, EGGS AND BEANS, HELPS KEEP SEROTONIN LEVELS BALANCED AND CAN REDUCE SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY AND IMPROVE OVERALL BRAIN HEALTH.



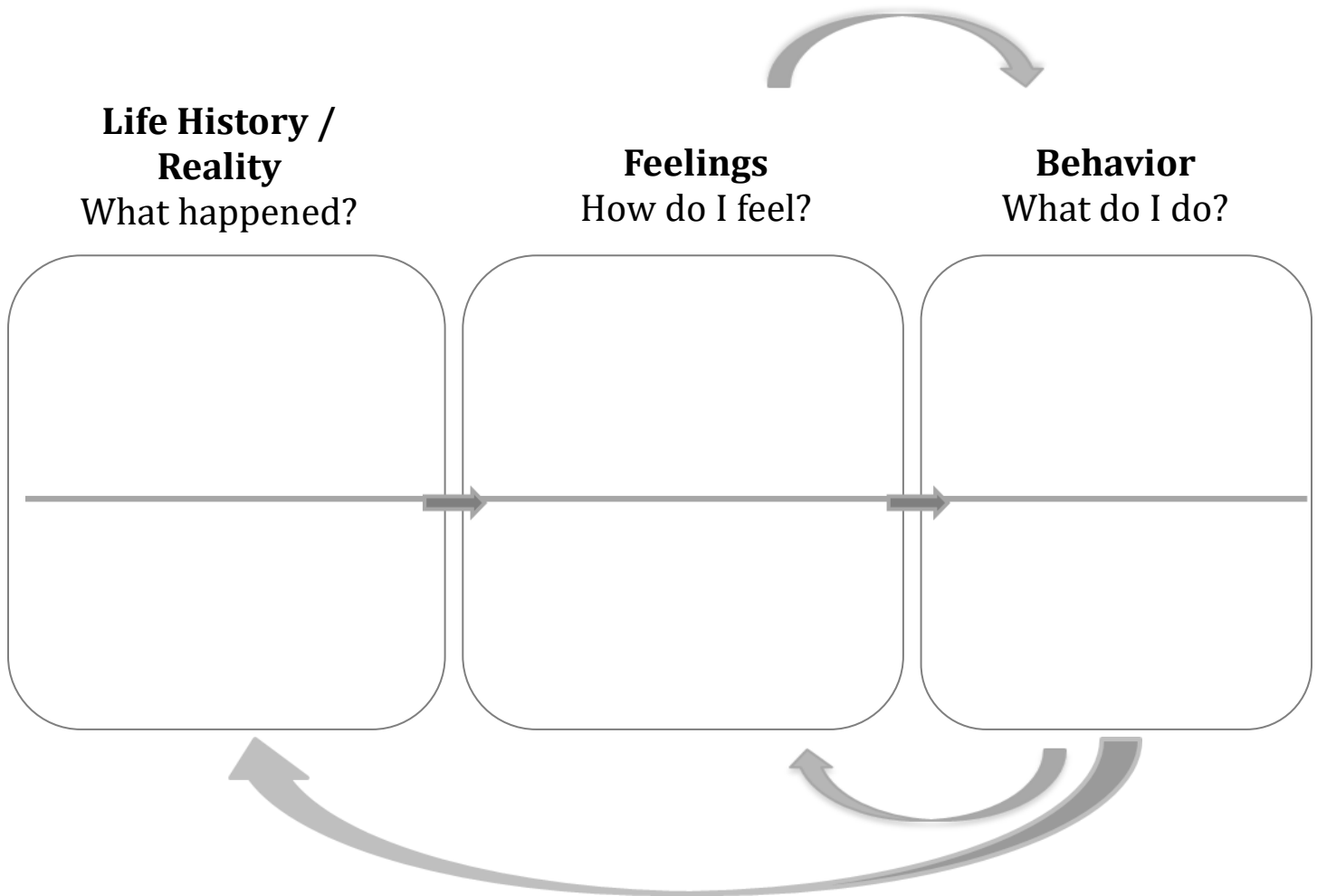
LEAFY GREENS LIKE SPINACH, ROMAINE AND BROCCOLI ARE HIGH IN FOLIC ACID, WHICH IS LINKED WITH LOWER RATES OF DEPRESSION, FATIGUE AND INSOMNIA.

FERMENTED FOODS LIKE YOGURT CONTAIN HEALTHY BACTERIA WHICH CAN REDUCE ANXIETY AND STRESS HORMONES



# Our Mind: Our Actions

Think of a behavior that you would like to change (big or small). Fill in the boxes below to identify the factors in your life and feelings that contribute to this behavior. Then describe the short and long-term effects of the behavior by completing the sentences below.



In the short term, I feel better when I **behavior** because it gives me a break.

In the long term, I continue to feel **stressed**

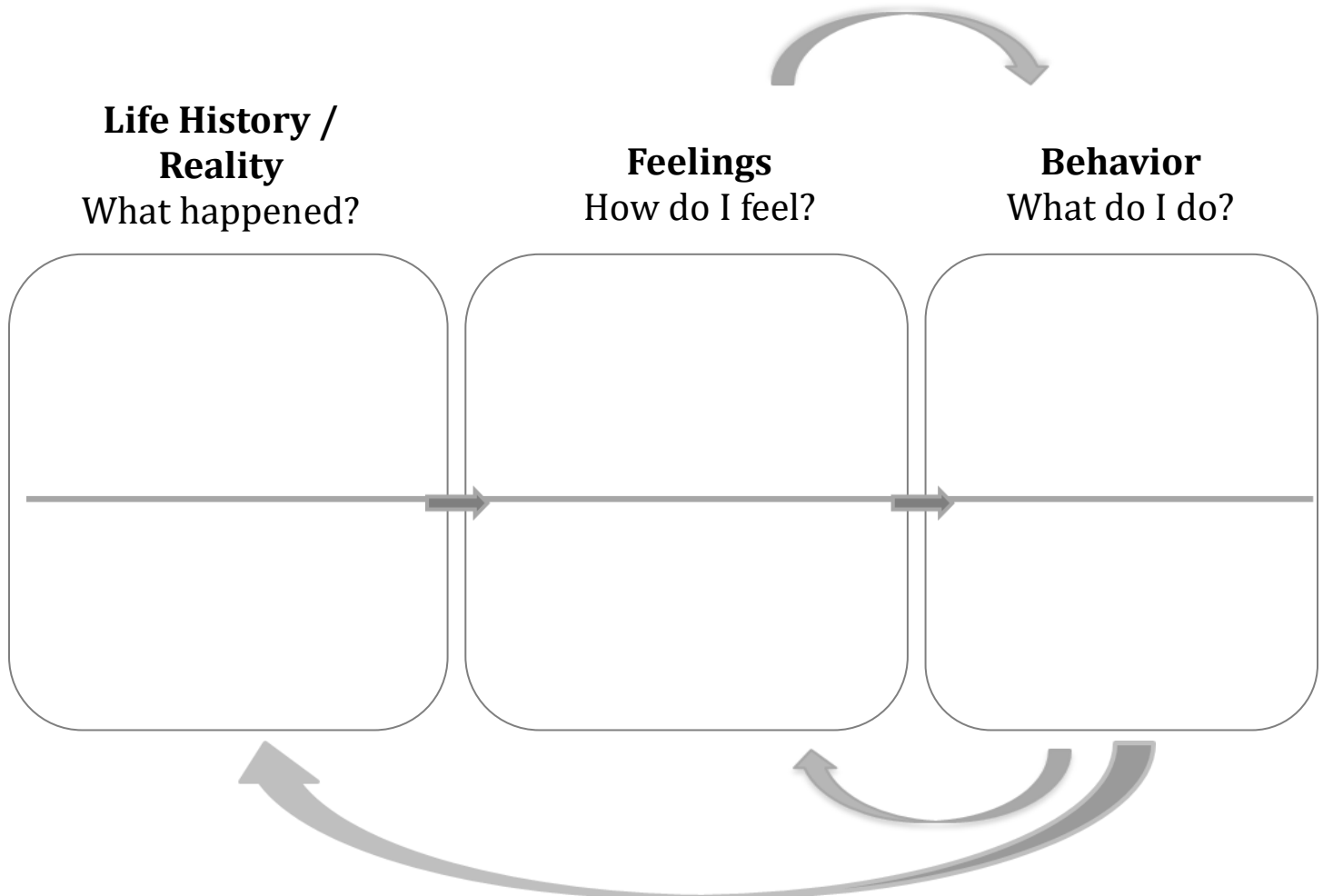
When this cycle happens for a long time, **new problems arise or continue.**

**Weekly Goal: Name one concrete behavioral change that could interrupt this cycle:**

# Our Mind: Our Actions

## Week 2: Example with Julieta

Julieta is a middle-aged Latina woman who has high blood pressure and is overweight. Julieta works and has three children. She also cares for her elderly mother who is sick. Caring for her mother every day, on top of her husband and kids, is really stressful. All of these additional responsibilities, in addition to the emotional challenges, are really difficult for her and make Julieta feel overwhelmed. She feels that there are not enough hours in the day to do everything, and Julieta feels anxious. In Julieta's case, she overeats unhealthy foods when she feels stressed.



In the short term, I feel better when I **behavior** because **it gives me a break.**

In the long term, I continue to feel **stressed**

When this cycle happens for a long time, **new problems arise or continue.**

**Weekly Goal: Name one concrete behavioral change that could interrupt this cycle:**

# Tender Care for a Happy Brain

Choose one or two action items from this handout that you would like to do during each week of the training. Then, write down the date that you completed each action.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Date</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Say something nice, positive, or uplifting to someone.	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Call a friend you have not seen for a long time.	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Allow additional time to do things and get to places without rushing.	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Look at yourself in the mirror and say, "I am special and unique."	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Try a new hobby such as arts and crafts.	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Write down how you feel.	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Look for an activity that will allow you to make new friends.	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> At the end of the day, think about the things that were good and the things you can improve.	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Show gratitude to at least five people.	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Rest. Go to bed 1 hour earlier than usual.	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Tell your loved ones that you love them.	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Listen to soft music to relax.	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Do something nice for someone.	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Help someone in need.	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Think about three things that make you happy.	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Plant a garden.	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Value what you have, and try to see the positive side of things.	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Be thankful for your family.	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Do something special for yourself.	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Seek support in your faith community.	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Laugh and be positive. If you like jokes, tell one.	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Speak calmly. Do not yell or scream.	_____
		<input type="checkbox"/> Take 15 minutes to breathe deeply and relax.	_____
		<input type="checkbox"/> Be kind to someone with whom you have differences.	_____