Saratoga Library English Conversation Club
Health: Emotional and Mental Well-Being
September 17, 2026

For the next few weeks, we will discuss health. This week, we will focus on emotions and mental health. To get started, respond to the warmup tasks, then review the vocabulary and practice them in a dialog.

Warmup Questions: Read and discuss these questions.

- What does **mental health** mean to you?
- In your opinion, what are some signs that a person has **good mental health**?
- Is there a word or phrase for **'mental health'** in your native language?

Vocabulary Preview: Read these words and match them to their meanings.

1. **boost** (BOOST)	A. to fully understand clearly
2. component (kuhm-POH-nuhnt)	B. to bring something back to its original, healthy, or former condition
3. consumption (kuhn-SUHMP-shuhn)	C. (noun) a state of mental or emotional strain resulting from demanding or difficult circumstances
4. **to contribute** (kuhn-TRIB-yoot)	D. to return to a normal state of health, mind, or strength after an illness or setback
5. **to cope** (KOHP)	E. (*noun)* the act of eating, drinking, or using up something
6. to discourage (dih-SKUR-ij)	F. (noun) something that is regarded as more important than other things and needs to be dealt with first
7. to **hydrate** (HY-drayt)	G. (*noun)* a part, element, or ingredient of a larger thing or system
8. **priority** (pry-AWR-uh-tee)	H. (*noun)* encouragement, improvement, or help; an increase, a rise
9. **to realize** (REE-uh-lyz)	I. to give money, time, or help to a common cause or project
10. **to recover** (rih-KUHV-er)	J. to deal with effectively or face difficulties in a calm, successful way
11. **to restore** (rih-STOR)	K. to cause someone to lose confidence, enthusiasm, or hope
12. **stress** (STRES)	L. to absorb or take in water to keep the body functioning properly

Answer Key: 1-H; 2-G, 3-E; 4- I; 5-J; 6- K; 7-L; 8-F; 9 – A; 10 – D; 11 – B; 12 - C

Dialog Practice with Vocabulary Words
Setting: Three students in a study group are sitting at a table.

Andi: I really need a way to **cope** with all this exam **stress** before I lose my mind.
Sal: Honestly, making sleep a **priority** is the best way **to recover** your energy.
Kelly: True, but you also need **to hydrate** by drinking water. Dehydration slows down your brain.
Andi: I **realize** you both want **to contribute** good advice, but we only have two days before the final.
Sal: Don't be too **discouraged**. We did really well on all the homework tasks, so I think we have this.
Kelly: You need **to restore** your focus instead of maxxing out on information **consumption.**
Andi: You're right! Thanks for the **boost** of confidence.
Sal: Exactly, so let's close the textbooks for a few minutes and grab a healthy snack outside.
Kelly: That breath of fresh air will definitely help us all clear our heads.
Andi: Thanks, guys. I already feel way better just talking this out with you.
Sal: That's what friends are for, especially when school gets this so **stressful**.
Kelly: Now let's boost our energy by taking a break so we can ace the test tomorrow!

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Mental Health

Physical health and mental health are closely connected. Mental health plays an important role in both the way people behave and the way they feel. Here is the World Health Organization's definition of *mental health*:

> *Mental health is a state of well-being in which a person realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal **stresses** of life, can work **productively** and is able to contribute to his or her community. Mental health is an essential **component** of health. Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or an illness.*

The definition from the Center for Disease Control is:

> *Mental health is a state of well-being that enables us to **cope** with the **stresses** of life, **realize** our abilities, learn well and work well, and **contribute** to our community.*

> Do you agree with these definitions?
> Would you change or add anything to these definitions?

Based on these definitions of mental health, providing help and resources to **boost**, maintain and **restore** mental health should be of vital concern to communities and societies throughout the world. Many schools, companies, government agencies and communities try to do this.

What do you do to care for your mental health? Read the following article from the National Institute of Mental Health of the United States. It discusses "self-care" or different ways that you can care for your mental and physical health yourself.

Caring for Your Mental Health

Mental health includes emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It is more than the absence of a mental illness—it's essential to your overall health and quality of life. Self-care can play a role in maintaining your health and help support your treatment and **recovery** if you have a mental illness.

Self-care means taking the time to do things that help you live well and improve both your physical health and mental health. This can help you manage stress, lower your risk of illness, and increase your energy. Even small acts of self-care in your daily life can have a big impact. Here are some self-care tips:

I. **Get regular exercise.** Just 30 minutes of walking every day can **boost** your mood and improve your health. Small amounts of exercise add up, so don't be discouraged if you can't do 30 minutes at one time.

Discussion: Discuss one or all of the following questions:

a) Do you walk or run every day? If so, how long do you walk for?
b) Do you exercise in other ways? Describe your weekly exercise routine.
c) Do you think you should exercise more?
d) How to you feel after you exercise?

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II. **Eat healthy, regular meals and stay hydrated.** A balanced diet and plenty of water can improve your energy and focus throughout the day. Pay attention to your **consumption** of caffeine and alcohol and how they affect your mood and well-being. For some people, decreasing caffeine and alcohol **consumption** can be helpful.

Discussion: Discuss one or all of the following questions:

a) Do you eat anything you want, or do you only eat healthy food because you are concerned about your health?
b) What are some healthy foods that you eat regularly?
c) Finish this sentence and then explain your answer: I wish I could eat more _____.
d) Do you enjoy cooking for yourself?

III. **Make sleep a priority**. Stick to a schedule and make sure you're getting enough sleep. Blue light from devices and screens can make it harder to fall asleep, so reduce blue light exposure from your phone or computer before bedtime.

Discussion: Discuss one or all of the following questions:

a) How much sleep do you get on average in a 24-hour period?
b) Do you think you should get more sleep?
c) Do you think you should cut down on your screen time? Is it difficult to cut down on it?
d) Do you look at your phone or computer right before you go to sleep?

IV. **Try a relaxing activity.** Explore relaxation or wellness programs or apps, which includes meditation, muscle relaxation, or breathing exercises. Schedule regular times for these and other healthy activities you enjoy, such as listening to music, reading, spending time in nature, and engaging in low-stress hobbies.

Discussion: Discuss one or all of the following questions:

a) What are some ways that you relax in addition to exercise?
b) Do you think people, especially children, should spend more time outdoors and in nature? Why or why not?
c) What are some of your hobbies that help you relax?

V. **Set goals and priorities.** Decide what must get done now and what can wait. Learn to say "no" to new tasks if you start to feel like you're taking on too much. Try to appreciate what you have accomplished at the end of the day.

Discussion: Discuss one or all of the following questions:

a) Do you work full-time? If so, is it difficult for you to tell your co-workers that you are too busy to take on a new project?
b) Do you engage in any volunteer activities? Do you try to limit how many volunteer activities you help with?
c) Is it difficult to tell the organizations that you volunteer with that you can only do so much?

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VI. **Practice gratitude.** Remind yourself daily of things you are grateful for. Be specific. Write them down or replay them in your mind.

Discussion: Discuss one or all of the following questions:

a) Do you sometimes get so busy, you don't have time to reflect on all the good things that have happened to you?
b) Do you think it is helpful to tell others how much you appreciate what they do for you?
c) What are some things that you are grateful for?

VII. **Focus on positivity**. Identify and challenge your negative and unhelpful thoughts.

Discussion: Discuss one or all of the following questions:

a) Are you a "glass is half-empty" or a "glass is half-full" kind of person?
b) What are some helpful ways to stay positive?
c) Who is the most positive person you know?

VIII. **Stay connected.** Reach out to friends or family members who can provide emotional support and practical help. Also, reach out to others who you think would appreciate hearing from you or would like to visit with you.

Discussion: Discuss one or all of the following questions:

a) How do you stay in touch with friends and family?
b) Are the people in your family all spread out geographically or do you live near each other?
c) Sometimes people spend more time with their co-workers or people other than their own families. If they get along, sometimes they are considered a chosen or a found family. Do you have a found family?

Everyone practices "self-care" in different ways. It is important to find what helps you relax and is healthy for you. It may take trial and error to discover what works best for you. Here is some information to help you learn more about healthy practices for your mind and body . If you have time, you can go through them together as a group.

References

https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/caring-for-your-mental-health
https://www.nih.gov/health-information/your-healthiest-self-wellness-toolkits