



# Behavioral Health... The Body, Mind and Spirit Connection

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For every 10 people in a doctor's office, seven are there seeking care related to behavioral health, according to the Maine Health Access Foundation (MEHAF). These issues can include depression, anxiety, diabetes management, weight loss, smoking cessation and drinking or drug use problems.

But what is behavioral health? Some people use the terms "behavioral health" and "mental health" interchangeably. However, there are important differences.

## Defining Behavioral Health

Behavioral health describes the connection between behaviors and the health and well-being of the body, mind and spirit. This includes how behaviors like eating habits, drinking or exercising impact physical or mental health.

However, during the 1970s and 1980s, behavioral health "almost entirely referred to behaviors that prevent illness or that promote health," says the MEHAF. Most recently, behavioral health incorporated mental health, including services provided by social workers, counselors, psychiatrists, neurologists and physicians.

## Behavioral Health vs Mental Health

- When distinguishing between behavioral health and mental health, it is important to remember that behavioral health is a blanket term that includes mental health. Behavioral health looks at how behaviors impact someone's health — physical and mental.
- This results in a noticeable difference between behavioral health and mental health. For instance, a behavioral health professional might look at behaviors that may have contributed to a person's obesity. This is an issue that primarily affects someone's physical health. Some behavioral health topics and issues do not fall into the category of mental health.
- However, mental health is included in behavioral health. As a result, people who have mental health issues can benefit from behavioral health principles. "Sometimes, changes in behaviors by the individual, family or even the community and changes in thinking patterns can help people better cope with their mental health conditions," says the MEHAF.



## Suggestions to enhance your own mental health:

- **Exercise:** There is overwhelming evidence that indicates physical exercise helps to lessen the effects of depression, due to the release of endorphins, or "feel good" hormones, in the brain.
- **Eat a Healthy Diet:** A diet high in sugar is strongly correlated with mental health problems. Eating whole foods and limit the intake of processed foods.
- **Go Outside:** Get enough exposure to sunlight to maintain healthy vitamin D levels. Low levels of vitamin D are associated with psychiatric and neurological disorders.
- **Eliminate Bad Habits:** Smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol can cause increased levels of stress. Over time, this can lead to mental illness, such as depression.
- **Get Help When Needed:** Getting help from a friend, family member, or professional is highly likely to improve behavioral health. Seeking guidance can lead to a quicker recovery from mental illnesses, allowing you to live a healthier, fuller life.

If you'd like more information, or wish to make an appointment, please call the office at 561-598-8585, or cell at 561-234-6778, or visit [www.TherapyWithMary.com](http://www.TherapyWithMary.com).

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