

# Optimizing Brain Health

## The Mind/Body Connection



The mind/body connection refers to the interrelatedness of our thoughts, emotions, and physical health. It's the idea that our mental and emotional states can affect our physical well-being and vice versa. For example, stress, anxiety, and depression can lead to physical symptoms such as headaches, stomach problems, and high blood pressure. Because of the mind/body connection, it is important to take a holistic approach to health and wellness. Rather than treating physical symptoms in isolation, it is important to consider the impact of mental and emotional factors on overall health and address them to improve well-being.

Practices such as meditation, yoga, and tai chi have shown they can help to reduce stress, lower blood pressure, and improve overall health. Similarly, therapies such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) have been shown to improve both mental and physical health outcomes.

- **Meditation:** Reduces blood pressure symptoms from anxiety, depression, and insomnia.
- **Yoga:** Promotes general wellness by relieving stress, improving mental health, sleep and balance.
- **Tai Chi:** Can improve balance and stability and other chronic diseases.
- **Acupuncture:** Can ease pain and help with symptoms of stress such as headaches and insomnia.
- **CBT:** A form of psychological treatment that has been demonstrated to be effective for a range of problems including depression, anxiety, alcohol and drug use problems, marital problems, eating disorders, etc.
- **MBSR:** A meditation therapy designed for stress management that is used for treating a variety of illnesses such as depression, anxiety, chronic pain, immune disorders, among others.

It's critical to recognize stress signals (anxiety, irritability, fear, moodiness, self-criticism, difficulty concentrating, forgetfulness, repetitive thoughts, fear of failure) and try to reduce them. In addition to practices like the examples above, it is important to check in with other healthy habits like diet, exercise and sleep. Each may have an impact on our mental well-being. We should watch closely what we eat and strive to make healthy choices, become more physically active and get plenty of good sleep to counteract stress.

Focusing on brain wellness is imperative to accomplish overall wellness. Our mind/body connection is dynamic and interactive. When we are aware of this powerful connection, we can increase our possibilities of recovery and relieve stress and other challenges that might impact us. To learn more and find support in integrating new wellness practices into your life, reach out to the EAP.