

Healthy Mind Platter

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Maintaining Healthy Mental Well-being

Most people would be familiar with what our bodies need to be healthy – balanced diet, sleep/rest, and exercise. We are conscious about what we eat, how much sleep and rest we get, and how much exercise we do on a regular basis. There are plenty of apps and programs that track our progress in these areas.

We can take the same approach to keep our mind healthy, and the Healthy Mind Platter gives us some guiding principles.

The 7 Activities of the Healthy Mind Platter

There are 7 mental activities in the Healthy Mind Platter that contribute to general mental well-being. These are:

1) Focus Time

When we closely focus on tasks in a goal-oriented way, we take on challenges that make deep connections in the brain.

2) Playtime

When we allow ourselves to be spontaneous or creative, playfully enjoying novel experiences, we help make new connections in the brain.

3) Connecting Time

When we connect with other people, ideally in person, or appreciate our connection to the natural world around us, we activate and reinforce healthy connections in the brain that foster, empathy, joy, connection, and positive experiences.

4) Physical Time

When we move our bodies, we strengthen the brain in many ways.

5) Time In

When we quietly reflect internally, focusing on sensations, images, feelings and thoughts, we help to better integrate the brain.

6) Downtime



When we are non-focused, without any specific goal, and let our mind wander or simply relax, we help the brain recharge.

7) Sleep Time

When we give the brain the rest it needs, we consolidate learning and recover from the experiences of the day.

Applying this to daily life

There is no set formula for the perfect combination as everybody and every *body* is different. One place to start would be to observe your daily life and reflect on the following:

- How are you feeling mentally given your current habits?
- What do you spend a lot of time on?
- What seems to be missing from your life?
- What is the one activity that you can quickly attend to in the next week that would make a difference?

Some examples of the 7 mental activities

These mental activities do not have to be expensive, time-consuming, complicated, or require apps. You can start small and build up. Here are some examples of the 7 activities:

- **Focus time:** Learn a new skill, read up on an interesting topic, or start a new hobby for pure interest. Youtube or libraries are great for this.
- **Play time:** Spontaneously explore a part of your city that you have never been to.
- **Connecting time:** A short phone call (not a text!) to a loved one where you are present in the conversation and not multitasking.
- **Physical Time:** A short walk in the nearby park where you pay attention to the sights, sounds, smells, and sensations around you.
- **Time in:** Set aside 15 minutes to reflect on the week or journal your thoughts.
- **Down time:** Sit quietly in a comfortable spot and simply let your mind wander.
- **Sleep time:** Give yourself permission to go to bed early.

Extra Tips

It is best to start small when beginning a new habit.

- Pick one area that you feel is lacking.
- Identify a small activity that you can start quickly, with minimal effort, or preparation.
- Do this activity for a small amount of time say 15 minutes. You can always evaluate after 15 minutes and stop or continue.
- Consistency is key to building habits.
- Be flexible in what, where, when, and how you want to do these activities. There are no firm rules.
- Sometimes, doing an activity with a buddy helps with motivation and consistency.
- Evaluate how you feel after a few weeks and make adjustments.
- Pick another area to work on.

Check-in and Reflection

Occasionally check-in on your progress. If you find it difficult to give yourself time for some of these mental activities, ask yourself:

- What thoughts and feelings do I have about these activities?
- Are these helpful or not helpful?
- Is there a different way of viewing these activities that would help me participate, rather than avoid, these activities?

You don't need to beat yourself up if you struggle, these changes take time.

Key Idea

The Healthy Mind Platter is a guide to general mental well-being, rather than an exact instruction. It is healthy to know what your individual needs are and to attend to them. Your needs will change over time and it is normal to review old habits and build new ones. Most importantly, have fun exploring different activities and learning about yourself.

The Healthy Mind Platter was created by Dr. Daniel J. Siegel, Executive Director of the Mindsight Institute and Clinical Professor at the UCLA School of Medicine in collaboration with Dr. David Rock, Executive Director of the NeuroLeadership Institute. <https://drdansiegel.com/healthy-mind-platter/>