



# Fasting's Effects on Mental Health



Fasting is a “mind over matter” type of health regiment that requires more mental actions, such as patience, discipline and perseverance, than physical. In this article, we will discuss the mental health benefits of fasting, as well as the science behind brain functions during a fast.

Fasting supports brain health through multiple biological mechanisms. It has been linked to neurogenesis, the creation of new neurons, which may improve learning and cognitive performance. Fasting also increases brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), a protein essential for memory, mood regulation, and mental resilience. Additionally, fasting shifts the brain’s energy source toward ketones, an efficient alternative fuel that may sharpen cognition and support long-term neurological health. As digestion pauses, more energy becomes available for brain function, often leading to clearer thinking and improved focus after the initial adjustment period.

During fasting, the body activates important cellular repair processes such as autophagy, which helps remove damaged cells and inefficient tissue. This process supports overall rejuvenation by clearing waste and optimizing how the body uses nutrients. By reducing metabolic load and circulating byproducts in the bloodstream, fasting creates a cleaner internal environment that supports both brain and body health. Over time, these adaptive responses increase cellular resilience and contribute to improved physical and mental well-being.

Beyond its physiological benefits, fasting strengthens mental discipline and willpower. Choosing to fast requires intentional focus and the ability to delay immediate gratification in favor of long-term goals. Completing a fast often leads to a sense of accomplishment, increased self-control, and renewed confidence. These psychological benefits can carry into daily life, supporting emotional balance, stress management, and a deeper sense of personal resilience.

Improving your mental health through fasting is one of the many reasons fasting is encouraged in our office. *Don't know where to start? Join us for our "Let's Talk About Fasting" class on January 19th at 6:30 PM to learn all about creating lasting fasting habits!*

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**Source:** Wendy Wisner: *Does Fasting Have Mental Health Benefits?* Very Well Mind (2024)

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