

Compliments of:

A hand is shown from the bottom right, holding a globe of the Earth. The globe is surrounded by various symbols of modern life: a city skyline with skyscrapers, a commercial airplane, hot air balloons, a wind turbine, and a small tree on a grassy patch. The background is a light, textured grey.

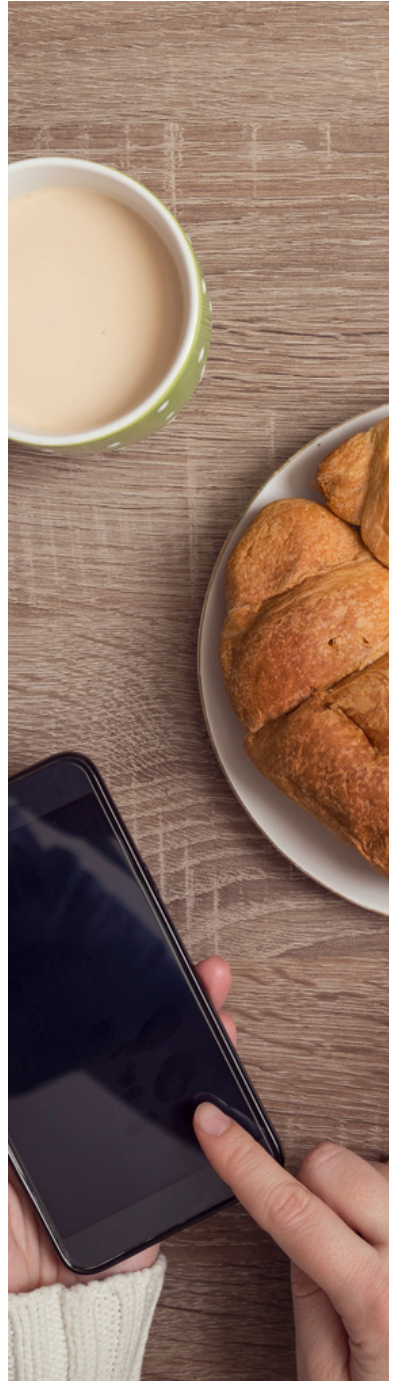
**The Effects  
of Modern  
Life**

**ON OUR  
MENTAL HEALTH**

The perks of being alive in this day and age sure are cool. Not being murdered by a Mongol army or burned at the stake because someone accused you of being a witch is pretty rad. Hell, even not dying from petty diseases, or living in the collective filth of your community, is a nice bonus.

But even though we enjoy many great things by being alive today, some major aspects of our modern life are definitely detrimental to our physical and mental health. Sure, North Korea might just drop a nuke on your head, but I'm not quite talking about that aspect of our modern lives.

Our mental health is on the decline, and that's a well-known fact by now. Chronic stress, depression, anxiety, ADHD, and our hormones going nuts, are just some of the more significant symptoms of our modern life.



CHAPTER 1

HOW DID  
WE GET  
HERE?



It's safe to say that our current way of living is pretty different from how we evolved to live. We lived in small hunter-gatherer communities for a long time, but something changed around 10,000 years ago. It was a pretty big deal, and you might have heard of it, the Agricultural Revolution. We learned how to farm, and frequent moving wasn't ideal, so we built permanent settlements around our crops. Life changed pretty dramatically, but we were still really physically active. We respected the day and night cycle and managed our lives based on the ever-changing seasons.

Another revolution, actually two, took place fairly recently, and they were pretty revolutionary too. The Industrial Revolution started approximately 250 years ago and ended about 180 years ago. It was followed by the Technological Revolution shortly after. These two periods significantly improved and sped up our lives.

The problem is that these changes took place so rapidly we could barely adjust to living in this new era of human existence. The Industrial Revolution started when the steam engine was invented, and now we have devices that are more powerful than anything the world could ever imagine, plus it fits into the palm of our hand. Oh, we also started engineering artificial fish from human hearts.

Saying these changes occurred rapidly is quite frankly an understatement. You probably get my point as to how ill-equipped our minds and bodies are to adapt to such a change in the environment in such a short period of time.

But how is our modern-day life affecting our mental health, and what can we do to stop it?



## Physical (in)Activity and Mental Health

While working out can sculpt your body and make you healthier overall, are you really aware of how the lack of physical activity can affect your mental health? You probably heard people saying exercising makes them energetic and improves their mood, but now scientists have conclusively proven the positive effects of exercising.

Anxiety and depression were on the rise during the initial Covid lockdowns, and so were substance abuse and binge eating. Sure, many of the effects of being lockdown can be attributed to social isolation, but another big part of the puzzle was our physical inactivity during those times.



Just by running or walking for 15 minutes a day, we can reduce the risks of developing major depression by 26% and help treat moderate depression. Exercise can actually be just as effective as anti-depression medicine, without the side effects.

Working out releases endorphins, the "feel-good" chemicals, which are natural painkillers and alleviate depression, anxiety, and stress. Speaking of anxiety and stress, the positive effects of exercise on them are also proven. Although we don't know all of the mechanisms with how exactly does it help, one theory suggests that exercise helps us grow new neurons, something called neurogenesis. PTSD and ADHD diagnosed people can benefit immensely from incorporating physical activity into their routine.

While the effects on conditions like schizophrenia and bipolar disease aren't thorough as with the ones mentioned above, there is a promise that working out can help people suffering from them.

CHAPTER 2

# YOUR BODY, MIND AND THEIR BASIC NEEDS



## Does Your Brain Like Social Media?

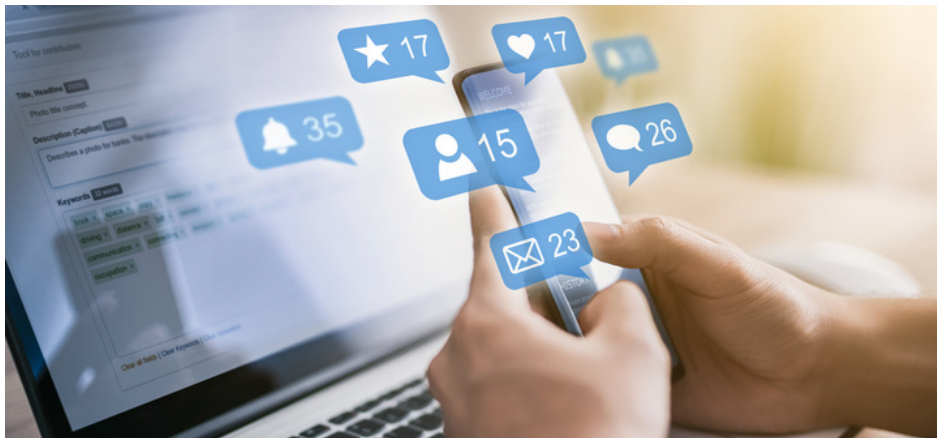
Not only does your brain like social media, but it also loves it. It also technically loves heroin. Social media platforms nowadays serve only one purpose: keeping your attention.

By making you stay on their platform, the social media companies practically sell your attention to advertisers. With the improvements in artificial intelligence, consumer behavior psychology, and us giving companies unfiltered access to our personal data, it's easier than ever for them to know what keeps us engaged on the platform.

While social media isn't inherently all bad, there are some undeniable effects it has on our mental wellbeing.

Depression is the most talked-about consequence of social media. A study from 2017 (Twenge, J. M) showed that heavy social media users increase their risk of depression by 27 percent. Sadly, the links between increased social media usage and depression aren't only seen in one study. A plethora of studies is finding correlation and causation between the two.

One study from 2019 by Hou, Xiong, Jiang, Song, and Wang suggested that social media addiction contributes to lower self-esteem. However, the same authors also noted that frequent social media usage doesn't always equate to addiction, nor does it have to have all of the adverse effects.



The thing that affects our self-esteem the most is the fact that most people portray their lives as perfect, and although we know that deep down, we still feel inadequate. We should all work on self-confidence and self-respect, but the lack of those two is definitely caused by social media.

It is worth noting that social media can positively affect someone's mental health. If a person is "surrounded" by supporting people online, receiving positive feedback will increase their self-esteem.

A recent study suggested a potential relationship between screen-time and suicide rates. The study by Coyne and associates was conducted during a 10-year period, where they gathered data through annual surveys. It showed little effect on boys and their suicide rate, but the girls were at a higher clinical risk of suicide.





## This Is Your Brain on Food

The brain needs fuel in order to function—a lot of it. We get the energy it requires through the things we consume, that being mainly food, obviously. We are pretty aware of how food can influence our physical wellbeing, but not all of us understand how big of a role the quality of our nutrition plays on our mental health.

Nutritional neuroscience is an emerging discipline that's helping us understand how nutrition is intertwined with our behavior, cognitive abilities, and emotions.

The nutritional deficiencies, including zinc, vitamin D, omega-3 fats, iodine, and magnesium, along with eating crazy amounts of sugar and unhealthy fats, all contribute to our deteriorating mental health.

Diets high in processed food, pretty much all western diets, are highly correlated with the increased risk of developing depression, ADHD, anxiety, and increased stress levels.

There are a lot of mechanisms at play when it comes to food and mood, but an important one involves the gut-brain axis. It links our cognitive and emotional centers of the brain with our intestinal organs. Our gut is full of bacteria that help us digest food, and it's safe to say that our modern diets don't support our gut microbiome.

If our food isn't digested properly, our body becomes inflamed. It was shown multiple times that a low-level chronic inflammation was seen in cases of depression.

Another big factor in our mood and mental health is played by our hormones. They are directly influenced by the food we eat and how well we sleep.



## Need for Sleep

A lot of us struggle to get a good night's sleep. Whether we are overstressed, watching Netflix late in the night, or scrolling Instagram until we fall asleep, the effects of a lack of quality sleep are the same. Sleep is not a luxury, it's a basic human need, and you need to treat it as such.

While the amount of sleep deprivation falls somewhere on a spectrum, all forms of sleep deprivation negatively affect our mental health. It's a well-known fact that we can't form new memories without sleep. We use sleep as a way to filter through our memories and remember the important parts. Poor cognitive performance, the inability to focus, mood shifts, and irritability are also a given.

Our stress hormones skyrocket, and therefore we always function in fight-or-flight mode, never giving our body the chance to rest and repair. This can lead to inflammation, which also ties in with our nutrition.

The lack of sleep has been linked to more frequent depressive, anxiety, and psychotic episodes, worsened ADHD, and increased suicide rates.

Conditions like depression and anxiety can also cause further problems with sleep. For example, a depressed person might sleep too much, and an anxious person might have trouble falling asleep or wake up many times during the night. Regarding bipolar disorder, a study by Allison G Harvey and colleagues suggests that sleeping problems induce or worsen manic and depressive periods.

Sleep apnea is also a common cause of sleep problems. It's a disorder that involves complete pauses in breathing during sleep. This reduces the body's oxygen levels and elevates blood pressure, causing fragmented and disturbed sleep.



CHAPTER 3

# WHAT YOU CAN DO?

## What Does This Mean for You?

Don't be scared; this doesn't mean you need to stop living altogether for your mental health not to suffer. It just means that we as a society need to think about whether or not our lifestyles need to change.

You can also look at it from a more positive angle and see how you can further optimize your mental health. We'll be kind enough to give you a few tips and pointers to help you Ditching your phone and TV for less than an hour or two before going to bed is also a good idea. factors listed above.



## Move, Disconnect, Eat

bed is also a good idea.

Besides getting enough of it, a

consistent sleep schedule is

and Sleepprobably the most important

thing regarding sleep. Sadly, this

The first things you need toincludes the weekend, but trust clear up in order for yourme. You will feel the benefits.

mental health to improve areYour bedroom should be dark, your sleep and your diet.silent, and cozy, with the

Research has confirmed thattemperature hovering around 18 we need about 7 to 9 hours ofdegrees Celsius.

sleep a day. And I'm talking

about quality, deep sleep.Speaking of food, it would

You should avoid drinkingprobably be a good idea to get a alcohol for at least 2 hoursblood test. Bloodwork can reveal

before bedtime and coffeany potential problems and within 6 hours of bedtime. deficiencies you may have.

Even if you don't get a bloodNow for the final part. Social test done, eating a balancedmedia. diet devoid of processed foods, sugar, and unhealthy fats is aThe feeling of instant safe bet.gratification it gives us is absolutely lovely, but we must Consistency is a thing you needresist it. Our focus is getting to consider when managingworse by the day. We are losing your nutritional habits. Youself-esteem and increasing the want this to become a lifelongrisk of many severe conditions. thing, not a thing you do for aYou don't have to ditch social few months.media altogether. Try installing a screen time app on your phone Exercise should be somethingand see how much time you you enjoy. Whether it bewaste per day. Then try lowering weightlifting, volleyball, yoga, orthat number after a few days. hiking, an ideal exercise for you certainly exists.The average person spends You don't have to do much, foralmost 7 hours a day looking at a starters. Go on daily 15-minutescreen, 4 of those being on the walks. The "daily" part is thephone. most important one. You willLimiting the time you spend in a strengthen your discipline andparticular app is also a good reap the benefits of beingidea, and there are a lot of apps active much faster.that can help you battle social media overuse.

The recommendations for weekly exercise say we should get at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise. Although I think this is still too low, it's a good goal to aim for.





PRINTABLE:

THE MODERN-  
DAY MENTAL  
HEALTH CHEAT  
SHEET



<b>Focus</b>	<b>To Do:</b>
<b>Sleep</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sleep 7-9 hours a day</li><li>• Keep a consistent sleep schedule</li><li>• Limit coffee, alcohol, and phone use before bedtime</li><li>• Keep your room cool, silent, and dark</li></ul>
<b>Diet</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Get a blood test to determine your deficiencies</li><li>• Eat whole foods, avoid processed foods</li><li>• Have a balanced diet</li><li>• Make it a lifelong habit</li></ul>
<b>Exercise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Start slow- 15 minutes of daily walking is a good start</li><li>• Find an activity that you'll fall in love</li><li>• Get at least 150 minutes of moderate or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise per week</li><li>• Stick to it</li></ul>
<b>Media</b>	<p>Track and limit your screen time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Limit your time spent in certain apps</li><li>• Do something else, literally anything</li><li>•</li></ul>



Hi!

I hope that you enjoyed and take advantage of this resource! I ask that you please do consider my fitness behaviour change program.

Think of it like a specialized type of health coaching. This is a great way to help individuals gradually change habits in a sustainable way.

I would welcome a chat with you.

Please use this link:

<https://tidycal.com/sjgfitness/30-minute-meeting>

Compliments of:



Sartre Jean-Gilles  
MHA, PKin, CSEP-CPT  
Fitness Behaviour Change  
Coach Certified Kinesiologist  
Personal Trainer