

Resolve to Improve Your Emotional Health This New Year



By Eileen Wittig

A lot of us are thinking about our health as we look ahead to the new year: Thinking about the gym, how much sugar we eat, how often we choose the less healthy option for lunch, etc. But what about our emotional health?

When we are emotionally healthy, we have a strong foundation from which to navigate the natural ups and downs of life. We build and maintain healthy relationships, in which we feel safe to express our own needs and have them met. We find time in our busy lives to maintain self-care and support our sense of groundedness and balance, including everything from good sleep hygiene to movement to our own quiet time. We are more resilient and can better rebound from the hard times that happen to us all, whether that be a job transition, the loss of a loved one, or a mental illness that affects some 1 in 5 adults every year.

So as you're thinking about improving yourself and your life this coming year, here are some things to consider to improve your emotional health:

- **Meet up with old friends.** Life is busy. But social connectivity supports and recharges us to get through it. Reach out to friends you haven't talked to in a while to catch up, and use the opportunity to find a new place to meet up and explore.

- **Start a new hobby.** It doesn't have to be a big commitment or expensive, like weekly hiking trips or horseback riding. As long as it's something that calms you in the moment and lets you focus on something that isn't stressful, it's helpful. Try puzzles, coloring as you listen to an audiobook, or starting a kitchen herb garden to add fresh flavor to your meals.
- **Stretch.** It's good for your body, but it also calms, grounds, and centers you. Give it a couple minutes each day to improve your mindfulness as well as your flexibility. But remember: It should not be painful. If you feel any pain, you're pushing yourself too hard.
- **Improve your mornings.** Use mornings to set the tone for the rest of your day. If you usually wake up as late as possible and rush getting ready, wake up a little earlier and take your time preparing for the day. If you normally skip breakfast or your morning vitamins, commit to eating something before you walk out the door and put your vitamins by your coffee or work bag so you don't forget to take them. If you tend to wake up frustrated or upset in the mornings, take some time before bed every night to think of something to get excited for the next day.
- **Learn to identify the nuances of your emotions.** It's easy to simply say you're angry when you're actually frustrated, disappointed, nervous, or skeptical. But lumping your emotions into just a few broad categories overly simplifies your experience and often does not let you get at the root cause of what you're feeling. Check out [this emotion wheel](#) as a starting point.
- **Accept that bad things will happen and negative emotions will come -- and that's okay.** Life is a constant shift of ups and downs. It's natural for things to go wrong and to react to them with anger, disappointment, or confusion. Being emotionally healthy doesn't mean that you're happy all the time or that life's bad turns don't affect you emotionally. It means that you know how to express and use your emotions appropriately, and the first step is to accept that negative emotions are valid.
- **Try therapy.** It's not just for diagnosing mental disorders or solving severe problems -- it's also for expert support to help navigate the natural ups and downs that will come with the new year.

Eileen Wittig is the Marketing Associate at Headway. She is thrilled to use her writing and research experience to help serve the emotional and mental health needs of as many people as possible.