



#GetLoud

about what mental health really is.

CMHA Mental Health Week

May 7-13, 2018

Strategies for Well-being

So, your mental health. It is about more than having a mental illness, or not having one. We all have a state of mental health.

Anyone can have a bad day – a bad mental health day. And anyone can have a great mental health day.

But, how to keep the good days coming, and lift you up on the bad days? The science tells us that there is real, tangible action you can take. So, here are some strategies for mental well-being, based on compelling evidence.¹

CONNECT

Feelings of connection are key to feeling well. So are healthy relationships, at home, work, school or in your community. Put time and energy into developing good relationships with family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. Your mental health is stronger when you feel like you belong.

Take someone for tea or coffee.

Join something: a club, a group, an association.

Hang out with a friend.

Send a card or email to someone you miss.

Enjoy the company of friends or family.

Accept social invitations.

Let grudges go.

BE ACTIVE

Being active and taking care of your body will help you take care of your mental health.

You've probably heard it before: Exercise will make you feel better. It will make you feel good. Well, it's true. It can reduce stress, boost your energy and strengthen your immune system. Exercise doesn't have to be work, and it doesn't have to be hard. Maybe exercise is the wrong word for you. Depending on what makes you feel good, and on your level of mobility, try these:

Play.

Run.

Row.

Lift.

Jump.

Throw (whether it's a frisbee, a ball or even a javelin).

Dance (like no one's looking).

Cycle.

Walk.

Garden.

Stretch.

Take the stairs.

TAKE NOTICE

Our lives are busy, so we sometimes need reminding to take notice. These days, we're hearing more and more about mindfulness. What is it? Here's one definition: It is the state of being attentive to and aware of what is taking place in the present.ⁱⁱ In other words, it means paying attention to what is happening right now. Sometimes we forget to be mindful. When you notice what's going on inside you, and what's going on around you, you can make choices that will meet your needs. And you can reduce stress. Notice the moment, whatever you're doing. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

Take time to really enjoy your food.

Pay attention to your breath, in meditation practice or just sitting at your desk.

Notice when something good happens to you, and savour it.

Observe when something's beautiful. Or unusual.

Be aware of your thoughts and what you tell yourself.

Be curious.

Try meditation. It's not as hard as it might sound. (You can meditate in all sorts of way, including sitting, walking, and even eating. Check it out online.)

Keep a journal or write a blog

Check out your local arts and culture scene

KEEP ON LEARNING

Whether you're in a classroom, or at the university of life, learning new things can foster your self-confidence, and give you a sense of well-being. We don't just learn as children, or in school. We can learn new things all life long. And through learning, we can change the way we think about ourselves and the world. The opportunities to learn are endless, whether it's formal learning, or not.

Try something you've never tried.

Or go back to something that you liked before.

Sign up for that course: learn sign language or CPR or how to decorate cakes.

Learn to play an instrument.

Experiment with cooking and make your favourite food.

Try a hobby or activity you've always meant to.

Give yourself a challenge you'll enjoy.

Check out how to do just about anything on YouTube.

GIVE

Give to others

Seeing yourself, and your well-being as linked to your community can be incredibly rewarding, and can give your brain a boost.

Do something nice for a friend, or for a stranger.

Thank someone.

Smile. Check it out: it's contagious.

Volunteer at something that's meaningful to you.

Join a community group.

Give to yourself

This is sometimes called "self-care." Set aside time for yourself and to do the things that make you feel well.

Cook a tasty meal.

At work: Take breaks. Go for a walk at lunch. Don't eat at your desk. Take your sick days when you need them.

Get a good night's sleep.

Go out in nature. Or just get outside.

Join a peer support group.

Un-plug from email when you can.

Take a break from social media.

Laugh hard, and often.

Do your laundry.

Sing loud.

ⁱ See *The Five Ways to Wellbeing*, a set of evidence-based public mental health messages developed by [NEF \(The New Economics Foundation\)](#) as the result of a commission by Foresight, the UK government's futures think-tank, as part of the Foresight Project on Mental Capital and Wellbeing. For more information, check out [the research study](#) from the New Economics Foundation and [this page](#) from the University of Toronto.

ⁱⁱ Brown KW, Ryan RM (2003) 'The benefits of being present: mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being.' *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* **84**: 822–848.