**Tips for Taking a Mental Health Day Off**

This week is Mental Illness Awareness Week. From October 1st – 7th, the [National Alliance on Mental Illness](https://www.nami.org/Get-Involved/Awareness-Events/Mental-Illness-Awareness-Week) (NAMI) is working to raise awareness on mental illness throughout the country. Their goal is to fight stigma, provide support, educate the public, and advocate for equal care for those living with a mental illness.

While mental health should be a priority year-round, we think this week is a great opportunity for employers and employees alike to focus on their mental health and wellbeing. Work can be stressful and make it difficult to find time for yourself and prioritize your mental health.

An excellent way for full-time workers to take care of their mental welling is by taking a mental health day. Whether you’re dealing with a breakup or major life crisis, the stress, anxiety and depression that comes with challenging life experiences can impact your daily work productivity.

Since mental health should be treated like physical health, you should feel absolutely no shame or guilt in taking a day or two off of work to focus on your mental health. However, just like physical health, proactively addressing your health should be your focus during your time off. Read on to learn some tips for making the best out of your mental health day.

**Know when to take a mental health day off**

It’s necessary to take a day off when you’re feeling overly stressed, depressed, or anxious. Going to work while feeling this way is debilitating, and you won’t be able to perform your best. Using a day off to practice self-care can help get you back on track and feeling better by the next workday. According to Amy Morin, a psychotherapist, in an article published by [*Psychology Today*](https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/what-mentally-strong-people-dont-do/201707/how-know-when-take-mental-health-day), here are some reasons why you might want to day a mental health day:

* You’re distracted by something you need to address (like financial troubles or family issues)
* You’ve been neglecting yourself
* You need to attend appointments to care for your mental health

**What to do on a mental health day**

While it might sound tempting, sleeping all day or binge watching Netflix isn’t going to help you feel any better mentally. Use your day off to help improve your mental wellbeing in the long run. Here are some good ways to spend your time during your mental health day:

*Meditate.* Wake up at a reasonable time and practice meditation. Meditating for even a few minutes is one of the best – and easiest – ways to reduce stress and anxiety. Meditating first thing in the morning will help set you up for a day full of [mindful behavior](http://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/tap-the-power-of-mindfulness-free-guide).

*See your therapist.* If you’re not feeling mentally healthy, use this time to meet with your therapist. If you don’t have a therapist or a mental health professional to talk to, use this time to find one and schedule an appointment.

*Reconnect with nature.* Getting outside and soaking up some sunlight is a great way to boost your mood and feelings of happiness. Not to mention, [research](http://news.stanford.edu/2015/06/30/hiking-mental-health-063015/) shows that spending time outdoors relaxes your body and mind almost instantly. Go for a hike, a walk around the park, or read a book in your backyard.

*Get active.* [Physical activity](http://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/7-stress-relieving-exercises-for-an-instant-pick-me-up) is amazing for your mental health. It’s been shown to reduce stress as well as symptoms from anxiety and depression. Take a yoga class, go for a swim, or take your dog for a walk.

*Relax.* Watching TV isn’t the only way to relax! There are plenty of [relaxing activities](http://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/7-weekend-wellness-activities-to-help-you-conquer-stress) that are proactive for mental wellbeing. Treat yourself to a professional massage, visit a spa, or create an [at-home wellness retreat](http://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/create-your-very-own-wellness-retreat-without-having-to-leave-home).

*Accomplish something.* Keep yourself productive throughout the day. Accomplish a task or challenge that you haven’t gotten around to – even if it’s just a load of laundry you haven’t found the time to do. Start working on an art project, learn something new, or complete a goal on your bucket list.

Taking a mental health day can help you reset and recharge, but spending the day in bed while binging on your favorite TV shows isn’t the most productive way to do it. You can make small improvements by taking a meditation class, or speaking with a professional. They key is to be proactive about bettering your health during your time off.