

How to Maintain Emotional Health in a Stressed-Out World

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Canadian Mental Health Association: Mental Health Meter link:
cmha.ca/mental-health-meter

1. Practice gratitude

- ❖ See the good in the bad (i.e. “silver-linings”)
- ❖ Train your brain to recognize things you can be thankful for everyday (e.g. food, a song, a person, health)
- ❖ When we lack gratitude we only see limitations
- ❖ It’s not just about money
- ❖ Gratitude journal
- ❖ Practice intentional thankfulness
- ❖ Encourages an outward focus

2. Pursue your interests

- ❖ Happy people know what they enjoy and they spend time doing it.
- ❖ What did you enjoy as a child?
- ❖ Doesn’t need to be something you do well
- ❖ Don’t let money limit you
- ❖ Think intellectually, physically, spiritually, practically, impractically, socially
- ❖ Build competency, confidence & creativity
- ❖ What do you want to learn or master?

3. Develop a routine that works for you (and your family)

- ❖ Structure is good for you.
- ❖ Plan ahead to decrease your mental load (e.g. dinner/lunches, clothing, route, etc.).
- ❖ Stop will-power fatigue
- ❖ Strive for “balance” between sleep, work, fitness, family, friends (book: Pick Three- Randi Zuckerberg)
- ❖ Schedule “down-time”, as well.
- ❖ Leave time for fun.
- ❖ Don’t spend too much time online.

4. Physical health is important

- ❖ Sleep hygiene
- ❖ Build movement into your day (less is more).
- ❖ Accept your limitations.
- ❖ Find what works for you (i.e. stretching, yoga, cycling, walking the dog, playing with kids).
- ❖ You are what you eat.
- ❖ Learn to cook.
- ❖ Examine your relationship with alcohol & other substances. (potential addictive behaviour)

5. Serve & give to others (generosity)

- ❖ Encourages connection with others
- ❖ Decreases isolation
- ❖ Increases sense of purpose

- ❖ Increases worldview
- ❖ Increases empathy for others
- ❖ Increases teamwork
- ❖ Get informed & identify social values

6. Spend time with supportive people

- ❖ We are wired for connection.
- ❖ Ideally we each have two or three people to confide in.
- ❖ We need healthy social bonding.
- ❖ Loneliness epidemic (e.g. Social Prescribing)
- ❖ Dependence on others is okay (i.e. ask for help)
- ❖ School, work, faith-community, meet-ups, etc.
- ❖ Limit time with people who drain you (set limits).

7. Stay Organized

- ❖ Make lists to reduce mental load (“worry list”).
- ❖ Use technology...or don't
- ❖ Budget money AND time
- ❖ Be intentional with your time
- ❖ Prioritize and/or give-up certain things
- ❖ Be realistic about what you can do
- ❖ De-clutter

8. Know Your Values

- ❖ Identify what's important to you.
- ❖ The Miracle Question: If you had a million dollars and a year off what would you do?
- ❖ What do you wish you could spend more energy on?
- ❖ When we continually act outside of our value system we feel inner tension.
- ❖ Values naturally lead to action.

9. Increase Your Emotional Intelligence

- ❖ Emotional awareness is important (27 distinct emotions?).
- ❖ Emotions provide information about how we're interacting with the world around us.
- ❖ Learn to recognize and accept how you feel, rather than judge whether it's valid or not.
- ❖ Emotions can cause us to feel out of control but they are NOT a sign of weakness.
- ❖ Surface emotions (i.e. anger, happiness) vs. deeper feelings
- ❖ Honour your emotions. (validation)
- ❖ Thoughts>>>Feelings>>>Behaviour
- ❖ We all have our limits.
- ❖ Emotional displays often seen as feminine. (i.e. not masculine)
- ❖ Feelings often seen as irrational
- ❖ Can be described as “uncomfortable and comfortable” rather than “positive or negative”.
- ❖ Book: The End of Stress by Joseph Goewey (neuroscience of emotion)