

# 5 MINUTE MED Mental Health SCHOOL



This is a non-generic, opinionated, evidence-based handout that tries to not reinvent the wheel and engage the good work of others.

## 5 Key Questions: Mental Health

### 1. Where do I start?

**Define your core problem.** I get people to fill out the the PHQ survey (see link on back) which goes through a variety of clinical diagnoses and key issues. Mental health is affected by so many factors (your thinking style, life events, upbringing, key relationships, genetics, etc), overlapping diagnosis (depression, anxiety, grief, etc.) and different vantage points (seniors, new mom, cultural, etc.) so it is good to start with something concrete.

### 2. What is something we can all do that is surprisingly effective?

We often get caught up looking for some magic key to all our problems and miss the low hanging fruit. When I play tennis and I start playing badly, I simplify and say “watch the ball”. Same could be said about our mental health. See “Boss Me” section to right...

### 3. Should I take an antidepressant?

**Depends.** Anecdotally they have been hugely helpful for some and not too helpful for others suffering from depression, anxiety, and other mental health diagnoses. A 2009<sup>a</sup> review indicated that they are not worth a try in milder cases but worth a try in medium to severe cases (eg. for people with over 5 symptoms of depression). Bottom line: depends on your style and the success of other things you have tried-but definitely something to discuss with your doc or pharmacist. See next page for a link to a decision aid.

### 4. What about talk therapy?

**Effective for most. Especially in the long run.** Many different types and therapists so hard to generalize but Cognitive Behavioral Therapy seems to rise to the top in terms of overall utility. See over for videos explaining CBT and other types of therapies. There are many sub-stories in therapy such as the success of Interpersonal therapy in depression, Mindfulness, group classes, behavioral therapy, and so on.

### 5. What about alternative meds?

No big winners. St. John’s Wort looked good in early research but risk-benefit looking less good now. Good recent review in “paper” resources on back.

## BOSS ME

**Walk More.** Or bike, or play hockey, or whatever you do. The efficacy of exercise in the treatment of anxiety in a meta-analysis with 3,566 subjects showed exercise cut anxiety by 48%<sup>b</sup>. A trial of graded exercise in people with depression showed low effort (3x/wk) dropped depression by 30%, whereas high dose activity (7x/wk) reduced depression by 47%<sup>c</sup>.

**Mingle.** Mental health setbacks tend to cause people to isolate themselves and this makes for poorer outcomes. Look at your week and make 2 or 3 “dates”. A walk, a movie, an outing... Make the dates with people that make you feel better, not worse.

**Eat well.** When people eat crap they feel crappy.

**Think well.** Learning how to think well is like learning how to parent well. We think we know how to do it but mostly we make it up as we go along. See over for resources.



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<sup>a</sup> National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence - Clinical Guidelines (UK) 2009 <sup>b</sup>Wipfli BM, et al, J Sport Exerc Psychol. 2008; 30(4):392–410. <sup>c</sup>Knubben K, et al, . Br J Sports Med. 2007; 41(1):29–33.



# HEALTH DESIGN LAB 2 BEST\* TOOLKIT

APPRAISING THE WORLD'S RESOURCES AND PICKING OUT THE BEST ONES..

\* OK. SOMETIMES WE PICK MORE OR LESS THAN TWO.

Resource	Name	Comments
 Web	<a href="http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/skills/managing-well-being">www.heretohelp.bc.ca/skills/managing-well-being</a>	This is a great site based in BC. this link is to their skills section but they have screening tests, interactive toolkits, etc..I recommend their wellness modules to everybody, especially the one on healthy thinking.
	<a href="http://www.checkupfromtheneckup.ca">www.checkupfromtheneckup.ca</a>	This is a site that starts with seeing where you are at right now and links to many other informative Canadian sites. Even gives you Google map locations of local therapists. <b>NB</b> if you are feeling really bad now: you need to talk to somebody. See "crisis resources" for local telephone lines and call.
	<a href="#">Take an antidepressant?</a>	This is an excellent overview for people wondering about whether to start an antidepressant pill. Gives the pros and cons.
	<a href="#">PHQ</a>	This is the Patient Health Questionnaire, a sort of mental health screener that is meant to be filled out and then gone through with a clinician. You'll see it on the left hand side of this page- then click on PHQ.
 Books	<a href="http://www.newharbinger.com">www.newharbinger.com</a>	Ok. This is a website, but it is for New Harbinger publications which has a variety of excellent books that you can tailor to your needs. Check out evidence-based publications and Martin Antony's books.
	<i>Anxiety &amp; Phobia Workbook</i> by Edmund Bourne.	It's big and not everything in here will work for everybody but there is something in here for every person suffering from anxiety. Good diagnostic questionnaires at the beginning to sort out your type of anxiety.
	<i>Mind over Mood</i> by Greenberger & Padesky.	This is a classic. Takes you step by step through how your thoughts influence your mood and how to improve that cycle.
	<i>Successful Problem Solving</i> McKay& Fanning.	Often the first step is just identifying the problem.
 Paper	<a href="http://www.sign.ac.uk/pdf/pat114.pdf">http://www.sign.ac.uk/pdf/pat114.pdf</a>	A group in the UK recently (January 2010) looked at all the data for for non-drug therapy. Everything from CBT to Art Therapy to Yoga to Acupuncture. This is an overview of their findings to the public.
 Video	<a href="http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cognitive-behavioural-therapy/pages/introduction.aspx">www.nhs.uk/conditions/cognitive-behavioural-therapy/pages/introduction.aspx</a>	Dr. David Clark explains Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. For some reason I like it more when somebody with a British accent explain things to me.
	<a href="http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/depression/pages/depression-support.aspx">www.nhs.uk/livewell/depression/pages/depression-support.aspx</a>	Scroll down a bit and you will see a very nice video overview with an explanation of the difference between simply having a bad day and being depressed. He also describes the levels of depression, early warning signs and the treatments available.
 Social Media	<a href="http://www.patientslikeme.com/mood/community">www.patientslikeme.com/mood/community</a>	This is Patients Like Me which has been the pioneer in social networking health sites. Depression, anxiety, OCD, bipolar communities. Sharing, profiles. feedback, and expertise...