

# Bay Counseling Clinic, LLP

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## Healthy Lifestyle Changes to Improve Mental Health

**Exercise:** There are many research studies that have proven the positive effects of exercise on mental health.

- ❖ Raise your heart rate for 30 minutes at least 5 times per week.

**Nutrition:** The majority of your total intake of food should come from veggies, fruits, grains, and fish.

- ❖ Veggies and fruit – Try to eat some of every color daily.
- ❖ Multigrain/Whole wheat products – keep your blood sugar level stable.
- ❖ Fish – particularly fat fish, such as salmon, which contains omega 3 and 6 oils.

Try to consume oils, nuts, and spices daily.

- ❖ Healthy Oils -Whenever possible use canola oil or olive oil.
- ❖ Nuts – another source of healthy omega oils.
- ❖ Spices – You can find anti-inflammatory and antioxidant features in garlic and ginger. Some spices may also help improve your metabolism.

Eat moderate levels from non red meats, light dairy products, and dairy.

- ❖ Chicken/Turkey, eggs – good source of protein.
- ❖ Light Dairy – Contains calcium which is good for bone health, but limit high milk fat.
- ❖ Soy bean products – Can replace animal products as a source of protein.
- ❖ Tea – lowers blood pressure and cholesterol levels.
- ❖ Healthy vices – Coffee, red wine, and dark chocolate contain health- improving antioxidants and anti-inflammatory substances (consume moderately).

Limit consumption of red meat, dairy, and simple carbohydrates.

- ❖ Red meat contains saturated fat – try to limit to once or twice per week.
- ❖ Butter and whole milk products – try low fat or skim milk products.
- ❖ White bread, soda, candy, cookies – These increase blood sugar levels and may bind proteins which age your body.
- ❖ Sodium – Use other spices to flavor food as sodium retains water and may increase blood pressure.

**Sleep:** Follow these tips to healthy sleep and renewed energy.

1. Keep it on a clock
  - ❖ Balance your sleep and wake time by going to bed and waking at set times each day. This will help your brain manage your sleep.
2. Find a relaxing routine
  - ❖ Create an activity that you repeat before going to bed that is relaxing, like listening to soothing music. Avoid activities that stimulate brain activity like television.
3. Create an environment that welcomes sleep
  - ❖ Make sure your bedroom is dark, cool, quiet, free from disturbances, and comfortable. Establish conditions you need for sleep.
4. Do not bring work to bed.
  - ❖ Only sleep in bed and remove objects that distract you from doing so. This will help strengthen the association between bed and sleep. If the clock makes you anxious move it out of sight.
5. Avoid big meals before bed.
  - ❖ Finish eating 2-3 hours before going to bed. Digestion may keep you awake and drinking too much may disrupt your sleep and increase your visits to the bathroom during the night.
6. Exercise regularly.
  - ❖ Establish daily exercise several hours before going to bed. Regular exercise will help you fall asleep and stay asleep, whereas sporadic exercise or exercising late at night might disturb your sleep.
7. Avoid caffeine and/or smoking.
  - ❖ Caffeine and nicotine are stimulants and may keep you awake by having an alerting effect. Even though you may think they are not disturbing your sleep, it may be affecting the quality of your sleep.
8. Avoid alcohol close to bedtime.
  - ❖ Even though alcohol may make you sleepy at first, it actually disrupts your sleep and may cause you to wake during the night.