



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.



New Year's Resolutions for Mental Health

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New Year's Resolutions for Mental Health

When thinking about a New Year's resolution, it is helpful to choose an objective that can be successfully reached. These goals may be short- or long-term, simple or complex, individual or shared. Some of the most common New Year's resolutions for Americans include:

- Focusing on health by losing weight, exercising, and eating healthier foods
- Becoming more financially savvy by lowering debts and saving money
- Quitting a bad habit, like drinking too much alcohol or smoking
- Improving professionally by finding a better job or pursuing higher education
- Travelling more by planning a trip
- Being more environmentally responsible by reducing, reusing and recycling
- Serving others by volunteering more

But what about those who want to make a mental health resolution? Many people choose to focus on stress management or reduction, anxiety control or just to live happier. Since these resolutions are more difficult to accomplish, how do you make this year different to make sure you set yourself up for success? Change your perspective when approaching New Year's resolutions. Instead of making a vague list of what you want to change, ask yourself three simple questions: what, why and how?

What? Start by specifically defining what it is you plan to accomplish this year. Be concise, and keep it simple. For example, if you start with a goal like, "I plan to be happier this year," you may want to redefine that as, "I plan to spend more time doing things I enjoy." If your resolution is to reduce your stress this year, you might guide yourself toward saying, "I will set boundaries about working on the weekends."

Why? Ask yourself, "Why would I like to accomplish this goal?" Often, changes to your life have an internal representation that you aren't even aware you're striving for. That's why some people vow to lose 15 pounds but once they do, they still feel defeated and depressed. If you really investigate why you want to accomplish your goal, you will find a bit more about what you really wish to accomplish. This is one of the most important things to identify. It helps keep you going when times get hard and you want to quit before reaching your goal.

How? Have a well-thought-out plan before you embark on your adventure this year. It's important to realize that if you knew all there was to know about this particular life change, you'd have already accomplished it.

- **Do your research.** Make sure you find out the info about what you're taking on.
- **Tell everyone you know.** People who are accountable are more likely to succeed in achieving resolution goals. When you know that you're going to hear about it from people when you continue to engage in the old behaviors, you are less likely to bail out on your resolutions.
- **Set up a reward system.** Periodically use rewards for reaching small goals. Accomplishing the goals you set produces *dopamine*, the pleasure chemical in your brain. Dopamine activates the parts of the brain that make you eager to pursue new challenges. By setting and achieving goals today, you're heightening your ability to be the person you want to be.

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.



Be a Great Mentor

What is a mentor? A mentor is a trusted advisor, often someone with expertise in a professional field who helps a less experienced colleague navigate work, learn new skills, and take on greater responsibility. A mentor can also provide support and guidance outside of work— to a child or teenager, for example, a younger friend, or a new immigrant.

Why be a mentor? Having a knowledgeable ally can help in focusing efforts on learning and skill development, choosing among new challenges to gain valuable experience, gaining maturity in dealing with other people, and making important life decisions. The benefits to the mentor are real, too. Mentorship is a way to leave a legacy. As a mentor, you share hard-won lessons so they can be passed on. That's good for your organization, your professional field, and your community. On an emotional level, it feels good to help another person succeed. That's probably the biggest benefit of all.

How to be a Great Mentor

- **Treat your mentee with respect.** Each mentorship is a different relationship, built around the unique personality, strengths and goals of your mentee and the experience and expertise you have to offer. Spend time upfront talking about the mentee's hope and aspirations, ways you might help, and how you'd like to work together. Once you agree on time commitments, honor them, no matter how busy you are. Be fully present whenever you meet with your mentee.
- **Listen and ask questions.** As the mentor, you have to be the expert, but you're not the boss in the relationship. Let the mentee take the lead while you take a supporting role. Ask questions to get to know your mentee and

understand their challenges and obstacles and areas they would like to grow. Then listen, without interrupting and use active listening skills. Take notes so that you remember the key points. Only once you've heard and understood should you begin to offer guidance.

- **Give honest feedback in a caring way.** People can't learn from their mistakes or shore up their weaknesses if they aren't aware of them. Balance constructive criticism with encouraging praise for your mentee's strengths and positive actions.
- **Guide; don't steer.** Don't solve every problem for your mentee. Instead, help guide them to their own solutions by asking questions and drawing out their thoughts. If you over-help, you can actually get in the way of your mentee's learning and growth. Let your mentee make the decisions, too, especially about important life and career choices. What seems right to you might not suit the personality and ambitions of your mentee. A good mentor helps a mentee find and follow their own path—even if that path takes them to another organization or into a different field.
- **Lead by example** Be a positive role model for your mentee. Show how to handle conflict in productive ways, how to overcome obstacles and handle setbacks and how to communicate to understand and be understood. Pass your wisdom on through your behavior.

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



6 Strategies for Improving Your Emotional Health

#1: Brighten your outlook.

- Remember your good deeds. Give yourself credit for the good things you do for others each day.
- Forgive yourself. Everyone makes mistakes. Learn from what went wrong, but don't dwell on it.
- Spend more time with your friends. Surround yourself with positive, healthy people.
- Explore your beliefs about the meaning and purpose of life. Think about how to guide your life by the principles that are important to you.

#2: Reduce stress.

- Exercise regularly. Just 30 minutes a day of walking can boost mood and reduce stress.
- Set priorities. Decide what must get done and what can wait. Say *no* to new tasks if they are putting you into overload.
- Think positive. Note what you've accomplished at the end of the day, not what you've failed to do.

#3: Get quality sleep.

- Go to bed at the same time each night, and get up at the same time each morning.
- Sleep in a dark, quiet, comfortable environment.

- Limit the use of electronics before bed.
- Avoid alcohol, nicotine or stimulants such as caffeine late in the day.

#4: Be mindful.

- Take deep breaths. Breathe in through your nose to a count of 4, hold for 1 second, and then exhale through the mouth to a count of 5. Repeat often.
- Enjoy a stroll. As you walk, notice your breath and the sights and sounds around you. As thoughts and worries enter your mind, note them, but then return to the present.

#5: Cope with loss.

- Don't make major changes right away. Wait a while before making big decisions.
- Be patient. Mourning takes time. It's common to have roller-coaster emotions for a while.
- Talk to your doctor if you're having trouble with everyday activities.

#6: Strengthen social connections.

- Take a class to learn something new.
- Join a group focused on a favorite hobby.
- Volunteer for things you care about in your community.

HEALTHY SNACK RECIPE: Garlic Avocado Grilled Cheese Sandwich

1 avocado; 4 slices of bread; 1/2 tsp crushed red pepper; 1 garlic clove, minced; 1/2 cup mozzarella cheese; 1 tbsp olive oil

1. Mash the avocado in a small bowl and add the garlic and crushed red pepper.
2. Spread this avocado mixture on a slice of bread, top with mozzarella cheese and add the other slice of bread on top. Repeat for the other bread as well.
3. Toast in a pan with olive oil, flipping once carefully until golden brown on both sides.
4. Take out of pan, slice in the middle and serve immediately.

Source: <https://hh-hm.com/garlic-avocado-grilled-cheese-sandwich/>

