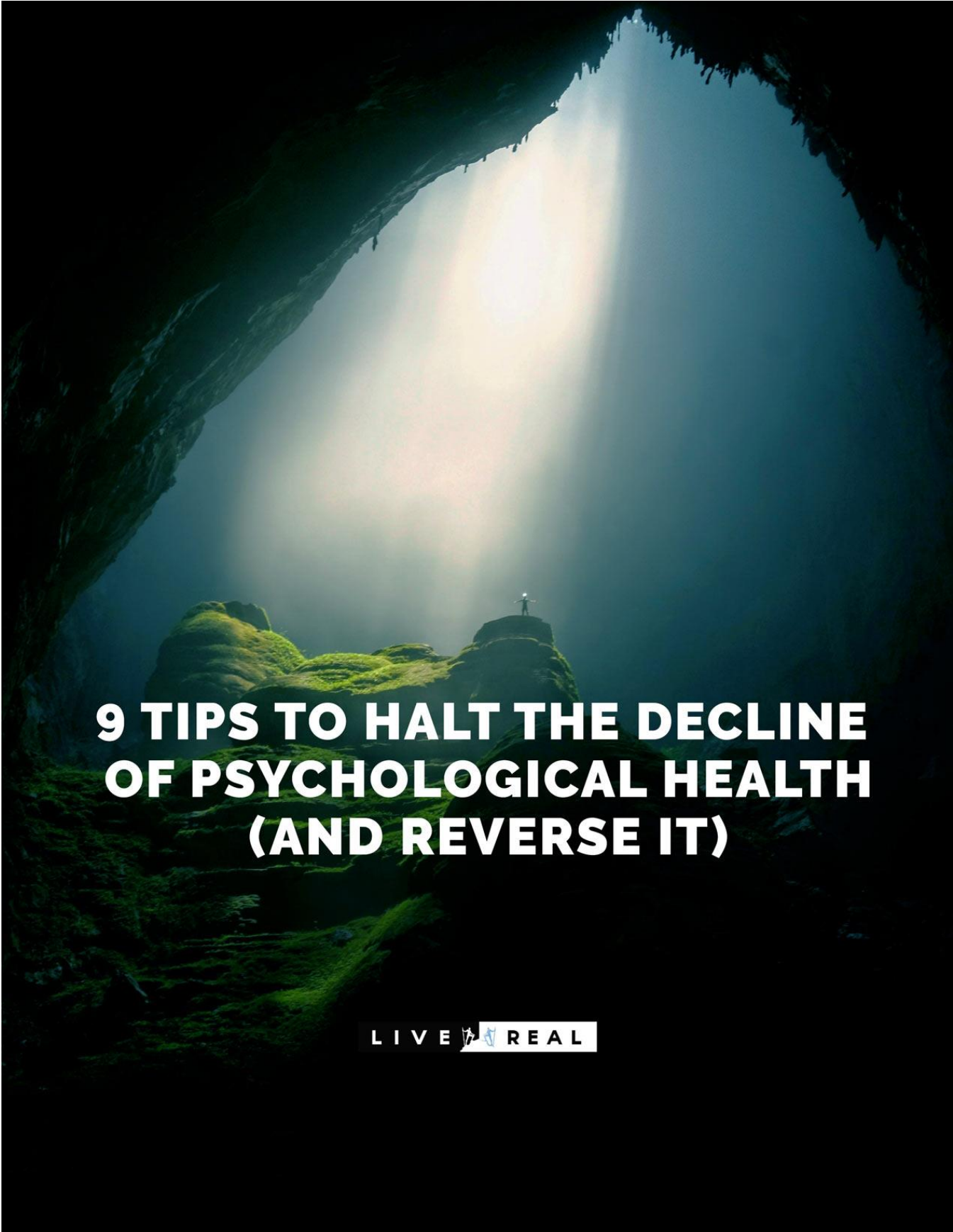




# **9 TIPS TO HALT THE DECLINE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH (AND REVERSE IT)**

LIVE  REAL

## 9 Tips to Halt the Decline in Psychological Health (and Reverse It)

*Psychological health has been declining, as we described [here](#). Anxiety, depression, addiction, and so on have been on the rise.*

*That's a problem.*

*What can we, regular, non-psychiatrists, do about it? How can we start moving more toward greater mental clarity & emotional strength?*

*We can work to make ourselves as strong, sane, and fit as possible. Here are 9 tips.*

### 1. Figure out your basic life philosophy.

Our most basic assumptions about life matter. A *lot*. We all have to make sense of life, and our thinking has to start somewhere. This forms our “life philosophy.” It’s the foundation for everything we think, feel, and do. Yet *few of us have really examined it deliberately and systematically*. Testing and strengthening our most basic assumptions about life isn’t glamorous, but it can help us make sure the foundation we’re building our lives on is sturdy. If we *lack* that, the ground we’re standing on can be fragile, and we risk collapsing into an [existential crisis](#). In today’s complicated world, it isn’t enough to just *live* life – we also need to [“think it through.”](#)

### 2. Take breaks from social media. (And regular media, too.) Long ones.

Social media is the new cigarette. (If you get your news from social media, you might not have heard this, for mysterious reasons.) Jonathan Haidt, Jean Twenge, and others offer plenty of evidence. The basic takeaway: take extended breaks – from *all* of it. *Put the phone away*. Spend time face-to-face with other real people, nature, or anything that isn’t a digital screen.

### 3. Figure out your model of human nature.

We all have a model of human nature that answers, “Why do we do what we do?” That model might be conscious, or not. It’s based on our life philosophy (See #1). For example, there are the [models of human nature from horror movies](#) (best avoided) and others that are [more advanced](#).

### 4. Become more spiritually literate.

Can we be honest here? A lot of people today are spiritually illiterate. It often isn’t their fault. They’ve often been taught to think of religion using caricatures that make spirituality seem crazy, irrational, or boring. The best voices are ignored while the sketchiest are lauded. This often leaves people utterly unprepared to face real life and baffled when reality intrudes on their fantasies. Instead, we can *train up*, or *deliberately seek out the most insightful perspectives on the [Big Questions of life](#)*. We can also “follow the science.” After all, the scientific literature has generally concluded that the genuinely religious are generally happier, healthier, and saner.

### 5. Become more psychologically literate.

Delving into psychology **can be hazardous**. Toxic misinformation is bad enough. Quality insights can be hard to find amid all the noise. (We’ve gathered some tips on [anxiety here](#) and on [depression here](#).) But even good information can be hazardous when it’s out of proportion. That’s why Steps 1, 3, and 4 are important. A clear view of **the human condition** (where **we live at a crossroads of conflicting forces**, in search of a “sweet spot”) can provide a strong foundation that **prevents some problems** from ever arising in the first place.

## 6. Learn psychological self-defense.

We often understand *physical* self-defense fairly well. It also isn't difficult to find a teacher who knows more than we do. But **psychological self-defense** is another matter. Same with **philosophical self-defense**. How do we defend our minds, hearts, or our very selves? How do we protect ourselves from toxic ideas or influences that are emotionally destructive? That's an entirely different ball game, and one worth looking into. While much of this sounds strange to most of us regular people, various **supervillains** seem pretty hip to the scene. We should resist them. And we should learn to do it effectively.

## 7. Adopt a consistent contemplative practice.

Real spirituality isn't a dusty pile of beliefs that's divorced from everyday life. To be worth the trouble, it should be a very practical and very real source of strength, clarity, sanity, and intelligence. "[Experiential spirituality](#)" can involve adopting some form of [contemplative practice](#), once or twice a day, for just 15 minutes or so, and unplugging from The Matrix (see #2).

## 8. Follow your...what, exactly?

When it comes to navigating life, who or what should we place our ultimate trust in? That question is a Big One. But instead of good answers, we often get simplistic, bumper-sticker slogans. For example: "Follow your heart"? That often steers us wrong, as explored **here**. ("I 'followed my heart,' and wound up pregnant.") "Follow your mind"? No, we're often flooded with bad ideas. "Follow your *conscience*"? That sounds better, but in practice, it often leads back to just following our "heart" again. "Follow your bliss"? Same thing. "Follow yourself"? This *could* be **good advice**, if we were all fully enlightened genius-saints – otherwise, it could easily turn into an existential get-out-of-jail-free card. "Follow *the experts*"? Well, many experts say that blindly listening to anyone who says, "*Trust us, we're experts!*" is headed for trouble. "Follow *science*"? Well, science is a neutral tool that depends on very human scientists. They've given us smartphones and vaccines, but they've also given us atom bombs, chemical warfare, and phrenology exams. Follow "God"? That sounds great, but how do we know "the will of God"? Follow holy or divinely inspired scriptures? Sounds great, but misinterpreting, misunderstanding, misapplying, or ignoring those altogether is hardly the exception. What about **spiritual experiences**? Again, sounds great, but they can also be baffling or mistakenly interpreted. In short, *no single, simple, solitary approach is foolproof*. This could lead to throwing up our hands and surrendering to **soft nihilism**. (Not recommended.) Instead, we could turn to a different approach: *adopt a system of checks and balances where each keeps the others in check*.

## 9. Make "existential fitness" a way of life.

If we want clear minds and strong hearts, sanity and genuine happiness, if we want life to be more than a confusing, [painful, pointless](#) ride that ends too quickly, we need to ask [Big Questions](#), get Good Answers, and apply those answers right in the heart of everyday life. In other words, we need to become ["existentially fit."](#) It's not a technique. It's a way of life.

*That's a start. For more, visit [LiveReal.com](http://LiveReal.com).*