

Department of Defense

Work-Life Programs

Health & Wellness



Walk Into Your Mental Wellness

January is National Mental Wellness Month. Mental health determines how we operate psychologically, emotionally, and socially. Considering how much of a role mental health plays in each aspect of our everyday lives it's important to guard and improve psychological wellness using effective tools. One of those tools is exercise. Everyone knows that walking outside is good for the body, but did you also know that walking is one of the best things we can do for our mental wellness, too? Here are five different methods you can use to create the perfect walking wellness routine!

5 Walks to Boost Your Mental Wellness

- **Silent Walks.** This experience is all about taking the time to detach from fast-paced environments and everyday stressors to reestablish a new pace by finding the silence in your mind. Walk slowly and step softly, letting your thoughts pass by as you redirect your mental energy on moving quietly through the environment. And, since nature isn't inherently silent, you can recruit it to help if your mind starts to wander to negative or anxious places.
- **Mindfulness Walks.** Mindfulness is the practice of bringing your attention to the present moment and is often performed in a place of quiet and stillness. But when you add in the act of walking, it becomes an exercise in awareness of both space and self and a time to appreciate your surroundings and how your body and mind feel while moving.
- **Social Walks.** Walking alone is great for focusing completely on yourself, but at the end of the day, human beings are social creatures. Social connection is crucial to our mental well-being. By walking with another person or a group, you can enhance the benefits of walking, satisfying your inherent need for connectedness to others and to the environment itself.
- **Learning Walks.** Walking has plenty of benefits, but one often overlooked benefit of walking is the perfect time it clears for productivity. Getting lost in an audiobook, podcast, or even music can keep you moving longer, making even the most familiar paths feel like a whole new journey, all while taking in information auditorily.
- **Wander Walks.** Going for a wander allows us to enjoy being outdoors without pressure or expectations. New surroundings create a heightened sense of wonder and awareness.

Even short walks — whether in nature, at the mall, or an exercise facility — can improve all-around well-being if you make them a habit. Five minutes here and ten minutes there can really add up and forge a path with a strong foundation for mental wellness.

RESOURCES:

- **NIH:** [NIMH » Home \(nih.gov\)](https://www.nih.gov/)
- **SAMHSA:** [SAMHSA Blog | SAMHSA](https://www.samhsa.gov/)
- **MentalHealth.gov:** [Home | MentalHealth.gov](https://www.mentalhealth.gov/)

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