



PEACE AT WORK
PERSONAL EMPOWERMENT AND CARE ENHANCEMENT

Psychohygiene – Strategies for Mental Well-Being

Unit 1

03/2025



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the European Union**

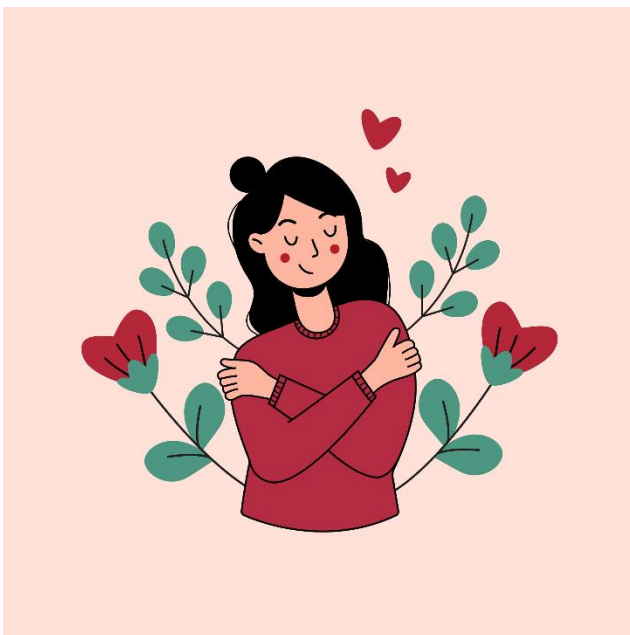
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Learning Objectives

By the end of this learning unit, participants will be able to:

1. Explain what psychohygiene is and why it is essential for mental and emotional well-being.
2. Recognise common challenges and habits that undermine psychohygiene.
3. Apply simple, daily strategies to prevent stress and emotional fatigue.
4. Build a personal plan for maintaining strong mental health.
5. Use practical tools and exercises to support ongoing resilience and balance.

Introduction



Source: <https://pixabay.com/>

Psychohygiene is the mental equivalent of daily hygiene. It's about taking small, consistent actions to maintain mental health, prevent emotional exhaustion, and create a lifestyle that supports well-being. We all know how important it is to brush our teeth, eat well, and keep our bodies clean — but how often do we think about doing the same for our mind?

Take a moment to reflect: when was the last time you intentionally cared for your mental

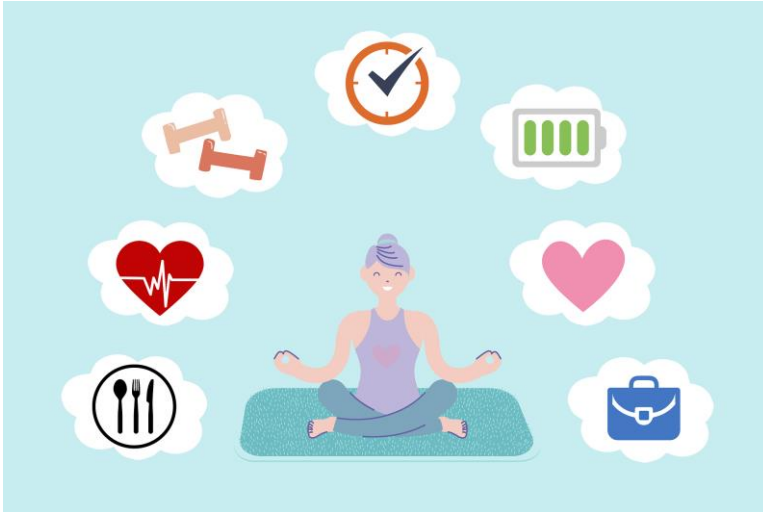
well-being?

In today's fast-paced and hyperconnected world, many people skip these “mental maintenance” habits. Over time, the result can be burnout, anxiety, or simply a constant feeling of being “drained.” The good news is that psychohygiene is simple to learn and easy to integrate into daily life.

In this unit, we will explore the key areas of psychohygiene, common barriers to practicing it, and practical tools that can help you stay balanced, focused, and emotionally strong — no matter what life throws your way.

Main Content

1. Understanding Psychohygiene



Source: <https://pixabay.com/>

Psychohygiene is a comprehensive approach to preserving mental well-being for individuals and society. It emphasizes that mental health is integral to overall health and requires conscious effort and means to maintain harmonious mental states. Psychohygiene simply means taking care of your mental health in everyday life. Just as physical hygiene protects the body from illness, psychohygiene helps protect your mind from stress, exhaustion, and emotional overload. It includes the habits, routines, and attitudes that help you stay mentally balanced — especially when life becomes demanding.

Its core purpose is to define the objectives and means for preserving harmonious mental states. Psychohygiene aims to identify an individual standard of mental health for each person, recognizing and preserving the diversity of mental capabilities and fostering a person's mental culture, including the culture of their own mental health. A critical aspect is its role in preventing the emergence and spread of mental dysfunctions, disorders, and diseases.

Furthermore, psychohygiene directly contributes to increasing human resistance by developing methods for harmonizing relationships, improving well-being, raising self-esteem, and managing lifelong stressors. This system incorporates lifelong psychophysiological self-regulation as a fundamental means of personal psychohygiene, enabling conscious adaptation to life's continuous changes across all age stages. The field is inherently multidisciplinary, integrating medical, pedagogical, social, and psychological efforts, and utilizes objective measurements through psychological equipment to assess mental functioning and well-being (Boltivets, 2022).

Putting it simple, psychohygiene is the art of looking after your mind before problems appear. It's about prevention, not crisis management.

Key elements include:

- **Awareness:** Noticing how you feel, physically and emotionally, throughout the day.
- **Boundaries:** Knowing when to say “no” and protecting your personal time.
- **Balance:** Managing work, relationships, rest, and leisure in healthy proportions.
- **Recovery:** Scheduling moments of rest before you feel completely exhausted.

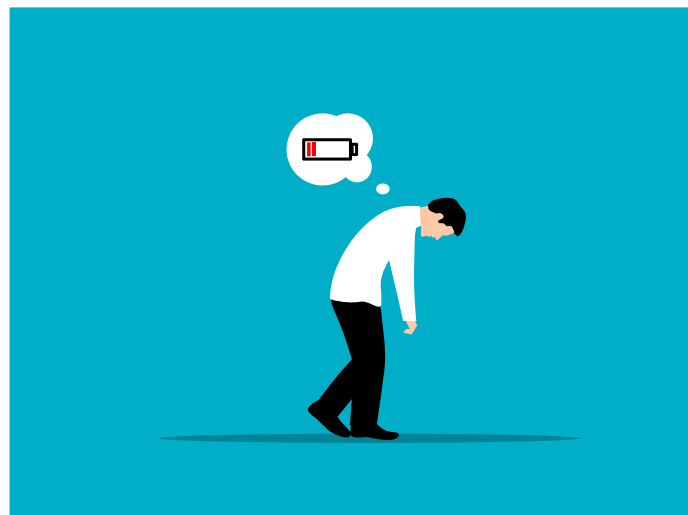
Examples:

- **Awareness:** Noticing how you feel during the day. For example, recognising when you are becoming tired, irritated, or overwhelmed.
- **Boundaries:** Knowing when to say “no” and protecting your time and energy. For example, turning off work or school notifications in the evening or saying no to extra tasks when you already feel overloaded.
- **Balance:** Keeping a healthy mix of responsibilities and enjoyable activities in daily life. For example, making time for school or work, socialising with friends, and relaxing.
- **Recovery:** Taking breaks and resting before you become completely exhausted. For example, going for a short walk, stretching, or taking a quiet break during a busy day.

Think of it as giving your mind the same care and attention you give to your body. A person who invests in psychohygiene is better prepared to handle stress, adapt to change, and maintain focus over time.

Embracing psychohygiene involves managing your energy effectively and maintaining a balance between physical and mental well-being, as well as between work and personal fulfillment in your daily life (Psychosomatics for Musicians, 2020).

2. Phenomena Negatively Affecting Well-Being



Source: <https://pixabay.com/>

Many people value their mental health but still struggle to maintain good psychohygiene. Modern life creates several common obstacles. Even people who value their mental health can struggle to maintain good psychohygiene. Some of the most common obstacles include:

Chronic Stress: When stress is constant, your body and mind never get a chance to recover. This can affect memory, mood, and even physical health.

Digital Overload: Phones, emails, and constant notifications mean we rarely switch off. This “always-on” culture leaves our brains in a permanent state of alertness.

Unrealistic Expectations: Comparing yourself to others — often based on the filtered, perfect images we see online — can make you feel you’re never doing enough.

Poor Lifestyle Habits: Skipping meals, sleeping too little, or avoiding exercise all reduce your capacity to cope with challenges.

Lack of Awareness: Many people simply don’t know what good mental maintenance looks like. They wait until a crisis hits before making changes.

3. Solutions and Good Practices



Source: <https://pixabay.com/>

Good psychohygiene is not complicated, but it requires commitment. Good psychohygiene does not require big lifestyle changes. Small daily habits can make a significant difference. Below are key practices that can be built into daily life:

a) Daily Routine for the Mind

- Begin the day with a short mental check-in: “How am I feeling? What’s my focus today?”

- Schedule at least one intentional break every 90 minutes.
- End the day with a “shutdown ritual” — a habit that signals to your brain that work is over, such as closing your laptop and making tea.

b) Stress Management Tools

- Take three slow, deep breaths before responding to stressful situations.
- Write down your worries to clear mental space.
- Use short relaxation exercises, such as stretching or listening to calming music.

c) Mindfulness Practices

- Practice focusing on the present moment, whether you’re eating, walking, or talking with a friend.
- Keep a gratitude journal and note three positive things each day.

d) Healthy Lifestyle Choices

- Aim for regular sleep patterns, 7–9 hours per night.
- Drink enough water and avoid excessive caffeine.
- Include movement in your day — even short walks count.

e) Social Connection

- Make time for people who make you feel supported.
- Share your challenges with trusted friends or family before they grow too big.

FIVE PILLARS OF PSYCHOHYGIENE



DAILY ROUTINE & STRUCTURE

Establishing consistent daily habits that support mental health



STRESS MANAGEMENT

Using practical techniques to reduce stress



MINDFULNESS & AWARENESS

Practicing mindfulness meditation, yoga, or gratitude exercises



HEALTHY LIFESTYLE CHOICES

Prioritizing adequate sleep, balanced nutrition, regular physical activity



SOCIAL CONNECTIONS & SUPPORT

Maintaining supportive relationships, seeking help when needed

Source: AI-Generagted

4. Barriers to Applying Psychohygiene

Knowing what to do is not always the same as doing it. Some barriers include:

- Feeling guilty for taking breaks.
- Believing that “self-care” is selfish.
- Workplaces that reward overwork rather than balance.

- Lack of time due to family or caregiving responsibilities.

Overcoming these barriers often means changing beliefs, not just habits. For example, understanding that rest is part of productivity can help remove the guilt associated with downtime.

Which of these barriers do you recognise in your own life?

5. New Approaches

Modern life has created new challenges, but also new solutions for psychohygiene:

- **Digital detox days:** Logging off completely for a few hours or an entire day each week.
- **Micro-habits:** Tiny actions that take less than a minute but have a big impact over time (e.g., drinking water before coffee).
- **Mental health apps:** Guided meditations, mood trackers, and breathing exercises in your pocket.
- **Community support groups:** Both online and in-person spaces to share experiences and tips.

6. Practical Tools

Here are three ready-to-use tools you can adapt:

Daily Psychohygiene Planner

Create a table with columns for: Morning habit, Midday habit, Evening habit. Fill in small actions for each.

Example:

Morning habit	Midday habit	Evening habit
Stretch for 2 minutes	Take a 10-minute walk	Write 3 good things about the day
Drink a glass of water after waking up	Take 5 deep breaths to reset	Turn off work/school notifications
Think of one positive intention for the day	Step outside for fresh air	Spend 10 minutes doing something relaxing
Avoid checking your phone for the first 10 minutes	Check in with how you feel (body and mood)	Reflect on what went well today
Do a short body stretch or light movement	Drink water and rest your eyes from screens	Read a few pages of a book

Stress Trigger Log

Write down what stressed you, how you reacted, and what you could do differently next time.

Mindfulness Minute

Choose one moment each day to pause, breathe deeply, and notice your surroundings in detail.

7. Activities

- **Reflection:** Describe a time when you felt completely mentally exhausted. Which habits might have prevented it?
- **Imagine your colleague says:** “I don't have time for self-care. Work always comes first.” How would you respond?
- **Self-Assessment Quiz:** Rate yourself from 1–5 on sleep, nutrition, social connection, stress management, and boundaries.
- **Action Plan:** Choose one psychohygiene habit to practice every day for the next week.

8. Summary

Psychohygiene is not about doing everything perfectly — it's about doing a few important things consistently. Just as daily brushing protects your teeth, daily mental care protects your emotional health. With a small investment of time each day, you can strengthen resilience, improve focus, and build a life where well-being is the default, not the exception.

9. Key Messages

- Mental well-being requires daily care.
- Small habits prevent bigger problems.
- Boundaries, rest, and awareness protect mental energy.
- Psychohygiene strengthens resilience.

References

Boltivets, S. (2022) *Psychohygiene is a System of Maintaining Mental Health*. Mental Health & Human Resilience International Journal, 6(2). doi: 10.23880/MHRIJ-16000189.

Psychosomatics for Musicians, Introduction to Psycho-Hygiene. 2020. Available at:
<https://psychosomaticsformusicians.com/coronablog/introduction-to-psycho-hygiene/>
[Accessed 14 August 2025].

Further Resources

- Websites:
 - Mental Health Foundation: mentalhealth.org.uk
 - Mind: mind.org.uk
- **Apps:** Headspace, Calm, Balance

Books: “The Happiness Advantage” by Shawn Achor; “Atomic Habits” by James Clear

Case Study 1: Collapse Behind the Screen – Burnout in a Young Project Manager

Theme: Personal Well-Being

Setting: Home-based remote office (NGO sector)

Author: EPIONE

Brief Description

Anna, a 29-year-old project manager in a mid-sized NGO, was known for her reliability and dedication. When her organisation shifted to fully remote work during a period of financial uncertainty, Anna felt compelled to “prove her worth.” She worked 12-hour days, skipped lunch breaks, and replied to emails late into the night.

Without a structured daily routine or healthy boundaries, her sleep deteriorated, and she withdrew from social contact. Over time, Anna developed frequent migraines, anxiety symptoms, and emotional exhaustion. A minor critical comment from her supervisor became the tipping point, triggering tears and a week-long absence.

Anna’s experience illustrates how neglecting psychohygiene—even in capable, motivated professionals—can lead to burnout and emotional collapse. Her case highlights the importance of setting boundaries, maintaining restorative habits, and recognising early warning signs of mental strain.

Problem Description

Anna lacked awareness of basic psychohygiene principles, such as setting clear work-life boundaries, scheduling breaks, and practicing daily stress regulation. Her desire to overperform led to sustained overwork without adequate recovery.

Emotional / Physical Effects

- Emotional exhaustion and boredom
- Heightened sensitivity to feedback
- Frequent headaches and insomnia
- Feelings of guilt and inadequacy
- Social withdrawal and reduced motivation

Response / Intervention

Anna decided to take a short-term medical leave. HR connected her with a wellness coach, who helped her implement a daily “shutdown ritual” to end her workday, schedule regular breaks, and use deep breathing exercises. Anna began journaling stress triggers and attended weekly mindfulness classes. With her supervisor’s support, she redefined her workload expectations.

Within two months, she reported reduced stress, improved sleep, and a more balanced lifestyle.

Reflection Questions

1. What early warning signs of burnout were visible in Anna’s behaviour?
2. How might a structured psychohygiene plan have prevented this crisis?
3. What responsibilities do organisations have in supporting employees’ mental well-being when working remotely?

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