



Take Action Every Day for Your Mental Health – Scavenger Hunt

We all need to take a break sometimes. This can be done in many different ways like listening to music, reading a book, talking with friends or loved ones, or by taking a walk outside.

Sometimes these things are still not enough to quiet your mind. Try a Scavenger Hunt to help you refocus and bring yourself back into the moment.

You have two different options to choose from (or try both!):

1. An Outdoor Scavenger Hunt you can do as you take a walk
2. An Indoor Scavenger Hunt to find things in your home, office, school or wherever you are



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OPTION #1: OUTDOOR SCAVENGER HUNT

Why take a walk when you need a mental health boost? Not only can it help take your mind off any possible daily struggles you may be facing, studies show that exercise increases your energy levels and boosts your mood.

Safety Note: *If you're heading outside by yourself, keep safety in mind. Let someone else know your plans, carry a phone with you, avoid unsafe areas, and wear visible clothing if possible.*

Step #1: Go outside and get grounded

Access to nature has also been found to improve sleep and reduce stress, increase happiness and reduce negative emotions, promote positive social interactions and even help generate a sense of meaning to life.

Need another reason to get outside? Focusing your mind on the sights, sounds, and smells around you can bring you back to a calmer state, mentally and physically. What does the sky look like today? Do you feel a breeze? What can you smell in the air?

Step #2: Take a look around and start moving

On the following page is a list of things to keep a lookout (and an ear out) for while you're on your walk. How many can you find?

We'd love to hear from you on what you found, post a picture on your social media of your checklist or of one of the items you found with the hashtag #ScavengerHunt4MH and **(insert County specific hashtag here)**



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- Stop sign with a sticker on it
- Birds chirping
Hearing bird song combats negative feelings such as annoyance and stress, while boosting positive emotions and health, according to new research using the sounds found at U.S. national parks.
- Community art (on the outside of a building or other structure)
- Picnic bench
- Cloud that looks like an animal
- Wind chimes
- Something starting with the letter "M"
- A fragrant flower, plant, or tree to smell
The sense of smell plays an important role in the physiological effects of mood, stress, and working capacity
- Orange leaf
- Ladybug
- Flag
- Basketball hoop
- Dog or cat (bonus points for spotting an unusual animal)
Interacting with animals has been shown to decrease levels of cortisol (a stress-related hormone) and lower blood pressure. Other studies have found that animals can reduce loneliness, increase feelings of social support, and boost your mood. Even just seeing cute animals can help!
- License plate beginning with the number "9"
- Butterfly
- Drinking fountain
- Red door
- Grass with small flowers in it
According to research, touching and smelling plants can reduce stress in your mind and body.
- Baby in a stroller
- Lawn sign
- Something that makes you laugh

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OPTION #2: INDOOR SCAVENGER HUNT

Sometimes you can't get outside, but you need a break to reset your mind. You can do that wherever you are! Use the things you see and sense around you to help bring yourself back to calm.

Step #1: Pause and get grounded

Focusing your mind on the present moment, without dwelling on the past or worrying about the future, can improve your mental well-being. This approach has been shown to decrease depression, help identify and manage your feelings, reduce anxiety and stress, and even boost your memory.

Before you get started with the scavenger hunt, take a few minutes to breathe to help clear your mind.

Sit in a comfortable position with your eyes closed. Notice how your body feels and let yourself relax. Breathe in and out naturally. Feel how your breath flows through your body. Focus on one breath at a time. If your mind wanders, just redirect it back to the breathing. After a few minutes, check in with your whole body. Take a deep breath, let it out and open your eyes.

Step #2: Take a new look at what's around you

On the following page is a list of things to find or sense when you're indoors. How many items can you find?

We'd love to hear from you on what you found, post a picture on your social media of your checklist or of one of the items you found with the hashtag #ScavengerHunt4MH and **(insert County specific hashtag here)**



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- Picture on a wall
- Green plant
Houseplants can enhance your mental and emotional health. Some types of plant soil bacteria can trigger brain chemicals that reduce depression!
- Something that makes you smile
- A rainbow of books (can you find red/orange/yellow/green/blue/purple books?)
- Something that smells good
- The sound of a car going by
- A vegetable (a real one or a picture)
People who eat a diet rich in vegetables and fruits have lower stress levels. The nutrients found in them improve the body functions that influence anxiety and mood.
- Something a kid might play with
- An item you made yourself
- A bag from a store
- Something musical
Music has been found to have many positive effects on stress and mood levels. It can even help to treat mental illness by literally changing your brain.
- Something shiny
- A hat
- Something with the first letter of your name on it
- A picture of something or someone you love
- Three things that are yellow
- An item you could cook with
Cooking can be great for your mental health for many reasons. Working with food is an opportunity to practice mindfulness, patience, a sense of accomplishment, and creative expression.
- Something that feels soft
- Calendar
- Something with a star on it

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