



Mental Health & Well Being – Kait Ross, PhD

Research evidence and background:

- Individuals with PCOS have a higher likelihood of mental health conditions compared with individuals without PCOS, particularly depression, anxiety, mood swings, body image concerns, and eating disorders. These psychological manifestations are often exacerbated by physical symptoms of PCOS such as hormonal changes, insulin resistance, hirsutism, acne, and weight gain, which can negatively impact body image and self-esteem.
- Using evidence-based strategies such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), or trauma-focused psychotherapy, understanding the mind-body connection, implementing effective behavioral strategies, fostering collaborative healthcare, and engaging with support resources are essential for comprehensive management of PCOS and can help prevent and manage difficult feelings, thoughts, and behaviors.

Practical strategies or recommendations:

- Behavioral Activation for Mood, Anxiety, and Stress Reduction
 - Plan and schedule simple activities that are new, fun, social, active, enjoyable, and relaxing
 - Notice and appreciate any improvements in how you feel after these activities, like better sleep, more energy, feeling relaxed, positive emotions, improved connection with your body or others
 - Do your best to follow your planned activities, even on tough days
- Practice Self-Compassion
 - Self-compassion involves treating yourself with kindness (vs. judgement), accepting that suffering is a part of life that everyone experiences (you are not alone), and mindfulness (accepting the present moment reality with a balanced approach – without suppressing or exaggerating it)
 - Self-Compassion.org has workshops, meditation and writing exercises
- Body Image Improvement
 - Get to know your body by tracking symptoms with Flo or Clue
 - Learn about body neutrality, body appreciation, weight neutral lifestyle
 - The Body Image Workbook: An Eight Step Program for Learning to Like Your Looks: A step-by-step guide using cognitive behavioral techniques
- Lifestyle Modifications
 - Engaging in regular physical activity that you enjoy and adopting a balanced diet can improve mental health symptoms
 - The PCOS Plan, PCOSDiva.com, and ThePCOSNutritionist.com all offer dietary strategies to improve insulin resistance and PCOS symptoms
- Find Professional Support and Information for Comprehensive PCOS Care
 - Access care in a multidisciplinary and integrated care model – work with a medical provider, mental health provider, and dietician to address PCOS holistically
 - Evidence based psychotherapy, CBT, ACT, Trauma Focused treatment
 - Review quality information about PCOS from PCOS Challenge, Society for Women's Health Research, RESOLVE – the National Infertility Association, PCOS Awareness Association