

7 Ways Tech Can Improve Your Mental Health

By Tony Phillips, howtogeek.com, 12/3/24

Technology often receives bad press for its adverse effects on people's mental health. But, actually, there are many ways in which your devices can help you improve how you feel, as long as your methods are selected carefully and used in moderation.

1 Wellness and Mindfulness Apps

A [study by Pooja Chandrashekar](#) of the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences at Harvard University suggests that "mobile apps have significant potential to deliver high-efficacy mental health interventions," especially in light of "the global shortage of psychiatrists and the lack of mental health care access in rural regions."

That said, the [American Psychiatric Association](#) suggests that people thinking about using a mental health app should first ask the following questions:

1. Has the app been updated in the last 180 days?
2. Is there a transparent privacy policy that is accessible before use?
3. Does the app collect, use, or transmit sensitive data? If yes, does it claim to do so securely?
4. Is there evidence of specific benefits from academic institutions, end-user feedback, or research studies?
5. Does the app have a clinical foundation relevant to your intended use?
6. Does the app seem easy to use?
7. Can data be easily shared and interpreted in a way that's consistent with the stated purpose of the app?

Headspace

[Healthline](#), [Hartford HealthCare](#), and [the NHS](#) all recommend [Headspace](#), a wide-ranging app that offers many resources and techniques for meditation, mindfulness, mental health coaching, and therapy. It is designed to help you develop life-changing habits that help you live more mindfully, and it's suitable for anyone hoping to maintain a healthy headspace. This app is free to trial for two weeks and costs \$12.99 monthly or \$69.99 annually after that. However, its [high user satisfaction](#) suggests it's worth it.

Calm

Many reputable well-being sources also recommend [Calm](#), which focuses on breathing exercises and meditation. As its name suggests, it aims to help you sleep and relax through wide-ranging techniques, including soothing music, sleep stories, and nature sounds. After the free seven-day trial, it's free to download but costs from \$14.99 a month or \$69.99 a year for premium services.

Built-in Phone Tools

In January 2024, Apple added a [Mental Well-being section to its Health app](#) that lets you track your emotions and mood or deep-dive into other factors contributing to your mental health. It includes a mental health questionnaire that uses [PHQ-9](#) and [GAD-7](#) tests, which medical professionals often use to monitor depression and anxiety. You can also log your mood, track your exercise minutes, and access resources that help you understand the factors affecting your mental health.

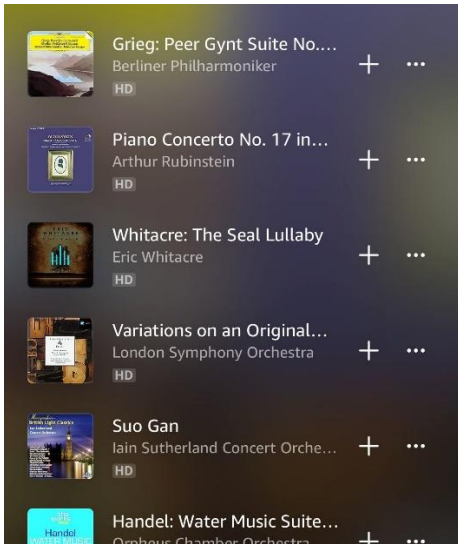
Be aware of the difference between mental health apps and AI chatbots. The former can provide useful resources to support your mental well-being, while the latter [might less usefully employ rules-based systems instead of](#)

[machine learning systems](#) , meaning they respond according to predetermined rules, rather than learning and adapting on the go.

2Calming Music on Demand

A [study published in the journal Nature Neuroscience](#) suggests that music can stimulate an immense pleasure that rivals the positive feelings derived from eating our favorite meals, taking drugs, or even having sex. With today's seemingly endless choice of music streaming services, this feeling of euphoria is something that anyone with a phone and the internet can enjoy.

Personally, I've created a playlist on [Amazon Music](#) called "Peacefully Classic," which I often listen to on my [noise-canceling headphones](#) as I drift off to sleep. In fact, I'm listening to it right now, as it puts me in the right frame of mind to concentrate on my writing.



Most music streaming services contain publicly available playlists for you to enjoy, whether you're looking for peaceful music or more upbeat tunes that increase your heartbeat. Either way, make the most of online music to boost your mood!

3Staying Connected

It goes without saying that social media has its drawbacks. Indeed, I recently [deleted my YouTube and X accounts](#) due to the adverse impact they were having on my mental health. However, when used selectively and carefully, social media has the power to connect you to your loved ones, as well as people who share your interests:

- One-on-one or group chats on platforms like [WhatsApp](#) mean you're just a few seconds away from those who matter to you.
- Safe social spaces, like moderated [Facebook](#) groups, are a great place for connecting with like-minded people.
- Increasing numbers of firms, including How-To Geek, use social chat channels on platforms such as [Slack](#) where employees can discuss both work-related matters and completely off-the-cuff issues.

4To-Do Lists

[To-do lists are underestimated](#). Whether you're looking for a to-do app that's convenient, such as [Apple Reminders](#), one that's compatible with your other apps, like [Microsoft To Do](#) or [Google Tasks](#), or one that's feature-rich, such as [TickTick](#), a to-do list helps you to de-clutter and organize your mind.

For me, I love the rewarding feeling that comes with ticking things off my to-do list when I've had a productive day. To-do lists are also good for avoiding the worrying feeling that you'll forget to do some of the more menial tasks that come with everyday life. My go-to task-organizing app is [Microsoft To Do](#)—it's easy to use, works on my phone and computer, and helps me organize my day, thus boosting my state of mind overall and letting me focus on the things that really matter.

Make sure you don't become overwhelmed by your to-do list. To-do lists are *meant* to have things on them, so try not to worry if they're building up. If you think having a to-do list is more likely to affect you adversely than positively, skip this suggestion and try some others instead.

5 Learning New Skills

Upskilling—defined as [the process of learning new skills](#)—can have significant and long-lasting positive impacts on your mental health. According to [The Benefits of Learning](#), picking up new skills can give you "self-esteem and self-efficacy, a sense of identity, purpose and future, communication and other competencies, and social integration," which all contribute to improved well-being, mental health, and "the ability to cope effectively with change and adversity, including ill-health."

My colleague, [Dan](#), recommends [Crash Course](#), a YouTube channel that has teamed up with Arizona State University to provide "more than 50 courses on a wide variety of subjects, ranging from the humanities to sciences and so much more"—all for free.

You can also go one step further and [take an online certification course](#) to broaden your career prospects and increase your chances of being happier in your work.

6 Monitoring Screen Time

Despite the many ways that technology can help you with your mental health, it's important to make sure you're not dependent on your phone for mental wellness. "Spending more than a few hours per day looking at your phone is bad for your health. It's more important to have a variety of real-world hobbies and social activities," says Dr. Weigle ([via THOCC](#)). "Put down the phone and get out there!"

To help you with this, you can monitor your screen time. [On Apple devices](#), tap Settings > Screen Time, and [on Android phones](#), swipe down from the top of your screen to access the gear icon, and then tap "Digital Well-Being And Parental Controls."

7 Text Chat Charities

If you're struggling, it can sometimes be easier to chat by text than to speak over the phone or face to face. Wherever you are, free mental health text lines are there to help 24 hours a day. Here are just a few of those services:

United States

- **988 Lifeline** is a universal mental health crisis line that connects you to a counselor via [online chat](#) or text at 988.
- **Crisis Text Line** has trained counselors that can help with wide-ranging mental health crises via text (at 741741), [online chat](#), or [WhatsApp](#).