52 MENTAL HEALTH HACKS CHEATSHEET
When you’re feeling very anxious or depressed, it’s easy to get caught up in the moment and forget your coping skills. While your first reaction may be to hide out in bed in the fetal position, there are plenty of things you can do that are a bit more productive and can get you on your way to feeling better. Here are 52 mental health hacks to get you started.
01. **Go to therapy (of course!)**
   Sticking with your therapist’s treatment plan is important, so be sure that you’re regularly attending appointments or checking in on the platform if you’re using online therapy.

02. **Make a list of things you’re grateful for.**
   Try to do it at the end of each day. This will help put things into perspective, and when you’re feeling like you have nothing going for you, you can refer back to the list.

03. **Eat your favorite snack.**
   Treat yourself once in awhile! Have a cheat day from your diet if you’re on one and indulge your cravings. Bonus points if you have to leave your house to acquire said snack.

04. **Make a scrapbook with photos of your happiest memories.**
   Doing arts and crafts can be therapeutic, so go at it with the glue and glitter. Like with the gratitude list, you’ll have a tangible end product to look back on to cheer you up.

05. **Stop comparing yourselves to others.**
   Spoiler alert: this is way easier said than done. It’s a skill that takes a lot of practice, but once you master it, your self confidence can change drastically.

06. **Say “no” and don’t feel guilty about it.**
   Anytime someone asks you to do something, you don’t have to agree to doing it. Overbooking yourself with your work or social life can add a lot of excess anxiety to your life.

07. **Go for a long walk.**
   Light exercise can do wonders for your mental health. Appreciate the scenery, breathe in some fresh air, and don’t forget to stop and smell the roses—literally!

08. **Take a bath with pretty bath bombs.**
   Baths are a super relaxing way to unwind and unplug after a long day. Colorful bath bombs are just an added bonus...who doesn’t like them?

09. **Cuddle someone...or a stuffed animal.**
   Cuddling and touch release hormones that can reduce stress, so get cozy! If you don’t have a cuddle partner, make do with a stuffed animal. There’s no shame in being a full-blown adult who sleeps with a teddy.

10. **Experiment with meditation.**
   So many people swear by it, and there’s a load of studies to back up the benefits of it, as well. To get started, you can even try using some apps to help guide you.
11. Watch videos that make you laugh.
Laughter is the best medicine for sadness, anxiety, or plain boredom. So head to YouTube and watch a standup comic, cat videos, or epic fail compilations. Whatever floats your boat.

12. Have sex (because science says so).
Doing the deed can put you in a better mood and relieve stress...plus can result in a bunch of physical benefits. So as long as you’re practicing safe sex, go out and get some!

13. Plan something you can look forward to.
When you’re feeling down, it can help to have something that you’re excited for, whether it’s as simple as dinner with a friend or a vacation to Europe. Put it on a physical calendar so you can see it everyday.

You can write about your day, your fears, your dreams, your crush—whatever! Buy a nice journal that will make you want to write. Putting a pen to paper can often help you make more sense of your thoughts.

15. Skype with a friend in another country or state.
Catch up and fill each other in on what’s going on in your lives. It’s nice to stay in touch and socialize even though you’re miles and miles apart. You know what they say—distance makes the heart grow fonder!

16. Volunteer or donate to a cause you believe in.
Doing good makes you feel good, and can help you find purpose when you feel like your life is meaningless. Love animals? Volunteer at a local animal shelter. Have a passion for children? Ask a children’s hospital what opportunities they have for you to help.

17. See nature: the beach, the mountains, or a meadow.
Appreciate the simple things that we often don’t take the time to cherish because we’re in such a hurry or staring at our phones. Mother Nature has created a beautiful world—treasure it!

18. Challenge your negative thinking.
If you have trouble doing this (it’s not easy) take a piece of paper and make two columns. On one side, write the negative thought you’re having. On the opposite side, challenge it. Write it, read it, repeat!

19. Take deep breaths—real good belly breaths.
Hyperventilation (overbreathing) is associated with panic attacks, and a good way to stop an attack is to practice breathing mindfully. Lay flat on your back with a book on your belly and watch it rise and fall, making sure you’re not taking shallow breaths from your chest.
20. **Watch your favorite movie.**
There’s a comforting feeling that comes along with watching the same movie multiple times. The characters become your friends, the lines become second nature to you, and sometimes it can be a tranquil experience. A movie can feel like home.

21. **Listen to your favorite album.**
Similar to the last point, a favorite record can feel like home. Songs can evoke emotions and feelings in a way that really nothing else can. Blast it in your car as you drive aimlessly, or in your headphones on the train to work.

22. **Sing and dance to your favorite song.**
Lock yourself in your room and let yourself loose because nobody’s watching and nothing matters. Use your hairbrush as a microphone, and go wild with your air guitar skills.

23. **Color in a coloring book.**
You can color in a simple kiddie book or buy a special more advanced one made for adults that are a little more difficult. Some adult coloring books are actually being marketed as anxiety coloring books!

24. **Exercise!**
While finding motivation to go to a gym or go for a run can feel like pulling teeth, the benefits are plentiful. It’s scientifically proven that physical activity releases endorphins—stuff in your body that can reduce symptoms of stress!

25. **Make a list of people you love.**
Think about why you love them and the great times you’ve had with them. Remember that this is your support system, and they are there for you when you need them.

26. **Pet a dog or cat.**
The best news in the world is that petting animals is proven to reduce human stress. You can even register your pet as an emotional support animal. So yeah, your pup can be like your second therapist.

27. **Allow yourself to have a day of nothingness.**
While too much free time can be a little dangerous, and an idle mind is breeding ground for negative thoughts, it’s good to give yourself time to totally recharge. Lay on the couch and veg out. You deserve it.

28. **Treat yourself to a massage or facial.**
Have a few hours of pampering and guilt free “me time.” Leave it to the professionals, sit back, and relax! Check out Groupon or LivingSocial for excellent deals on these kinds of things.

29. **Be mindful—even though it can be hard.**
This is something that therapists are often big advocates for. It’s associated with meditation, but it can also be totally separate. Here’s a great guide to getting started.
30. **Try grounding exercises.**
These can help bring you back to reality when you are having a panic attack or an episode of depersonalization. Methods involve using all of your senses to really root yourself in the present. Some simple exercises are here.

31. **Read a book (an old favorite or a new one).**
They say reading books is a way to travel the world without leaving your couch. Escape your reality and immerse yourself in a great story.

32. **Look in the mirror and appreciate your unique beauty.**
Cheesy as it sounds, leave Post-Its on your mirror with little reminders like, “You are beautiful!” It’s not about being cocky, it’s about building confidence.

33. **Take your meds and give yourself a pat on the back for remembering to do so.**
Especially when you start taking meds daily, it can be really hard to be sure to take the pills every day, let alone at the same time. Once you master this daily regimen, you’re good as gold.

34. **Cut back on caffeine and sugar.**
Yes, they’re hard to resist and many of us have serious addictions to coffee. But both of these substances are known triggers for anxiety! Keep a log of how much sugar and caffeine you ingest and see if there’s a correlation between that and your anxiety levels.

35. **Sniff some lavender oil — aromatherapy!**
There are many different essential oils, each with their own healing properties. Lavender is one that’s great for relaxation and to help you fall asleep.

36. **Tell your family how much you love them.**
It doesn’t hurt to shoot them a quick text and let them know you’re thinking of them and appreciate them. Give your mom flowers for no reason and get your dad a Home Depot gift card. Call them up once in awhile. Revolutionary idea!

37. **Tell your friends how much you love them.**
See previous tip. Friends are the family that you can choose. Sisters from another mister, brothers from another mother. Keep them close to you, and remember that friendship is a two way street.

38. **Write down a list of your biggest accomplishments.**
Think back as far as you can. Even those silly awards you won in elementary school matter. When you feel down or unaccomplished, refer back to this list and remember all of your achievements. Give yourself a high five.

39. **Hang pretty art on your bedroom wall.**
Your room should feel like a sanctuary and a private escape. Decorating it with art or posters can make the room truly feel like your space. Pro tip: Watch some HGTV to get inspired.
40. **Give a new hobby a go, and don’t be afraid of failing.**
Even if you aren’t great at what you try, at least you gave it a shot. Then, you can move on to the next thing. Babe Ruth once said, “Never let the fear of striking out keep you from playing the game.” Totally related to baseball, but also extremely metaphorical for everything else in life.

41. **Try to learn a new language (or two).**
This is tough and will require a lot of practice, but it’s a fun journey. Programs like Rosetta Stone and apps like Duolingo make learning fun and simple. Then, if you’re feeling ambitious and have the means, travel to a country which speaks the language and put your skills to the test.

42. **Bake cookies and revel in the sweet aroma.**
Seriously, who doesn’t love the smell of freshly baked sweets? Plus, closing your eyes and really smelling the fragrance can double as a grounding exercise. Win-win.

43. **Organize your desk.**
Organize your desk and you’ll organize your life! Just kidding, I wish it was that simple. However, a tidy desk or workspace can make it a lot easier to get your work done with less distraction.

44. **Play your favorite guilty pleasure app.**
There’s no shame in still being a little bit addicted to Candy Crush. Playing simple games on your phone (or the computer) can distract your mind for a few minutes and take your mind off some of your problems.

45. **Quit worrying about who you “should” be.**
Society, family, and friends can put a lot of pressure on us to become a certain version of ourselves that we might not want to be. Life is about figuring out who you are...and you’re the only one who can truly decide who you want to be.

46. **Try anything new, even if it’s scary at first.**
Facing fears is an excellent way to grow. Scared of heights? Try rock climbing. Scared of open water? Go snorkeling. After you finish, chances are, you’ll think to yourself, “Wow, that wasn’t so bad!” and then you’ll be ready for the next challenge.

47. **Join a support group.**
It can be an amazing experience to open up to people who understand exactly how you are feeling. Many people are wary of opening up to friends and families about their problems, but a support group is a safe and non-judgemental space to let it all out.
48. **Join a niche, secret Facebook group.**
Seriously, there are Facebook groups for everything. You can bond with the internet over anything from beauty products to sloths. If your obsession doesn’t have a group on Facebook, start one!

49. **Take a day to unplug from social media.**
Remember that oftentimes social media is an illusion, and isn’t an accurate depiction of someone’s real life. Rather, it’s a highlight reel. So unplug and be present. You don’t need to refresh Instagram every five minutes. You won’t miss anything too important, promise.

50. **Reach out to a long lost friend or family member.**
It can be so cool to connect with family that you never met or even knew that you had. Then, you can swap stories and see just how much you have in common.

51. **Remember that you are not broken.**
You are enough—despite stigmas and society’s perception of people with mental illnesses. You may want to repeat phrases like these over and over to yourself as mantras.

52. **Do something you love everyday.**
The work or school grind can make life dull and repetitive, feeding into depression and anxiety. So make time, to do your favorite things, no matter how simple they may be. It will make a difference.

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Even doing just one or two of these things can make you feel at least a tiny bit better. Refer to this cheat sheet when you’re feeling lousy. Think of it as your swiss army knife of mental health hacks—and don’t be afraid to use it!
LOOKING FOR THE ULTIMATE MENTAL HEALTH HACK?
GET STARTED WITH TALKSPACE TODAY.