
Sixteen Strategies to Help You Thrive

We all deserve to feel well and to thrive. In order to get there, the first thing to keep in mind is that we ALL have mental health to protect, promote and celebrate. Just like with our physical health. Secondly, we need to ask ourselves: are we actively taking care of our mental health? And what can we do to turn it around when we're not feeling our best?

The Canadian Mental Health Association has adapted a list to aid individuals to help them thrive. These sixteen strategies are based on sound science. Try one of these strategies each day and reflect on how they impact your mood and sense of well-being. Keep stock of which strategies make the biggest impact and keep them in your back pocket to boost your mental health on the bad days, and on the good ones too.

1. **Starting the day off fresh**

It's a brand-new day. Take a deep breath. Fill your lungs with cool outdoor air as you start your day. Repeat this at lunch and when you arrive home... keeping in perspective that we can make a conscious choice to slow down and just breathe throughout our day.

2. **Focusing on the positives**

Write down 3 things that went well today. What was your role in it? Do this before you go to sleep and reflect on the good things from the day. Being grateful can enhance your mental well-being.

3. **Getting outdoors**

Play with your kids, your pet, your friends or your family. Take a moment to just play, move unwind. As far as your mental health is concerned, there is no such thing as too much play!

4. **Seeing the bigger picture**

What is meaningful to you? Do you want to make a difference in your community? Jot down one thing you can do today to make that difference. Volunteer? Check on your neighbor who lives alone? Get involved in a community organization whose mission you support. Choose something and go for it.

5. **Treating yourself**

Enjoy something you usually deny yourself. Really experience the taste, smell and texture. Be mindful of all your senses as you enjoy this treat! Now share some with a colleague or friend with a little note saying, "Enjoy, you deserve it!"

6. **Embracing culture**

Reflect on your heritage. What part of your cultural roots do you celebrate? Is it specific traditions or celebrations, foods, faith or spirituality? Embrace your uniqueness and your history as a valuable part of who you are. You may want to do an exchange with someone who celebrates a different culture.

7. **Being active**

Head out to a local park or activity centre. Take your friends or meet new ones there. Bring along your frisbee, balls and your favourite snacks. Did you know being active and connecting with others has real health benefits, including for your mental health?

8. Using your personal resources

What or who has helped you through difficult times in the past? Make a list. Now, add things you do for you yourself! Keep this list for the next time you might need it. We all have difficulties from time to time but knowing what helps us can make a difference in how quickly we get through it.

9. Learning

Go online. You can learn how to do just about anything on YouTube. Or got out in the world and take that course you've meant to try.

10. Finding meaning

Want to get in touch with a sense of your purpose? What excites you? What do you feel passionate about? How can you get more involved in what is important to you? Think about this throughout your day.

11. Enjoying yourself

Spend ONE hour today doing what YOU want... what was that like? How do you feel now? Taking time to re-energize allows you to continue to be your best in other areas of your life.

12. Connecting

Call a friend or someone you like and arrange to meet. Spending time with people can actually boost our immune system and our mental health!

13. Disconnecting

Really? Yes, to stay connected you need to disconnect. Turn away from your screens. Turn off all electronics for one hour today (cell phones, television, computer, video games). Do something that you haven't done in a while – read a book, write in a journal, play an old-fashioned board game, or visit a friend. Enjoy this time without any interruptions.

14. A moment just to rest

Give yourself a moment to just close your eyes and let go of your thoughts. This might lead to a few minutes – or more – of mindfulness meditation. (Check online for easy instructions!) This is time for you and only you.

15. Time out to breathe

Take 3 minutes to focus on your breathing. Get comfortable in your chair (legs uncrossed; arms relaxed by your side). Inhale slowly through your nose (or mouth), count one, two, three; completely fill your lungs. Hold your breath – pause, then exhale through your mouth. Repeat this process for a few minutes and focus on how relaxed you are.

16. Nature

Take a walk in a natural setting and take in the sights and sounds, perhaps the bird songs, the squirrels scurrying, footprints on the ground, or the texture of the tree bark. Re-connect with the natural world around you!

Now that you've tried out some of these strategies, how do you feel? Which strategies are your favourites? Which made the biggest impact?

Are there other strategies you use that aren't on this list?

<https://cmha.ca/blogs/16-strategies-to-help-you-thrive>