

Mental Health Care Cheat Sheet

What is Mental Health?

Mental health is the state of our emotional, psychological, and cognitive well-being. Just like physical health, it is something we all have and must take care of. One in three Canadians will experience a mental health issue at some point in their lives. Just like maintaining our physical health, there are tips and tricks we can use to maintain our mental health.

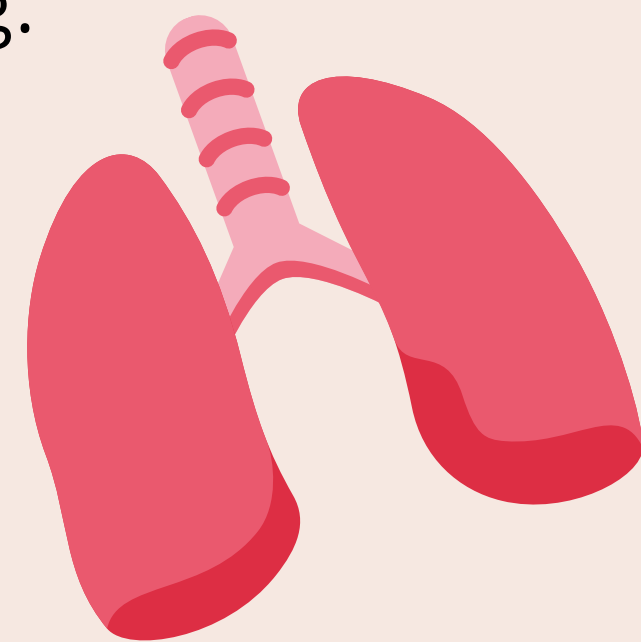


Sleep

- Limit screen exposure in the morning & at night/before bed. Artificial light disrupts your brain's natural sleep & wakefulness cycle. Avoid digital devices 2 hrs before bedtime.
- Aim to get 6-9 hrs of sleep a night.
- Limit bedroom use to sleeping only. Doing work or schoolwork in your bedroom associates that room with memories of stress, alertness, and possibly tension. Separate your office or schoolwork areas from your sleeping environment to improve your ability to fall into and maintain sleep.

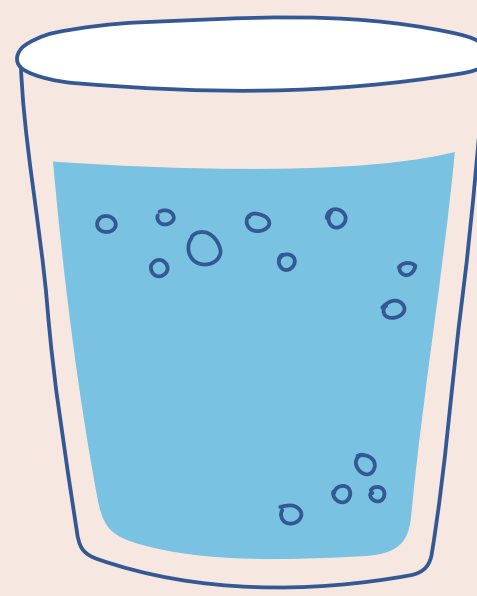
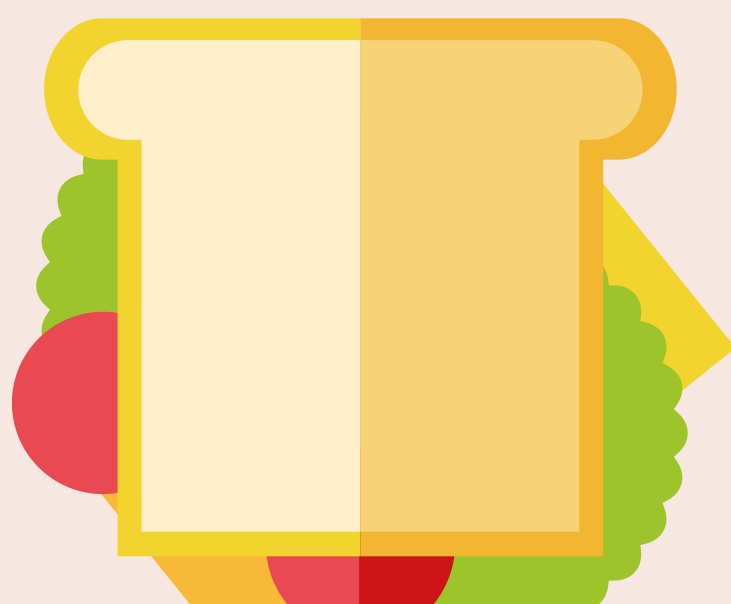
Breathing

- One of the fastest ways to reduce stress in the moment is through focussed breathing.
- Proper form involves breathing in through the nose, and out through the mouth
- Focus on the air filling up your lungs, focus on the feeling of calm and renewal that comes with each breath. Exhale forcing the air from your lungs, imagining the tension being expelled from your body with the air.
- If your mind wanders, that is completely normal! Just return your focus to your breathing each time you get lost in passing thoughts. Visualizing the words IN and OUT as you breathe can help keep your attention locked on your breathing.
- Doing 2 minutes of focused breathing a day can improve your mental and physical health!



Diet

- Proper nutrition plays a role in your physical and mental health.
- Nutrient deficiencies can increase risk for developing a mental illness.
- Eat as little processed food as possible, and aim to get 7-10 fruit & veg servings a day (follow the Canada Food Guide for reference).
- Make sure to hydrate! 2-3 L of water per day assists in maintaining a healthy body and plays a role in cognition, attention/focus, energy levels, and overall mood.



Socialization

- Social connections provide us with closeness to others as well as a safe space to be heard.
- Positive connection with others aids in our emotional regulation, improves self-esteem, and amplifies empathy.
- Socialization increases positive neurotransmitter levels in the brain. This increase can elevate your mood and break negative thinking cycles (get out of your own limited perspective).
- Positive social connections decrease blood pressure, inflammation, and can alleviate physical stress on the body!



Meditation, Prayer & Mindfulness

- Deepens your connection to God, the connection to those around you, and self-understanding.
- Decreases stress hormone levels, regulates breathing, slows heart rate, and reduces blood pressure.
- Calms thoughts, improves brain function, aids in focus, and improves sleep quality.
- Prayer, meditation, and mindfulness all contribute to a longer lifespan and improved overall quality of life!



Physical Health

- Maintaining a good level of physical health reduces blood pressure, decreases inflammation in the body, improves cardiovascular health (decreased risk for heart disease), leads to more efficient breathing, and enhanced cognition.
- Physical activity increases blood flow and flexibility/mobility, while decreasing inflammation and pain sensations in the body.
- Moving your body releases endorphins and other mood-lifting neurotransmitters that not only elevate mood, but also improve focus, aid in memory formation, and enhance learning!
- Aim for 60 minutes of physical activity each day, and try to stretch or move your limbs every 30 minutes (even just for 1-2 minutes).

