Visit the Teladoc Medical Experts website for more information

31 days of mental self-care

The first week of May is Mental Health Week, organized by the Canadian Mental Health Association. Caring for your mental health is as important as caring for your physical health. All of the systems in your body work together, and when one thing is out of sync, the others can be impacted.

Eating, sleeping, exercising, socializing and how you talk to yourself can affect your mental health. Below are 31 simple activities that support different areas of mental health. Think of this as a flexible checklist. Try one each day, or pick what feels right when you need it most.

Remember, you can do any of these any day of any month.

1

Plan for a good night's sleep

Fresh, comfy sheets and a regular bedtime routine can set you up for recharging your mind and body.

2

Make a date with yourself

Do something you enjoy. Visit a museum, engage in a hobby, or see a movie. Taking time for yourself is a form of self-care.

3

Add flavour and crunch

Top your meals with flax seeds, almonds, or walnuts for mood-boosting omega-3 fatty acids and fibre.

4

Talk it out

Share your thoughts with someone you trust, or connect with a mental health professional for support.

5

Let in the light

Aim for 30 minutes of natural sunlight each day to boost your mood. It can help you sleep better too.

6

Pay it forward

Show kindness. Buy a friend a coffee or lunch. They may get a jolt of happiness, and the social connection can be good for you, too.

7

Stay connected

Call a loved one and catch up on the phone or a video chat. Building and maintaining healthy relationships is good for your mental well-being.

8

Reframe negativity

Find a positive angle. Think of your challenges as opportunities to learn and grow.

9

Be mindful

Take a moment to pause, breathe and focus on the present, instead of distractions and digital devices.

10

Eat seafood for dinner

Fish[3] contains two types of omega-3 fatty acids. These nutrients support brain health, and low levels have been linked to mood concerns.[1]

11

Start a journal

Entries don´t need to be lengthy; just put words to the page. Aim to notice something good and write about it each day.

12

Be creative

Paint, write, garden, colour or make music. Do it with friends. Building a healthy support system through shared interests can be uplifting.

13

Rest your best

Limit electronics and avoid alcohol, caffeine, large meals, and exercise too close to bedtime.

14

Do an act of service

Volunteer at a school, food bank, or shelter for a feeling of belonging and community-building.

15

Take a 10-minute walk outside

Even a short walk can help reduce stress and boost your mood. Your body will thank you, and your mind will too.

16

Practice gratitude

Take a moment to notice what's going well, even the small things. It could be someone you're grateful to have in your life, or simply a sunny day.

17

Snack on fruits and veggies

They are a good source of fibre, and eating healthier foods can boost happiness.

18

Show compassion for yourself

Note your accomplishments. This fresh perspective can change your mood.

19

Ask for help

You don't have to do everything on your own. Reaching out to family, friends or a mental health professional can make a difference.

20

Check in with yourself

Explore your feelings. Write them down. Think about your beliefs, what is important to you, and let them guide you.

21

Dance it out

Put on music and get your heart pumping. You'll relieve stress and release feel-good brain chemicals.

22

Colour your world

Colouring isn't just for kids. Try out an adult colouring book. The repetitive action and expression of creativity can be calming.

23

Say no

Setting priorities and boundaries are healthy ways to keep from taking on too much.

24

Treat yourself

In moderation, dark chocolate has been linked to improved mood and reduced tension.

25

Practice self-care

Take a walk, soak in a warm bath, or enjoy a coffee in a cozy café. Live in those moments and recharge.

26

Shift your focus

Try not to dwell on what you can't control. When something outside of your power happens, concentrate on what you can fix.

27

Find the fun

Laughter reduces cortisol, the body's stress hormone, and improves your sense of well-being.Watch a sitcom or find funny videos online.

28

Plan a meal with a friend

Eating together is a great way to stay connected with loved ones.

29

Try a 10-minute meditation

Be aware of your breath, take in sights, and listen for sounds. Let thoughts and worries leave your mind as you focus on the present.

30

Seek serenity

Look for opportunities in the day to pause, breathe, and be mindful.

31

Give yourself a pat on the back!

Focus on progress, not perfection. Taking pride in setting and reaching goals will make you happy.

Congratulations—you're on the road to improving your emotional health!

Now keep it going. Draw from what you've learned along the way to stay in touch with yourself.

[1] https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/maple-leaf/defence/2021/06/connection-between-mental-well-being-and-nutrition.html

All the feels: identifying what you're feeling and how to process it

We all have feelings.

At any given moment, we can go from joy to anger, despair or sadness and then bounce back to happiness. We're designed to be emotionally resilient.

From an early age, we begin learning how to express or suppress our emotions based on how others respond to them.[1]

When emotions are consistently ignored or suppressed, they can build up over time and impact both mental and physical health, including sleep, immune function, and heart health.[2]

At the same time, expressing emotions without regulation can also be unhelpful. Learning how to process and manage emotions is key to overall wellbeing.[1]

There's no perfect balance between expressing emotions and holding them in. It's different for everyone. What matters most is recognizing what you're feeling so you can process it in a healthy way.

That's where the coping guide is useful. It helps you dig deeper beyond your initial feeling of, for example, anger. Is your anger related to annoyance or resentment? The guide offers you helpful suggestions for each variation of feeling. It helps you recognize, address and manage your feelings.[1]

Use the following coping guide when you're not sure what you feel or what to do. It can help you name your feelings and feel better.

Identify your feelings[3]

1. Start with your overwhelming emotion.
2. Dig deeper and find how you feel.
3. Try the suggested activity to help manage your feelings.[3]

Happy

Joyful	**Sing** Your favorite song
Excited	**Celebrate** Do a happy dance
Proud	**Reflect** On your hard work
Amused	**Laugh** With a friend
Grateful	**Thank** With a note
Relieved	**Relax** Rest quietly

Sad

Lonely	**Connect** Talk to someone
Disappointed	**Create** Draw or paint
Hurt	**Comfort** Take a warm bath
Powerless	**List** All good things
Unhappy	**Play** Have fun
Gloomy	**Step outside** Get sun and air

Surprised

Astonished	**Journal** Write it down
Shocked	**Soothe** With calm music
Curious	**Research** Look it up
Confused	**Ask** Get more info
Startled	**Settle** Take five deep breaths
Amazed	**Explore** Find out more

Angry

Annoyed	**Soothe** Drink warm tea
Frustrated	**Re-think** Do it differently
Irritated	**Pause** Write down your feelings
Furious	**Exercise** Burn off steam
Upset	**Explain** Share your feelings
Resentful	**Express yourself** Share to clear the air

Afraid

Scared	**Share** Talk it out
Nervous	**Breathe** Slow deep breaths
Stressed	**Focus** On your five senses
Worried	**Plan** Create simple steps
Vulnerable	**Nestle** Find a safe space
Rattled	**Count** Steady to 10

Uncomfortable

Uneasy	**Listen** To what calms you
Overwhelmed	**Meditate** Sit, relax and focus
Insecure	**Cuddle** With a pet
Discontent	**Chill** Lie back and unwind
Tired	**Relax** Relish the quiet
Tense	**Unwind** Breathe deeply

[1]https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/promoting-positive-mental-health.html
[2]https://cmha.ca/brochure/stress/
[3]https://cmha.ca/news/understand-your-emotions-understand-yourself/

Calm your mind with foods

Feeling stressed or overwhelmed? It's common to reach for comfort foods in those moments. These tend to be higher in salt, fat and sugar, and many of us turn to them for comfort.

But it's not all bad. While it's important not to over-indulge, some foods can actually help support your mood. Choosing more balanced, nourishing options can have a positive impact on both your body and your mind.

Stress can show up in different ways, including physical and emotional symptoms like:

- Irritability
- Muscle pain and tension
- Anger
- Difficulty sleeping
- Tiredness (fatigue)
- Digestive troubles

Unresolved stress can lead to long-term issues like those listed above and more.

Eating (for) your feelings

What you eat plays an important role in both your physical health and your mental and emotional wellbeing.[1] That's where terms like "comfort food" and "hangry" come from. Research shows that nutrient-dense foods can improve mental health. Aim to include a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins in your meals. Foods rich in antioxidants, omega-3 fatty acids, vitamin D and fibre can all play a role in supporting your mood. Try adding these to your meals:

Beans and legumes
Pinto, black, navy, red or kidney beans, lentils and peas

Fruits
Apples, prunes, cherries, plums, berries, apricots, peaches and oranges

Nuts and seeds
Almonds, walnuts and pecans, flax and sunflower seeds

Vegetables
Artichokes, kale, cabbage, spinach, carrots, mushrooms, tomato, cucumber, beets and broccoli

Healthy fats
Olives, avocados, nuts (walnuts, almonds) and oily fish (salmon, sardines)

Herbs and spices
Cinnamon, garlic, dill, parsley, turmeric and black pepper

Your body and mind are connected, and what you eat can impact how you feel. Try these recipes to help you feel your best.

Hot chocolate with cinnamon and black pepper

Makes: 2 servings | Prep: 5 min | Cook: 10 min

Adding spice to hot chocolate cuts the sweetness while adding complexity to the flavour.

Ingredients

- 1 oz dark chocolate (chips or squares)
- 2 cups low or non-fat milk of your choice
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- ½ tsp cinnamon
- Pinch of ground black pepper

Preparation

Place the chocolate in a medium heatproof bowl. Warm the milk, vanilla, cinnamon, and pepper in a saucepan over medium heat. When bubbles form around the edges of the milk, remove from the heat. Pour it over the chocolate and mix until blended. Serve in two mugs.

Nutrition

Per serving

Calories: 176 | total fat: 6 g | saturated fat: 4 g | sodium: 137 mg | cholesterol: 5 mg
total carbs: 20 g | fibre: 2 g | sugars:16 g | protein: 9 g | potassium: 532 mg

Mushroom and spinach frittata

Makes: 6 servings | Prep: 10 min | Cook: 18 min

A frittata is easy to make and can be packed with nutrients, depending on the vegetables you add. This version has antioxidants and fibre from the spinach, and vitamin D from the mushrooms.

Ingredients

- 5 eggs
- 1 cup unflavoured, unsweetened almond milk (or other milk of your choice)
- ½ tsp sea salt
- ¼ tsp ground black pepper
- 1½ tsp dried parsley
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 cup spinach, fresh or frozen (thawed and drained)
- 1 cup mushrooms, chopped

Preparation

Preheat the oven to 350°F and line a casserole dish with parchment paper. In a medium-sized bowl, whisk the eggs with the milk, salt, pepper and parsley and set aside.
Heat the olive oil in a frying pan over medium heat.
Sauté the spinach and mushrooms in the oil until the mushrooms are lightly brown, about 3 minutes. Allow to cool.
Place the cooled mushroom-spinach mixture in the casserole dish. Pour the egg mixture over the vegetables, cover with foil and bake until the eggs are just set, 15–18 minutes. The frittata is cooked when it's just firm to the touch.
Cut into 6 pieces and serve.

Nutrition

Per serving

Calories: 98 | total fat: 7 g | saturated fat: 2 g | sodium: 314 mg | cholesterol: 175 mg
total carbs: 2 g | fibre: 1 g | sugars: 0 g | protein: 7 g | potassium: 88 mg

[1] https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/maple-leaf/defence/2021/06/connection-between-mental-well-being-and-nutrition.html

Webinar

Interested in learning more wellness tips from the Teladoc Health Canada team?
Join us for our upcoming Wellness Webinar

Resilience Reset: Science-Backed Habits for Stress Recovery

Kennedy Huggett
Clinical Operations Supervisor
Teladoc Health Canada, Inc

Ying Yan Lin
Case Coordinator
Teladoc Health Canada, Inc

Thursday, May 14
@ 12:00 - 1:00 PM EST

Scan here to register

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