

# MENTAL HEALTH FOR LIFE

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 balance too much in one direction and must find your footing again. Your personal balance will be unique, and your challenge will be to stay mentally healthy by keeping that balance.

## **BUILD A HEALTHY SELF-ESTEEM**

Self-esteem is more than just seeing your good qualities. It is being able to see all your abilities and weaknesses together, accepting them, and doing your best with what you have. For example, you may not play tennis well enough to be a star, but that should not stop you from enjoying the game.

### **Activity - Build Confidence**

Take a good look at your good points. What do you do best? What are your skills and interests? How would a friend describe you?

Now, look at your weak points. What do you have difficulty doing? What things make you feel frustrated?

Look at this list. Remember that all of us have our positive and negative sides. We let our strengths shine, and we build on our weak points to help us mature and grow.

## **RECEIVE AS WELL AS GIVE**

Many of us confuse having a realistic view of our good points with conceit. We have trouble accepting kindness from others. We

often shrug off a compliment with a "Yes, but..." and put ourselves down.

### **Activity -Accept Compliments**

The next time someone compliments you, say, "Thank you! I'm glad you think so." then think about other compliments you have had, and how good they made you feel.

## **CREATE POSITIVE PARENTING AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS**

Work on building good family relationships. Learn to value each member's skills and abilities. Learn how to give and accept support.

### **Activity-Make Time**

Make time just to be a family. Schedule time for both serious things and fun. Listen respectfully without interruption to what each person has to say. Do it: frequently.

## **MAKE FRIENDS WHO COUNT**

Friends help you understand that you are not alone. They help you by sharing your "ups" and "downs", and you in turn help them. Together, you and your friends share life's challenges and celebrate life's joys.

### **Activity – Build A Friendship Tree**

Keep in touch – invite a friend to lunch. Encourage new friendships – ask your friend to bring someone you have never met.





## FIGURE OUT YOUR PRIORITIES

Advertisers try very hard to convince us that we “need” their products and services. Our challenge is to know the difference between our real needs (food, shelter, clothing, transportation) and our “wants” (bigger TV, new CD player, expensive fashions, flashy car), and to find the right balance in our spending. Financial problems cause stress so it is important to avoid over-spending.

### Activity – Create A Meaningful Budget

Write out a budget for yourself Is it realistic? Have you planned what to do with the money left over for your “wants”? Which “wants” are most important to you?

## GET INVOLVED

Being involved in things that really matter provides us with a great feeling of purpose and satisfaction. You should always remember that you make a difference, no matter how big or small your efforts.

### Activity - Volunteer

Be a volunteer. Read to children at your local library; visit an elderly person at home or in hospital; serve on a committee or the board of your favourite charity; organize a clean-up of a local park or beach; help a neighbour clean out his/her garage.

## LEARN TO MANAGE STRESS EFFECTIVELY

Stress is a normal part of life. How you deal with it will depend on your attitude. You may become overwhelmed with things that

people can easily handle. Learning to keep a balance among work, family and leisure is difficult and needs skillful management of time. Planning helps, and so does staying calm.

### Activity- Take a Five-Minute Vacation

Each day, set aside five minutes for a mental health break. Close your office door or go into another room, and daydream about a place, person, or idea, or think about nothing at all! You will feel like you have been on a mini vacation.

## COPE WITH CHANGES THAT AFFECT YOU

It would be nice to "live happily ever after", but real life keeps "throwing monkey-wrenches" at us. Coping with these unexpected (and often unwanted) changes can be stressful. Children have accidents, parents get ill, jobs disappear - we need to be flexible and learn ways to cope.

### Activity- Find Strength in Numbers

Search out a support group that deals with the issues you are facing. By teaming up with people who share your problems, you may find a fresh solution. Try starting a group of your own by using the public service announcements in your local newspaper, radio station or TV station.

## DEAL WITH YOUR EMOTIONS

We are all challenged to find safe and constructive ways to express and share our feelings of anger, sadness, joy and fear. Your





ways of experiencing and expressing emotions are unique because you are unique.

### **Activity-Identify and Deal with Your Moods**

Find out what makes you happy, sad joyful or angry. What calms you down? Learn ways to deal with your moods. Share joyful news with a friend: "cry on a shoulder" when you feel blue. Physical exercise can help you deal with your anger. Keep a stack of your favourite funny cartoons or a collection of humorous stories of video tapes for times when you feel the need to laugh.

### **HAVE A SPIRITUALITY TO CALL YOUR OWN**

Learn to be at peace with yourself Get to know who you are; what makes you happy, what you are passionate about. Learn to balance what you can change about yourself with what you cannot change. Get to know and trust your inner self.

### **Activity - Build Your Own "You"**

For yourself, set aside quiet, quality time. Do a breathing exercise- *try* counting your breaths from one to four, then start at one again. Or do something you love to do, like dancing, going to a baseball game, building a birdhouse, whatever works for you!

### **DO YOU NEED MORE INFORMATION?**

If you would like more information about mental health, you can contact a community organization, such as the Canadian Mental Health Association, to help you find what you need to know.

The Canadian Mental Health Association is a national voluntary association that exists to promote the mental health of all people. CMHA believes that everyone should have choices so that, when they need to, they can reach out to family, friends, formal services, self-help groups or community-based organizations.

