



HELPING HANDS



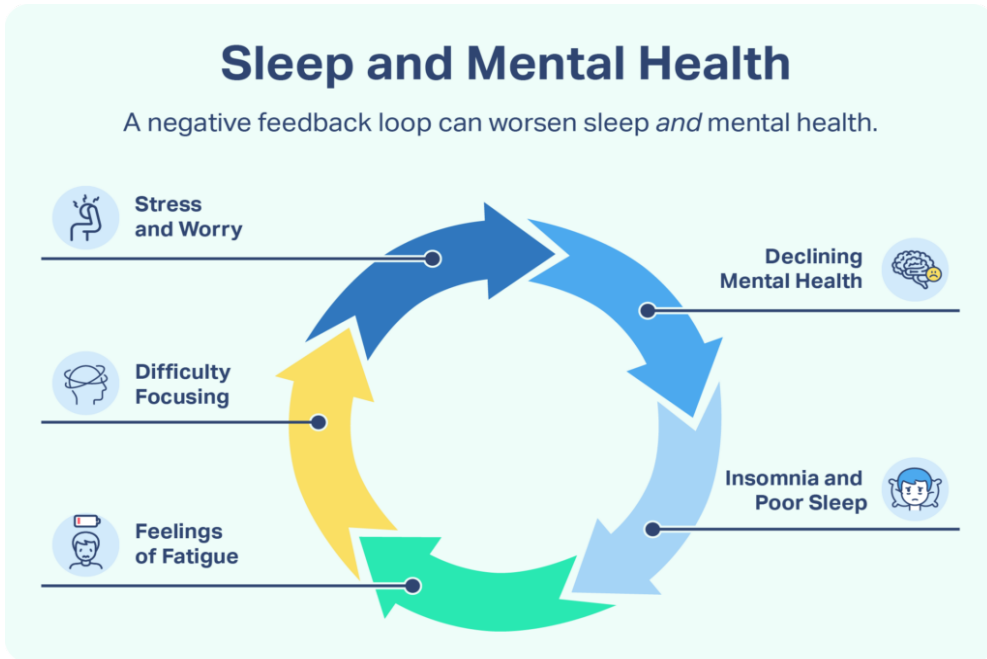
Sleep and Mental Health

(excerpts from <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/mental-health>)

How Is Mental Health Related to Sleep?

Brain activity fluctuates during sleep, increasing and decreasing during different **sleep stages** that make up the sleep cycle. Each stage plays a role in brain health, allowing activity in different parts of the brain to ramp up or down and enabling better thinking, learning, and memory. Research has also uncovered that brain activity during sleep has profound effects on emotional and mental health.

Sufficient sleep, especially rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, facilitates the brain's processing of emotional information. During sleep, the brain works to evaluate and remember thoughts and memories, and it appears that a lack of sleep is especially harmful to the consolidation of positive emotional content. This can influence mood and emotional reactivity and is tied to mental health disorders and their severity, including the risk of suicidal ideation.



As a result, the traditional view, which held that sleep problems were a symptom of mental health disorders, is increasingly being called into question. Instead, it is becoming clear that there is a bidirectional relationship between sleep and mental health in which sleeping problems may be both a cause and consequence of mental health problems. Further research is needed to identify the diverse connections between sleep and mental health as well as how their multifaceted relationship can be influenced by numerous factors in any specific person's case.

Depression

It is estimated that over 300 million people worldwide have depression, a type of mood disorder marked by feelings of sadness or hopelessness. Around 75% of depressed people show symptoms of insomnia. Many people with depression also suffer from excessive daytime sleepiness and hypersomnia, which is sleeping too much.

There is growing evidence suggests that poor sleep may induce or exacerbate depression. Sleep problems and depressive symptoms are mutually reinforcing. While this can create a negative feedback loop — poor sleep worsens depression that then further interrupts sleep — it also opens a potential avenue for new types of treatment for depression. For example, for at least some people, a focus on improving sleep may have a corollary benefit of reducing the symptoms of depression.

Improve Sleep Habits

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A common cause of sleeping problems is poor **sleep hygiene**. Stepping up sleep hygiene by cultivating habits and a bedroom setting that are conducive to sleep can go a long way in reducing sleep disruptions.

Examples of steps towards healthier sleep habits include:

- Having a set bedtime and maintaining a steady sleep schedule
- Finding ways to wind-down, such as with **relaxation techniques**, as part of a standard routine before bedtime
- Avoiding **alcohol**, tobacco, and **caffeine** in the evening
- Dimming lights and putting away electronic devices for an hour or more before bed
- Getting regular exercise and natural light exposure during the daytime
- Maximizing comfort and support from your mattress, pillows, and bedding
- Blocking out excess light and sound that could disrupt sleep

Finding the best routines and bedroom arrangement may take some trial and error to determine what's best for you, but that process can pay dividends in helping you fall asleep quickly and stay asleep through the night.



The heart and soul of the District 141 Employee Assistance Program is the local lodge EAP peer coordinator. These dedicated men and women volunteer their personal time to assist union members and their families who are experiencing personal difficulties. EAP peers do not make clinical diagnoses or clinical evaluations; however, they are trained to get an idea of your situation and refer you to an appropriate resource for a more detailed evaluation. EAP peers will follow up to ensure you have been able to access services that address the difficulty you were experiencing.



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Sleep Facts

- Mental health impacts thoughts, feelings, and actions and influences our ability to handle stress, relate to others, and make choices.
- Quality sleep is crucial for good mental health, but sleep issues can worsen mental health conditions, and mental health problems can lead to poor sleep.
- Adhering to sleep hygiene practices can improve sleep quality and mental well-being.