



Canadian Mental
Health Association

Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale

Mental Health for All Fact Sheet

Mental Health for All

Maintaining our mental health means striking a balance in all aspects of your life: social, physical, spiritual, economic and mental. Reaching a balance is a learning process. At times, you may tip the scales too much in one direction and have to find your footing again. Your personal balance will be unique, and your own individual challenge will be to stay mentally healthy by keeping that balance.

It's important to take time to think about your emotional well-being and your "mental fitness." Assess your emotional health regularly. Consider the particular demands or stresses you are facing and how they are affecting you.

Give yourself permission to take a break from your worries and concerns. Recognize that dedicating even a short time every day to your mental fitness will reap significant benefits in terms of feeling rejuvenated and more confident.

Here are some simple ways to practice mental fitness:

Learn ways to cope with negative thoughts – Negative thoughts can be insistent and loud. Learn to interrupt them. Don't try to block them (that never works), but don't let them take over. Try distracting yourself or comforting yourself, if you can't solve the problem right away. You might want to try focusing on an issue in a more balanced way (e.g. - try looking at all sides of an issue rather than from just one point of view).

Do one thing at a time – For example, when you are out for a walk or spending time with friends, turn off your cell phone and stop making that mental "to do" list. Take in all the sights, sounds and smells you encounter.

Exercise – Regular physical activity improves psychological well-being and can reduce depression and anxiety. Joining an exercise group or a gym can also reduce loneliness, since it connects you with a new set of people sharing a common goal.

Enjoy hobbies – Taking up a hobby brings balance to your life by allowing you to do something you enjoy because you want to do it, free of the pressure of everyday tasks. It also keeps your brain active.

"Collect" positive emotional moments – Make it a point to recall times when you have experienced pleasure, comfort, tenderness, confidence, or other positive emotions.

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Set personal goals – Goals don't have to be ambitious. You might decide to finish that book you started three years ago; to take a walk around the block every day; to learn to knit or play bridge; to call your friends instead of waiting for the phone to ring. Whatever goal you set, reaching it will build confidence and a sense of satisfaction. Writing the goal down, giving yourself a timeline, and telling others about your goals can all increase your chances of success.

Do new things/challenge yourself – Challenging yourself can help to increase your motivation and to set personal goals.

Keep a journal (or talk regularly to loved ones!) – Expressing yourself after a stressful day can help you gain perspective, release tension and even boost your body's resistance to illness.

Share humour – Life often gets too serious, so when you hear or see something that makes you smile or laugh, share it with someone you know. A little humour can go a long way to keeping us mentally fit!

Volunteer – Volunteering is called the “win-win” activity because helping others makes us feel good about ourselves. At the same time, it widens our social network, provides us with new learning experiences and can bring balance to our lives.

Treat yourself well – Cook yourself a good meal. Have a bubble bath. See a movie. Call a friend or relative you haven't talked to in ages. Sit on a park bench and breathe in the fragrance of flowers and grass. Whatever it is, do it just for you.

Ask for help – Learning to set boundaries and say no is a very important skill for mental health as is asking for help. In addition to help from family and friends and mental health services, you may find that some of your problems can be solved with help from community agencies. Sometimes, practical help such as home nursing care, Meals On Wheels or subsidized door-to-door transportation for people unable to walk, will greatly reduce the stress in your life.

How You Can Learn More

Many communities have information centres that produce lists of available services, which you can view at social service agencies or public libraries. Other possible sources of information include:

- books about your problems, available at your public library or local bookstore
- films, videos and audio tapes
- courses and workshops offered through community centres, secondary schools, colleges and universities
- other people you admire for their ability to find balance

Do You Need More Information?

Mental Health Week is a designated week created by **The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)** to talk, reflect, engage and celebrate mental health for all. The theme of Mental Health For All represents the right of every Canadian to enjoy and have the best possible mental health. It's this attitude that represents ways in which all Canadians can actively protect and preserve their mental health at home, work and in their own community. CMHA develops policies and delivers programs and services through its 10,000 volunteers and 135 branches across Canada everyday.

Learn more by visiting www.MentalHealthWeek.ca

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