

# HealthyNaija

JANUARY 2020

## MENTAL HEALTH

**HORMONAL FORMULAR  
FOR MENTAL HEALTH**

**YOGA**  
for mental health

**Mental CASE  
IS NOT  
MADNESS**



**ejtales:**

*Innovating to ensure sanity*

**Book Review:**

**Healthy and Sane**  
by *Chikodili Ochuba*

[www.healthynaija.ng](http://www.healthynaija.ng)





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# Welcome! To a new decade.

## (Editorial Note)

**Udeogalanya Ezinwanne**  
Lead Editor.



It's the end of an era, another ten years has come and gone. It's been quite a decade and as we begin this new year, Healthy Naija quarterly eMagazine is poised to provide our readers with concise and practical health information.

I'm typing this editorial from my duvet fort in my harmattan trousers, (this is what I call my post-Christmas stretchy waist trousers, my fitted jeans having abandoned me roughly three Christmas dinners ago). 2019 had its up and downs for the world, but Healthy Naija is excitedly focused on 2020, I hope you'll join us. What better way to start the new year off than with inspiring stories of courage and tantalizing articles that position us mentally for the next decade? This January's edition is centred around mental health.

It is important that we start treating our mental health how we do our physical. This 5th edition promises an honest and intimate approach to starting a conversation on mental health and its associated illnesses, thus reducing the culture of silence and stigma our society is used to. While coverage of mental health in the mainstream media tends towards the sensationalised, think stats about alarming suicide rates or stories of "extreme" mental illness, we've approached it in a less radical manner making it more relatable. We hope you find helpful articles in this issue.

Almost everyone is affected by Mental health issues in one way or another; healthcare professionals are no different. Pharm Ukamaka's article discusses the implications of second-hand trauma on health workers and how to help them overcome these challenges. In Chijioke Chukwuekem's article the reader is introduced to mental health. You will also find practical advice on how to overcome social media related psychological pressures.

If you've indulged a little too heavily in 2019, fear not! We have a delightful detox for you in Ezinne's article on the benefits of Yoga: so, grab your mats and find your zen! Both physically and mentally. Along with promises of healthy diet and new resolutions comes the inevitable January blues. Luckily, Pharmacist Ekada Inimovie has some tasty tidbits about the link between how we feel (our mood) and the levels of hormones/ chemicals in our brain. For some of us, the start of a new year can be accompanied by a weight of expectations and can be a particularly trying time, but you're not alone. Eajtales® is here to listen. Read about their social media driven Mental health programme. To top off our wonderful harmattan issue, we featured a review of Chikodili Ochuba's book: "Healthy and Sane".

See you again in April.

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The Endocrine System: a collection of glands that produce hormones that regulate metabolism, growth and development, tissue function, sexual function, reproduction, sleep, and mood, among other things.

image source: hormone.org

# Hormonal Formula for Happiness

***The phrase 'mental health' is occasionally used to mean an absence of a mental disorder. In a much broader perspective, mental health refers to our cognitive, behavioral, and emotional wellbeing - it is all about how we think, feel, and behave."***

Emotions are just but an aspect of mental health but are very important, they are measured in physiological responses, such as a throbbing heart, sweating, blood rushing to the face, and the release of adrenaline. Emotions are mostly being affected by the parts of the nervous system. The frontal part is usually associated with feelings of happiness and pleasure, while the other is usually associated with feelings of anger (resentment), fear (anxiety), and sadness (depression).

Throughout the day, we experience a variety of emotions. Largely, these emotions are ephemeral in nature. But, when these emotions become intensely negative or are incessant they can dramatically affect our biochemistry and behavior. Although very difficult, if we can understand what is influencing our emotions, we are one step away from seeking the right treatments and support, and comprehending the best way for us to keep our mental health in check. An often-overlooked aspect is the influence of hormones on our mental health.

**Ekada Inimuvie**  
Clinical Pharmacist

This aspect of hormones and other substances secreted by the body is also where drug therapy comes in and different drugs aim to stabilize such body hormones in patients with different mental issues so as maintain or restore their mental health.

"Hormones are chemicals that keep the body working normally. Below are a few of them and how their balance affects the way our moods, emotions, and stresses are triggered".

## Dopamine:

### Reward and Motivation Hormone

Dopamine is a substance released in the brain and is involved in focus, attention, memory, drive, muscle control and ovulation. It is associated with alertness, memory, cognition, happiness, and vigilance.

It is often released when we execute many little or big tasks. The feeling of fulfillment that comes from being appreciated for our work at the office or at home is what causes a release in Dopamine. Hence the name "reward and motivation hormone".

As an important hormone in the brain's reward system, increased levels can lead to addictive behavior, suspicious personality, and possible paranoia.





Low levels of dopamine in the body can result in depression, impulsivity, mood swings, attention deficit, cognitive issues, compulsive behavior, cravings, apathy and loss of satisfaction in life activities. It also inhibits rational thinking as seen in schizophrenia.

## Serotonin - Happiness Hormone, selfless hormone

Serotonin is referred to as a selfless hormone because it is released when we act in a way that benefits others. The hormone regulates a wide range of physiological and biological functions including mood, arousal, aggression, thinking abilities, behavior.

For example, the feeling that comes with transcending ourselves and giving back to others or to nature or to society causes a release of Serotonin. Even, providing useful information on the internet like writing information on blogs, providing people with health information on Healthy Naija, responding to people's questions on Quora or Facebook groups will generate Serotonin.

Right levels of serotonin are associated with relaxation, mood upliftment.

Excess of serotonin causes sedation and apathy, whereas deficiency of serotonin is associated with low mood, lack of will, poor appetite control, anxiety disorders, depression, social behavior, and sexual problems.

## Oxytocin - The Bonding Hormone

Oxytocin is a hormone that is made in the brain and released into the blood by the pituitary gland. It plays a role in pro-social behavior, sexual reproduction, and during and after childbirth. It induces feelings of contentment, calmness, security, and reductions in anxiety levels.

Oxytocin inhibits brain areas associated with behavioral control of fear and anxiety and protects against stress, it is released when we become close to another human being, hug our friends or family, shake hands or put our arms around someone's shoulders.

## Endorphins - Pain reliever

Certain stimuli especially stress, fear or pain causes the production of endorphins. The hormone originates in various parts of the body and interacts mainly with parts of the brain responsible for blocking pain and controlling emotion.

Endorphins block pain, but they're also responsible for our feelings of pleasure. It's widely believed that these feelings of pleasure exist to let us know when we've had enough of a good thing and also to encourage us to go after that good thing in order to feel the associated pleasure.

When we exercise, the body releases Endorphins. This hormone helps the body cope with the pain of exercising, laughter is another good way of generating Endorphins. We need to spend 30 minutes exercising every day, read or watch funny stuff to get our day's dose of Endorphins.

Now you know the kinds of activities that stimulate certain hormones and you can do more of such. That way you intentionally look out for your mental wellbeing.

So achieve that little or big goal and get the dopamine rush of fulfillment, do more for others and enjoy the happy feeling of serotonin, cultivate meaningful relationships and physical connections and experience the bonding and safe vibe of oxytocin while not forgetting to exercise and get the pain relieving effect of endorphins.

**Be intentional about your mental health!**





# SOCIAL MEDIA and mental health.

Social media is an amazing tool that enables us to connect with friends and loved ones. Social media opens us up to the world. However it has been discovered that social media can impact your mental health negatively when you don't use it properly. So what are some of the ways social media can be abused?

It has been revealed that some people get their self-worth from social media. They go through all the perfect pictures on Instagram and conclude that their own life is a mess. This conclusion drives them into depression and makes them unproductive. Seeing another person "prosper" on Facebook results to what researchers has chosen to call "Facebook Envy". This impacts mental health negatively. You see people worried about the number of followers they have and the number of likes they get. So how do you overcome this? It's simple, never draw your self-worth from social media. Just scroll through, have fun and get back to your life



Another way social media can be abused, is when it is over-used to an extent that it denies you sleep. Various medical reports show that our brain needs healthy sleep-awake cycles in order to prepare for the new day and also to store up long-term memories. But when social media intrudes into our sleep cycle, we don't give our brain the rest it requires. Hence we wake up anxious with all these negative vibes and we don't have a very productive day. Make sure you don't allow social media to deny you sleep. Create a timetable for yourself. Finally, social media can mess with your attention span. In our country Nigeria, our social media handles are always flooded with comedy skits and funny posts that excite us. When you spend so much time in that excited state, it can actually become difficult for you to focus on day-to-day normal tasks. Your job can become boring to you and you quit paying attention to details, school can become boring. So spending so much time on comedy channels is not the way to use social media, divide your time on social media and make it productive.

Social media is not good or bad, it's how you use it that determines how it will impact your life. So use it properly and don't abuse it and you will be alright.

**Chijioke Chukwuekem**



image source: africaymca



[illegible]

This means that a person can have poor mental health and not have a mental illness. Sometimes we feel down, depressed or stressed out, this does not mean that you are mad or need to be put in a mental home. It just means that you are having an episode of poor mental health and you will be alright if handled properly.

So you see that mental health is about your well-being mentally, and mental illness is same as bodily illness but this time it deals with your mind. While madness is severe mental illness, this means the person has gone "bonkers" and is totally crazy. So not everybody who goes to see a psychiatrist or therapist is mad.

Some of them have just stressed their minds and need help to get themselves back in shape. So the next time someone mentions mental health or mental illness. Please do not look at the person like he/she is completely mad. Because they are not the same thing. If you have not visited a psychiatrist or therapist before, it is not because you have had it altogether, it's simply because you did not know you had to visit one. As a way of conclusion, repeat these words: "A Mental Health issue is not madness". I know some of you did not say it, if you didn't, go back and say it. But if you did, congratulations, you just joined the league of enlightened people. Enjoy!

**Chijioke Chukwuekem**  
Pharmacist and Life Coach



# Helping Persons With SUICIDAL TENDENCIES

According to WHO, one person commits suicide in the World every 40 seconds and one attempt in every 3 seconds. Out of all patients diagnosed with depression, 15% die by suicide.

- Close to 800 000 people die due to suicide every year.
- For every suicide there are many more people who attempt suicide every year. A prior suicide attempt is the single most important risk factor for suicide in the general population.
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among 15-29 year-olds.
- 79% of global suicides occur in low- and middle-income countries.
- Ingestion of pesticide, hanging and firearms are among the most common methods of suicide globally.

The following tips will help these people:

**a. Pay attention:** When the person is willing to speak, listen to what they have to say, having a listening ear will help them relieve tension and voice out their inner concerns. Do not rush to offer counsel or suggestions but just listen to them.

**b. Take certain alarm signs seriously:** When there are notes or conversations referring to death, Changes in diet or sleeping habits, alcohol or drug intake, returning loaned items and other unusual behaviors can be signs of alarm.

**c. Understand the Persons mood:** Individuals contemplating suicide are extremely unhappy and desperate; they see themselves as helpless and tend hate themselves.

**d. Help the person to find the positive aspects of him/her:** Talk of the positive sides of life, and the desirable features they possess.

**e. Stay close to the person and always be available:** Loneliness is the main enemy of someone contemplating suicide. Maintain constant contact with him or her.

**f. Remove objects that may lead to suicide:** Put aside guns and weapons, poisonous substances, ropes, drugs, knives, e.t.c

**g. Speak directly about suicide:** Do not be afraid to talk about suicide, thoughts, impulses, and attempts whenever the affected person mentions it. Without sermonizing, suggest hopeful attitudes as alternatives to suicide.

-Compiled by  
**Pharm Joshua Y. Difa**

SUICIDE PREVENTION ADVICE

## WAIT!

**W Watch out** for signs of distress and changes in behaviour

**A Ask** "are you having suicidal thoughts?"

**I It will pass** – assure your loved one that, with help, their suicidal feelings will pass with time

**T Talk to others** – encourage your loved one to seek help from a GP or health professional

Call Samaritans  
116 123



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# Eajtales:

## *Innovating to ensure sanity*

According to the WHO (World Health Organization), mental health is a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. Over the decades, mental illness has been stigmatized and relegated to the background.

Mental illness is not a respecter of age as studies have shown that all class of individuals (children, teenagers and adults) can be affected. The neglect of issues pertaining to mental health has often been credited for the rise in suicide rates in Nigeria and in the world at large.

Challenges are inevitable in our everyday living; how do we handle them?

We encounter emotional and psychological challenges, trauma (death of loved one(s), physical abuse, rape, heartbreak, etc.) in our lives; Who helps us through our challenges?

How many therapy sessions are available to help us through terrible challenges that seem to drain our lives?

How do we handle loss of our parent(s) at a tender age?

How do we handle rape, physical and emotional abuse?

How do we handle failure (poor academic performance, loss of job or opportunities, etc)?

How do we handle rejection?

Do parents even know what attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is all about or do they just accuse their children of not being focused and organized?

Depression, insomnia, anxiety, agoraphobia, genophobia are real, millions of people all over the world are depressed. Mental illnesses are real.

Eajtales is a dynamic and innovative organization whose mission is ensuring sanity among humanity. It is geared towards creating awareness about mental illness through real life stories, proffering solutions to different mental health conditions such as insomnia, depression, low self-esteem amongst many other illnesses on social media platforms, programs, outdoor outreaches and access to a therapist.

Eajtales is accessible to everyone, everywhere.

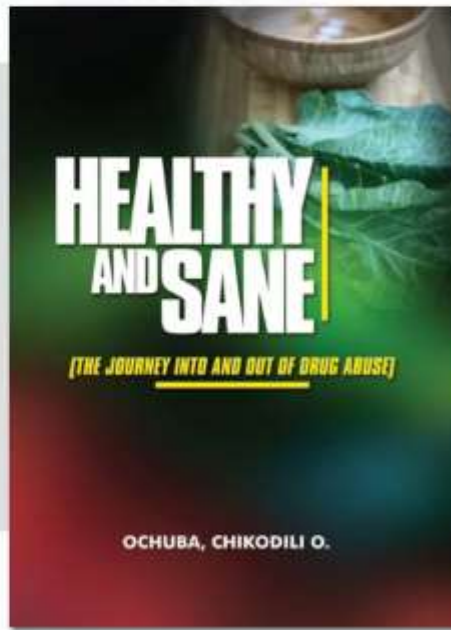


Call **+234 701 608 1968** to share your personal story, get professional help and be guided through life challenges.



# *Book Review:* "Healthy and Sane"

by **Chikodili Ochuba**



*Chikodili Ochuba*  
**Author**

Substance Abuse otherwise known as Drug abuse is an age-long monster eating deep into the lives of people, old and young; male and female. It is both a local and an international challenge. Why do people do drugs? What are the effects of drug abuse? Is there hope for a drug addict? This book, "Healthy and Sane" answers these questions and more. It contains comments on drug abuse and addiction from reputable professionals.

The author introduces the book with an interesting story; one that captures the journey into drug abuse and consequent addiction. The protagonist, a teenager whose background was faulty and poverty-stricken eventually fell into wrong hands and began to do drugs. His academics became history, he wondered how he would be plucked out of the raging fire of addiction.

The author then takes us on a journey into literature, revealing the global nature of this menace. The chapter that follows, contains information about drug abuse, the reasons why people toe that path and its effects.

The attention of the reader is also drawn to ways through which one can get out of the snare of drug abuse and addiction. The need for medical attention was emphasized as well as the importance of divine intervention. The writer concludes with a poem that urges those who are drug free to be cautious lest they become preys through careless living.

Healthy and Sane is a Book for everyone.

#### **To get a Copy,**

contact : Pharm Chikodili on  
+2349036300413  
Purityochuba@gmail.com



# MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS OF YOGA/MEDITATION



Have you ever done yoga before? If yes, what was your experience?

Yoga originated from ancient Indian philosophy. It is derived from the Sanskrit word "yuj", which means yoke or union. Yoga is an ancient practice that brings together the body and mind. The application of yoga as a therapeutic intervention, takes advantage of the various psychophysiological benefits of the various principles. Yoga is much more than stretching and holding poses; it encompasses several life principles like:

- **Asanas**

which is the physical postures and exercises

- **Dhyana** that is: deep relaxation, and meditation practices that cultivate awareness and ultimately more profound states of consciousness.

- **Pranayama** is mindfulness of breathing

- **Pratyahara** practices a detachment from our physical senses

- **Niyama** is self-discipline

- **Savasana** or state of rest

- **Yama** is the moral code of yoga philosophy

- **Samadhi** is about ecstasy

While the Asanas may increase a person's physical coordination, flexibility, and strength the Pranayama and meditation may calm and focus the mind to develop deeper and greater awareness and diminish anxiety, and thus resulting in greater quality of life. This is a relationship between yoga and Mental health.

Yoga is much more than stretching and holding poses, you will notice that only asanas and savasana are focused on physical experiences. The rest are focused on mental, emotional and spiritual experiences. This is because yoga is focused mainly on the inner experience than the outer or physical experience. It is a way to connect to one's own thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and core values.

It turns out that practicing yoga actually facilitates the release of chemicals from the brain that relieve anxiety and stress. This indicates that yoga can actually bring the brain to a calmer, more collected state, giving one the baseline mood needed to deal with stress encountered every day. Aside from relief from stress and anxiety, yoga helps you feel happier, and may improve romantic relationships. When one is more centered and more peaceful with oneself, it tends to extend to the partner- as you will view them through the same lens of compassionate and unconditional love.

This decade will bring its own goals, milestones, targets and expectations; you don't need to be stressed-out.

Do Yoga!

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# Mental health *of* health workers

Providing health care during emergency situations can take its toll on health care workers. Addressing these workers' own health needs is important to ensuring they are able to do their jobs.

In modern society, mental illness is an increasingly common problem. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimated the total number of people with depression exceeded 300 million in 2015, and a similar number of people are experiencing anxiety disorders. Mental illness is a major concern in healthcare industries. The mental health of healthcare professionals is especially important, because it is associated with medical errors or decreased performance, and these could eventually negatively impact patients health.

A number of studies have shown that health-care professionals are exposed to psychological distress, such as role conflict, emotional labour, being concerned about medical errors and litigation, as well as experiencing verbal or physical abuse by patients and caregivers or bullying by colleagues. In addition, healthcare professionals have a much greater chance of being exposed to long working hours. Therefore, they frequently experience sleep problem. These work-related stress factors could lead to burn-out, and even depression, anxiety disorders, sleep disorders, or other psychiatric disorders.

When disaster strikes, the immediate needs like food, shelter, and medical aid are obvious. It is easy to see these needs as they often manifest in physical and more tangible ways. Yet the residual mental health effects of any crisis, be it a natural disaster, conflict, or a health outbreak like Ebola, are not always seen or obvious days, weeks, or years later. Front-line health workers, which range from community health workers to professional cadres of nurses and doctors at local community clinics, are providing immediate care for the physical and mental health needs of the community. How are we, then, responding to the mental health needs of health workers themselves?



## Why is mental health care for health workers important?

In emergency or humanitarian situations, the main priorities are the community members affected. However, we need health workers to meet these priorities. Currently, there is a global health workforce shortage. There are various factors contributing to the health worker shortage, but one of the challenges is keeping health workers at their posts (also known as *retention*). While the evidence base is sparse, mental health issues like burn-out and even secondary trauma (experiencing trauma from hearing firsthand about it) can contribute to retention challenges and make it even more difficult to keep health workers in their communities during a humanitarian or emergency crisis.





### **What is being done about mental health care for health workers?**

Support for mental health care is increasing, though it is not necessarily directed all at health workers. On the 10th of October yearly mental health practitioners and organizations worldwide, including the World Health Organization (WHO), observe World Mental Health Day, an annual day that focuses on advocacy, education, and awareness for mental health care. Last years focus was on psychological first aid, which advocates for providing the appropriate training and framework for first responders, including front-line health workers, to respond to communities in crisis. While psychological first aid does not replace a mental health care provider or other mental health and social services, it does provide a framework through which responders can better understand, assess, and respond to immediate needs of an individual during a crisis. Think of it as front-line triaging for community members and facilitating treatment early for health workers down the line.

By expanding resources and advocacy for mental health, we are making strides toward responding to the needs of health workers. What we need next are more platforms and opportunities to discuss mental health through the lens of front-line health workers. As we develop programs and implement activities, we need to ask again and again, how can we protect the mental health of our health workers?



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