Good mental health means that you have the mental energy to function at your best at work, at home and at play. It means being able to relax, eat and sleep without feeling worried, anxious or depressed. There are several ways you can lay the foundations for good mental health, such as:

- finding time to do the things you enjoy
- talking to people you trust about what is bothering you
- exercising
- eating well
- not ignoring signals that something is upsetting you
- not turning a bad day into a major disaster – everyone has a bad day now and then
- not putting yourself last when caring for others - take time to care for yourself as well
- seeking professional help if your feelings seem overwhelming.

Nutrition
The food that you choose to eat can have a direct effect on your physical health, energy level and mood. A ‘healthy diet’ is considered to be one that contains all of the basic food groups and enough of essential nutrients, does not have too much sugar, salt, fat or alcohol and provides the right amount of calories to maintain a healthy weight. Avoiding additives and preservatives is always beneficial. The right foods can help your body stay healthy, which has a flow-on effect to good mental health.

Exercise
Physical activity is good for your body, your brain and your mental health.

Brain cells use certain chemicals - dopamine and serotonin - to communicate with each other, so they affect mood and thinking. Exercise has an effect on these chemicals and stimulates other chemicals which help new cells to develop and grow. Exercise has also been shown to reduce damaging changes in the brain that can be caused by stress.

Any exercise is better than no exercise. Moderate exercise on most, if not all, days has been shown to work best.

While you might not feel like working out when you’re feeling down, even a walk around the block or some yoga could contribute to improving the symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Sleep
Sleep is vital for the body to recover from physical activity, replenish energy reserves, repair organ tissue and rejuvenate tired muscles. It also plays an important role in the body’s capacity to learn and remember information. Without enough sleep, people can become angry, stressed, mentally exhausted or feel overwhelmed, nervous, frustrated or worried.

Stress
Stress can be caused by all sorts of situations. Some of the most common involve money, relationships and work. Some stress can be positive, however too much can be damaging to your health.

When stressed, the body produces the so-called ‘fight or flight’ chemicals that prepare your body for an emergency. If you’re in a modern-day situation in which you can’t fight or run away, your body can’t use up these chemicals and the changes they produce can do serious damage to your health. Stress produces feelings of anger, fear, frustration, anxiety and depression. These feelings can produce physical symptoms, making you feel worse.

References

Promoting good mental health
Good mental health plays a significant part in overall health and wellbeing. Maintaining good mental health is just as important as good physical health.