

# 7 Ways to Improve Mental Health in Seniors



## 1. Play Mind Games

Just as the body needs physical activity and stimulation to stay healthy, the brain needs stimulation to stay sharp and avoid cognitive decline common as we age.

Any activity that keeps the mind engaged and working towards solving problems contributes to brain health, but some of the most common and accessible activities for seniors include:

- **Reading and writing:** [journaling can help](#) to manage and alleviate the effects of stress and anxiety
- **Learning a new language:** language learning [exercises regions of the](#)

[brain](#) often affected by aging

- **Playing an instrument:** [music stimulates the brain](#) & improves memory in seniors with Alzheimer's & dementia
- **Playing puzzles and games:** being active, [having fun](#), and challenging your brain have multiple cognitive benefits



## 2. Get Physical

From taking regular walks to yoga classes and ballroom dancing, exercise and physical activity are good for both the mind and the body by boosting confidence and reducing the risk of falling, for example.

Staying active and getting enough exercise are as important for senior mental health and older adults' wellbeing, as they are at any other stage of life.

In fact, low-impact exercises like stretching and strength training are actually necessary to help seniors stay healthy and reduce the risk of common age-related problems like bone fractures, joint pain, and other chronic illnesses.

In addition to the physical benefits, exercise can also help manage stress, anxiety, and [depression in seniors](#), which can be just as detrimental to senior health as physical ailments and injuries.



## 3. Stay Connected with Friends

Time and distance can make it difficult for anyone to maintain close relationships with old friends, especially as we age.

For older adults, keeping in touch with the important people in their lives can help to stave off loneliness and feelings of isolation that can lead to depression, as well as mental and physical decline.

Teach your older relative or friend how to connect with new and old friends on social media and Skype.

Or keep it simple and encourage them to write letters or set up a regular schedule for a good old-fashioned phone call.

And like anyone, [seniors can always make new friends!](#)



## 4. Adult Day Health Programs

Adult day health is a great resource for seniors looking to stay active, make new friends, pick up new skills, and join a friendly and welcoming community of peers and skilled nursing and care professionals.

Other professional services can be arranged, including rehabilitation therapies, nursing care, podiatry, mental health counseling and social services.

Daily program includes a morning coffee social, medication assistance, personal care and grooming, group exercise, crafts, music and movies, discussion groups and educational programs, seasonal activities and parties, physical and intellectual motivation and outings.



## 5. Pick up a New Hobby

**Staying active after retirement** is extremely important. Everyone has a personal wish list of dreams and activities they put off for “one day.” Retirement is the perfect time for seniors to dust off their “bucket list” and pursue a lifelong goal, be it gardening, sewing, painting or French cooking!

Hobbies like **shadow boxes** help increase the neuroplasticity of the brain in which nerve cells connect or reconnect, changing the brain’s structure and function when stimulated through the repetition of seeing them.

As neuronal connections in these pathways are strengthened and new connections established, individuals with dementia feel comforted and gain an increased sense of belonging.



## 6. Volunteering

Many seniors find fulfillment and a sense of purpose in volunteering for a worthy cause.

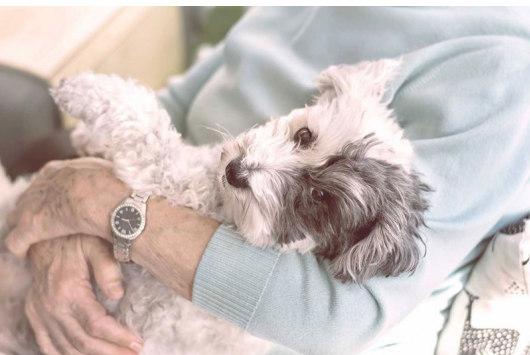
With no shortage of organizations and causes in need of support, there are many possibilities for older adults to get involved and feel valued and needed.

**Seniors volunteering for a cause** or organization can be a rewarding experience at any age.

But for someone looking to donate their time after retirement, volunteering can offer a number of additional benefits that enhance physical, emotional, and mental health.

Whether you enjoy reading to or sharing your skills and expertise with children and young students, or you feel moved to volunteer in a hospital or local food pantry or soup kitchen, volunteering in retirement can help seniors remain active, socially engaged, and become part of a vibrant and diverse community.

From making new friends to getting (or staying) physically active, volunteering can be a rewarding experience for everyone involved.



## 7. Caring for a Pet

Where appropriate, animals can help **keep seniors active** and busy and offer companionship in the process with their unconditional love.

Volunteering at an animal shelter is also a good way to connect with animals if you don’t care for one of your own.