



# BHS A.S.S.I.S.T. Spotlight

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Your EAP is a free and confidential service, which provides assessment and short-term counseling for a variety of mental health, substance abuse and work/life related issues. To learn more about your available benefits, contact your BHS Care Coordinator at 800.245.1150.



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## Nutrition & Mental Health

The new field of “nutritional psychiatry” has recently sought to explain the connection of nutrition and mental health. The food we eat provides fuel for our entire body, with the brain being one of the most important parts of them all. While mental illness is more complex than just the food we eat, our diet undoubtedly affects our mental health. The correct foods can potentially increase brain function, while others might lead to poor attitudes and laziness.

A diet including plant-based foods, complex carbs and nutritious fruits and vegetables can not only boost our overall health, but can also have a positive impact on our mood. The link between food and mood in a diet such as a Mediterranean-style (lean protein, whole grains, olive oil, fruits and vegetables) has consistently shown to protect mental health and help prevent/manage mental health illnesses such as depression. Conversely, diets high in simple carbs, saturated fat, red meat and refined sugars tend to worsen mental health symptoms.

**Nutrients Affect on Your Brain** Not consuming the proper amounts of certain vitamins and minerals, often referred to as micronutrients, can have a negative impact on your mental health. A majority of individuals facing mental health problems tend to have deficiencies in micronutrients, such as omega-3 fatty acids and B vitamins. Consuming these nutrients can help symptoms of mental illness like poor memory and help you focus, while also helping your brain by relieving anxiety and boost your mood.

**Brain-Friendly Foods** include fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean protein, nuts and low-fat dairy. Also, look for foods high in nutrients such as magnesium, Omega-3 fatty acids and probiotics. Magnesium can help with symptoms of anxiety and depression. Omega-3 fatty acids improve mood, comprehension and cognitive abilities. Probiotics increase the live bacteria in your digestive system, helping the connection between your gut and brain.

**On Your Plate** While incorporating more brain healthy food may take some extra effort at first, planning ahead can help the temptation for takeout. Preparing a weeks worth of chopped veggies or soaking beans in advance can make brain-healthy meals less of a chore. Making small substitutions for similar items can also help, like white rice and white bread for their whole grain counterparts.

These changes might not be noticeable immediately, taking days or weeks depending on how many changes are implemented. Over time, healthy eating, along with other positive behavioral changes like regular exercise and meditation, might provide the mental boost you need!

**If you are concerned about your mental health, don't hesitate to seek advice. Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides free and confidential assessment and counseling services. BHS is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by calling 800-245-1150.**



## Team Building Virtually During COVID-19

One of the major consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic is that our typical routines have likely been permanently altered. This has had a great impact on both the workforce's mental and physical well-being. Without our typical structure and personal contact, it's led many remote workers to feel isolated. In turn, productivity has decreased drastically due to the lack of a feeling of belonging to a workplace.

While virtual-team building exercises are certainly nothing new, people who are working from home for the first time may benefit from them greatly. They can help workers feel more connected and also improve mental health.

Team building drills focus on improving the relationships of members of the workforce, helping them better connect to each other. Taking time for team building can help prevent their physical distance from becoming an emotional barrier, while also improving productivity.

Finding the correct type of exercises for your workforce can be key, depending on their needs and preferences. Implementing the wrong type of exercise may yield poor results.

First, determine if your team would benefit from real-time activities, like ice breakers or virtual lunches, or activities that can be done passively, like group chat threads or sharing music playlists.

Team building exercises can be regular events or just single time events. Blending different types of events, like reoccurring virtual lunches, with one time events, such as virtual orientations or award presentations, can help maximize results.

Next, determine if the reason behind insufficient productivity is lack of motivation or stress and exhaustion. Depending on your answer, fun activities such as playing games or having virtual video watch-alongs can help with stress. Alternatively, activities that are more targeted to productivity can include having conversations with team members about strengths/weaknesses or connecting with colleagues to help learn new skills.

Hopefully, team building exercises can lead to a boost in employee morale, while also helping everyone develop a mutual respect for each other. They'll also help your workforce to combat loneliness and stay connected with one another.

Being social beings, it's natural that extended times of isolation can lead to a drop in morale and productivity. Conducting virtual team-building exercises can be your immediate solution to making the remote working environment a disciplined and productive one.

**Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides free, confidential consultations. For more information, call Behavioral Health Systems at 800-245-1150.**





## Myths & Facts About Sleep

Sleep isn't merely a time when your body shuts off. While you rest, your brain stays busy, overseeing biological maintenance that keeps your body in top shape, preparing you for the next day. Without the proper amount, you won't be able to work, learn and communicate at your highest level.

**Myth:** Getting just one hour less sleep per night won't affect your daytime functioning.

**Fact:** You may not be noticeably sleepy during the day, but losing even one hour of sleep can affect your ability to think properly and respond quickly. It also compromises your cardiovascular health, energy balance, and ability to fight infections.

**Myth:** Your body adjusts quickly to different sleep schedules.

**Fact:** Most people can reset their biological clock, but only by appropriately timed cues—and even then, by one or two hours per day at best. Consequently, it can take more than a

week to adjust after traveling across several time zones or switching to the night shift.

**Myth:** Extra sleep at night can cure you of problems with excessive daytime fatigue.

**Fact:** The quantity of sleep you get is important, sure, but it's the quality of your sleep that you really have to pay attention to. Some people sleep eight or nine hours a night but don't feel well rested when they wake up, because the quality of their sleep is poor.

**Myth:** You can make up for lost sleep during the week by sleeping more on the weekends.

**Fact:** Although this sleeping pattern will help relieve part of a sleep debt, it will not completely make up for the lack of sleep. Furthermore, sleeping later on the weekends can affect your sleep-wake cycle, so that it is much harder to go to sleep at the right time on Sunday nights and get up early on Monday mornings.

### St. Patrick's Day Green (Edamame) Hummus

**Ingredients:** 1 cup frozen, shelled edamame, thawed • 3 1/2 tablespoons tahini • 3 tablespoons water • 2 tablespoons lemon juice • 2 tablespoons canola oil • 2 cloves garlic, roughly chopped • 3/4 teaspoon kosher salt • 1/4 teaspoon onion powder • 1/8 teaspoon black pepper • olive oil to drizzle on top for serving, optional



**Directions:** Combine all ingredients in a food processor. Process until desired consistency, scraping down the sides as needed. Refrigerate for at least one hour to allow flavors to blend. When serving, drizzle with a little olive oil, if desired.

Source: <https://twohealthykitchens.com/edamame-hummus/>