

# Taking Your Emotional Health to Heart



**The link between your head and your heart may be closer than you think. Stress, anxiety and depression can all affect your heart health.**

The reason is partly behavioral: It's harder to focus on healthy living when you're distracted by difficult feelings. Some people fall back into bad habits, such as eating too much unhealthy food, drinking too much alcohol or smoking. That can take a toll on the heart.

But there may also be a physical link. Stress and depression are associated with chemical and physiological changes in your body that may affect heart disease. For example, did you know that stress can trigger tightening in your arteries?

## Prioritize Your Physical Health

The same good habits that support better heart health are also effective at keeping stress in check. Regular physical activity is a proven stress-buster and mood-lifter.

Treating yourself to nutritious foods and plenty of sleep can also improve your mental and physical well-being. Tackle healthy lifestyle changes one or two at a time to avoid feeling overwhelmed.

## Mind Your Mental Health

Talking with supportive family and friends is another effective way to ease stress and anxiety. Let them know how you're feeling and suggest possible ways they could help.

Make time for de-stressing breaks. Try listening to music, reading a book, practicing yoga or simply soaking in a warm bath.

## Show Your Heart Some Love for Valentine's Day

Looking for the perfect way to celebrate Valentine's Day? Share heart-healthy activities with family and friends. Consider these ideas:

- ♥ **Go for a leisurely walk together.** You can chat on the move. If you're walking with your partner, rev up the romance by holding hands. Are you both ready for a challenge? Pick up the pace or choose a walking route with hills.
- ♥ **Bond over learning something new.** Has your partner or friend always wanted to try yoga or kickboxing? Sign up the two of you for a class.
- ♥ **Put on your dancing shoes.** Go out for a night of dancing. Or just turn on your favorite music and break out your best moves in the living room.
- ♥ **Bring out your inner child.** Be playful in your relationship. Play miniature golf, go bowling, toss a frisbee or take a bike ride together.