

Presence of Mind: Mental Health Matters

Music plays as the series title displays: Presence of Mind, sponsored by Cloud9 and Kaiser Permanente.

Introduction

Alanah Pearce opens the video by talking about how to take care of your mental health to stay in the game. Alanah, is a popular content creator, game developer, and streamer.

Hello, I'm Alanah Pearce coming at you today with a topic that I care about a whole lot; mental health. If you've watched my videos or streams, or listened to podcasts, you might have heard me talk about struggles that I've had in the past with depression or with just managing feelings and emotions in general, and there are a lot of things that have helped me like video games, like being a part of the gaming community, and the tremendous amount of positive output that it can have. And learning how to manage my own mental health effectively.

Since I started paying attention to the way that I feel and the things that I need, I have way more good days and good days mean more time to focus on the things that I'm passionate about. Reaching out and getting support from the Internet has been one thing that has genuinely really helped me. And doing positive things on the Internet has made my world a whole lot more positive in general, so here's me giving a gift back to you guys.

Check out this video that's designed to help you be your best self by taking care of your mind and your body, and it'll only take a couple of minutes.

Leo's story

Let's start by listening to a real conversation about mental health.

This is Leo, talking to his Dad, Marc, about how he came to understand his depression and learned to manage it.

[Leo's story](#)

Questions answered in the video

The video focuses on your emotional well-being and will help you answer the following questions:

- How is my mental health connected to my total health?
- How does my mental health impact my life?
- What can I do to make my mental health a priority?
- What resources are available to support me?

How is my mental health connected to my total health?

Taking care of your mental health

Your mental health is part of your total health because your brain and body are connected. Just like with physical health, sometimes we're OK and sometimes not so OK. Sometimes we all need a little help.

Taking care of your mental health and wellness allows you to feel and be at your best. You need to eat right, sleep well, exercise, and have healthy relationships. Doing these kinds of things helps build resilience so you can manage stress and get through tough times.

Mental health plus physical health equals total health

As kids, we may have been taught to take care of our **physical** health – like eating our vegetables, brushing our teeth, and getting lots of exercise.

But when were we taught to take care of our **mental** health? For many of us, we may have learned little bits here and there... or nothing at all.

And yet, mental and physical health play equally important roles in **total** health.

Ways to care for your mental health

You can support your **total** health by taking better care of your **mental** health. Ask yourself this question, "How can I make my mental health a priority?" Here are some ways to you might answer this question:

- Eat well and exercise.
- Take time for myself.
- Talk about how I feel.
- Practice ways to manage stress.
- Gt help when I need it.

How does my mental health impact my life?

Voices from the gaming community

Let's hear from some voices in the gaming community.

A young man presses his hand to his brow and says, "I'm trying so hard to improve at this game and I'm just not good enough. Some days I get really down and I don't even feel like playing. My performance anxiety is out of control."

A young woman squeezes her eyes shut in frustration and says, "I hate it when people I know argue with me in a game, or they blame me for a move I made. I get tilted and it ruins the game."

A teenager looks perplexed and says, "What really gets me down is when I see a friend rage and I say, 'Chill' and that person rages even more and then they block me or they don't respond to my texts. Then, when I see them playing online with another friend, I feel bad."

Some days we just don't feel that great

In a game or not, some days we just don't feel that great emotionally. We may feel stress, anxiety, fear, or just feel "down." Anyone can have such feelings now and then.

But, what does it mean when these feelings last a long time, like several weeks or months, or if we start feeling worse, or our feelings keep us from being our best or doing the things we enjoy?

When you're not feeling great, it can impact your everyday life. Here are some examples of emotions you might experience:

- Trouble concentrating
- Forgetfulness
- Aches and pains
- Extreme mood changes
- Irritability
- Trouble sleeping
- Feeling sad, down, uninterested
- Being "tilted"

These emotions might impact your life in the following ways:

- Not participating in my usual online communities or games
- Problems in my relationships with friends or family
- Putting off important or even fun tasks
- Not performing at my best
- Problems at school or work

Mental health conditions

When negative emotions start to dominate our lives, we may be diagnosed with a mental health condition, such as depression or anxiety.

Some people ignore mental health conditions and hope they will fix themselves or go away. This approach doesn't work well because mental health conditions are medical conditions, just like diabetes or asthma.

Let's look at a story about one young woman's journey as she learned about her mental health condition.

Beth's story

In this story, Beth is talking to her boyfriend, Shawn, about how she came to understand her depression and find the right treatment.

[Beth's story](#)

Some people are at higher risk

Mental health conditions can impact anyone. But some people experience prejudice, racism, trauma, abuse, or violence at higher rates, which can harm their physical and mental health. People of color, people who identify LGBTQI, and people living with disabilities are among those who experience these stressors more often. This can make them more vulnerable to developing mental health conditions.

Mental health conditions are manageable

The good news is that, like many types of **medical** conditions, mental health conditions are manageable. Support and treatment from a mental health professional or doctor can help get us on the path to feeling better. You can learn to manage a mental health condition.

A young gamer poses a question faced by many. "I get it. My mental health is important. I need to pay attention and take care of myself, both physically and mentally. I can do that. But what about the judgment? What about the negative and toxic things some people say online and I-R-L?"

Some people have the wrong idea about mental health

Unfortunately, some people have the wrong idea about mental health. They treat others who have intense emotions or mental health conditions as "less than."

Their judgements may be obvious, such as making negative remarks about a person's mental health condition or feelings, or making toxic comments in chat.

Other times, their words or actions may be more subtle, maybe even unintentional, such as avoiding or ignoring a person who appears to be struggling.

How does this feel when it's directed at you? Consider this short chat between 2 gamers and the emotions Erisly may be feeling.

Pika Dude says "Hey, how are you?"

Erisly responds, "Not so good" with some sad and angry emojis.

Pika Dude asks, "Why? What's going on?"

Erisly responds, “People say some toxic stuff. I’m feeling it.” She includes more sad and angry emojis.

Pika Dude asks, “You mean in you game of League?”

Erisly responds, “Yeah but other games too” with 2 sad emojis.

When we become overwhelmed or can’t speak up

When we become overwhelmed by other people’s toxic words and actions, it can impact how we feel about ourselves. It can become part of our identity.

Sometimes people feel they cannot speak up or be themselves. Here are some examples:

- “Sometimes the depression overwhelms me, and I can’t get out of bed. I can’t admit that to anyone.”
- “Who am I going to tell? People will never treat me the same if I tell them about my eating disorder.”
- “When I have a panic attack, I look for somewhere to hide until it’s over.”
- “I smile because I have to, but inside I’m falling apart. I feel like no one sees me or cares.”

Seek psychological safety

One of the most important ways you can protect yourself from the negative judgements of others is to seek out psychological safety. This is where you’re able to say or show how you feel without fear of negative consequences.

Look for environments, situations, and relationships where you feel safe, where you can be open about your feelings, and where you feel accepted and supported.

If you find yourself not feeling safe, think about removing yourself from those situations or taking a break from those relationships, at least for a while.

What about you?

When other people’s toxic words and judgements have a negative impact on your mental health, what can you do? Take a moment to reflect, then continue for the answer.

Here are several actions you might have identified for yourself:

- Maintain my physical health.
- Pay attention to my feelings.
- Talk about the way I feel.
- Practice techniques to manage stress.
- Get help when I need it.

What can I do to make my mental health a priority?

Knowledge check

As we finish up, let's do one last knowledge check. When you consider your total health, which is true?

- a. Mental health is more important than physical health.
- b. Physical health is more important than mental health.
- c. Mental and physical health are equally important.

If you answered the last choice, that mental and physical health are equally important, you are correct. Mental health plus physical health equals total health.

Find Your Words, a website full of resources

Sometimes it's hard to know how to talk about mental health.

Please check out [Find Your Words dot org](https://www.findyourwords.org). It's a place to learn how to manage stress, how to recognize the signs it could be something more, how to start a conversation, or get support for yourself or someone else.

On the home page for Find Your Words, select Support center. Here, you can find all kinds of support, for yourself, or for someone you care about who might be struggling.

...such as self-check tools to help you identify signs and symptoms.

...and contact info so you can talk, text, or chat online with someone who can help.

You can also connect with others and join online conversations with people who understand what you're going through.

You can find many other resources as well.

Next steps

Gaming can be a healthy way to take time for yourself and recharge. What else will you start doing today to make your mental health a priority? Choose 1 or 2 actions from the following 3 areas that you'll start working on today.

Practice daily self-care:

- Take care of my physical health.
- Manage stress.
- Take time for myself.
- Build healthy relationships.

Listen to my feelings and moods:

- Pay attention to my feelings.
- Talk about my feelings with trusted friends and family.

- Seek psychologically safe environments, situations, and relationships.
- Reject wrong ideas about mental health.

Get help when needed:

- Participate in online support, such as Find Your Words.
- Work with a mental health professional or doctor.
- Call a hotline.

Wrapping up

Alanah Pearce wraps up the interactive video with a few parting words.

Thank you for staying with me. I hope you got some tips on how to take care of your brain and your body and of course, why that's important. If you make your mental health a priority you can really see the positive impact it has on your life, and those around you, and how you can start to help the wellbeing of others when you're in a more positive place yourself.

We have more videos coming soon and we hope you can stick around and check them out. The more you learn, the longer you can stay in the game.

Congratulations on completing the interactive video. Please complete a [short survey](#).