

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 have to find your footing again. Your personal balance will be unique, and your challenge will be to stay mentally healthy by keeping that balance.

This pamphlet has been prepared with some suggestions to help you strike and keep your 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? Where are your skills and interest areas? How would a friend describe you?

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

Take a 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 to us provide 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 by things that other people deal with easily. Learning to keep a balance among work, family and leisure is difficult and needs skillful management of your 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 day-dream 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 or 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 really happy, what you are really passionate about. Learn to balance what you are able to change

about yourself with what you cannot change. Get to know and trust your inner self.

Activity – Build Your Own “You”

Set aside quiet, quality time to be totally alone. 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 bird house, 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 nation-wide, voluntary organization that promotes the mental health of all and supports the resilience and recovery of people experiencing mental illness. CMHA accomplishes this mission through advocacy, education, research and service.

Visit the CMHA website at www.cmha.ca today.

MENTALLY HEALTHY PEOPLE IN A HEALTHY SOCIETY

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