

Prioritizing mental health for May

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, a time to prioritize and raise awareness about our mental well-being. Read below for an activity with some expert tips and insights to help prioritize your mental health and reduce stress.

31 days of mental health mindfulness

You know it's important to care for your physical health. Did you know that caring for your mental health is just as important? Below are 31 activities to help you prioritize your mental health. Use it as a checklist and try to accomplish one activity each day. Remember, these activities can also help any day of any month.

<p>1</p> <p>Plan on a good night's sleep</p> <p>Fresh sheets and a regular bedtime routine can set you up for recharging your mind and body.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Make a date with yourself</p> <p>Do something you enjoy. Visit a museum or see a movie. Taking time for yourself is a form of self-care.¹</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Create a vision board</p> <p>Cut out images and quotes that inspire you and place them on a board or paper. This can help you stay motivated toward achieving your goals.</p>
<p>4</p> <p>Talk it out</p> <p>Discuss your thoughts and feelings with a trusted friend. Or connect with a therapist. They may be able to better help you manage stress.¹</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Let in the light</p> <p>Aim for 30 minutes of natural sunlight each day to boost your mood while you are awake and help you sleep better at night.¹</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Pay it forward</p> <p>Show kindness. Buy a friend or stranger a coffee or lunch. They will get a jolt of happiness, and the social connection is good for you too.</p>
<p>7</p> <p>Reframe negativity</p> <p>Find a positive angle. Think of your challenges as opportunities to learn and grow.¹</p>	<p>8</p> <p>Stay connected</p> <p>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.¹</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Be mindful</p> <p>Practice being aware and present in the moment instead of on autopilot.</p>
<p>10</p> <p>Write a letter</p> <p>Taking time to write a letter to yourself or someone special can strengthen your connection and bring joy.</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Start a journal</p> <p>It doesn't have to be long. Just put words to a page. Aim to "notice the good" and add to it every day.</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Be creative</p> <p>Paint, sing, read, garden or dust off a musical instrument. Play with a group or friends. This will help build a healthy support system and can be uplifting.¹</p>
<p>13</p> <p>Rest your best</p> <p>Limit electronics and avoid alcohol, caffeine, large meals or exercise too close to bedtime.¹</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Do an act of service</p> <p>Volunteer at a school, food bank or shelter for a feeling of belonging and being part of a community.¹</p>	<p>15</p> <p>Take a 10-minute walk outside</p> <p>Activity helps improve your mood and reduce stress.¹ Your body will thank you and your mind will too.</p>
<p>16</p> <p>Practice gratitude</p> <p>Take stock of what you are fortunate enough to have and who you are lucky to know. Perspective affects your outlook.¹</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Take a digital detox</p> <p>Unplug from technology for the day. It can reduce stress, improve sleep quality, and allow you to be more present.¹</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Show compassion for yourself</p> <p>Note your accomplishments. This fresh perspective can change your mood.</p>
<p>19</p> <p>Ask for help</p> <p>It's one of the hardest things you can do. Having someone step in or talking to a mental health professional to help you cope will make a difference.</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Check in with yourself</p> <p>Journal your feelings. Just a few words will suffice. Think about your beliefs and what is important to you, and let them guide you.</p>	<p>21</p> <p>Dance it out</p> <p>Put on some music and get your heart pumping. You'll relieve stress, possibly release some endorphins and put a smile on your face.¹</p>
<p>22</p> <p>Color your world</p> <p>Invest in an adult coloring book. The repetitive action and expression of your creativity can have a calming effect.</p>	<p>23</p> <p>Say no</p> <p>Setting priorities and boundaries are healthy ways to keep from taking on too much.</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Try a new hobby</p> <p>Explore a new hobby, learn new skills, and discover new passions. It can help break up the monotony of daily routines and provide a sense of accomplishment.</p>
<p>25</p> <p>Practice self-care</p> <p>Take a walk, soak in a warm bath, get a manicure or have coffee in a cozy café. Live in those moments and recharge.</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Shift your focus</p> <p>Try not to dwell on what you can't control. When something outside of your power happens, concentrate on what you can fix.</p>	<p>27</p> <p>Find the fun</p> <p>Laughter brings about positive emotions, reducing stress and improving your well-being. Watch a sitcom or find funny videos online.¹</p>
<p>28</p> <p>Plan a meal with a friend</p> <p>Eating together is a great way to stay connected with loved ones.</p>	<p>29</p> <p>Try a 10-minute meditation</p> <p>Be aware of your breath and take in sights and sounds. Let thoughts and worries leave your mind as you focus on the present.</p>	<p>30</p> <p>Seek serenity</p> <p>Look for opportunities in the day to pause, breathe and be mindful.</p>
<p>31</p> <p>Give yourself a pat on the back!</p> <p>Taking pride in reaching goals will make you happy. And it gets better—it releases dopamine and serotonin.</p>	<p>Congratulations—you're on the road to improving your emotional health!</p> <p>Now keep it going. Draw from what you've learned along the way to stay in touch with yourself.</p>	

¹ <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/promoting-positive-mental-health.html>

Is stress stressing you?

Life can be hard. Everyday activities may bring situations that cause stress. But there are ways to deal with it before it harms you. It's sneaky—our body often tells us we're stressed before our mind realizes it may be heading into trouble. Do you have sleeping problems? Feel tense? Have an unexplained headache, upset stomach or low energy? These are signs that stress and its symptoms may be turning into a full-blown problem.

The physical discomfort of stress can accompany behaviour and mood changes.

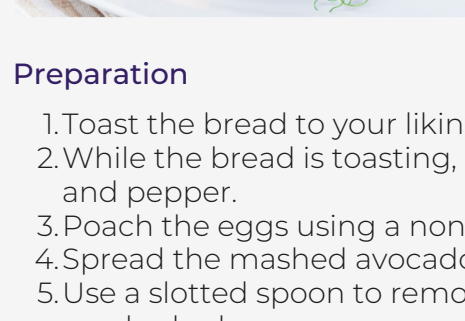
Long-term stress can make you feel:

- Anxious
- Lonely
- Overwhelmed
- Angry
- Unfocused

Prolonged stress can also cause long-term effects to our health.

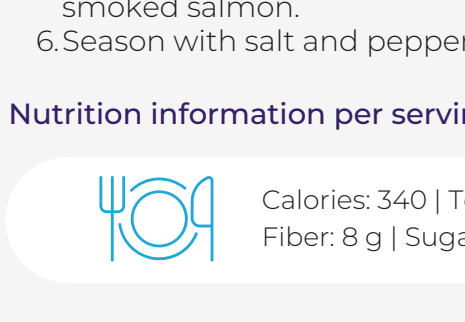
Physically, ongoing (prolonged or repeated) stress can lead to high blood pressure, breathing trouble, skin or stomach problems, pain and a weakened immune system.¹

Here are some stress management techniques for a more peaceful life



Get a good night's rest

Follow a bedtime routine. Commit to a regular lights-out and wake-up schedule to refresh your body and mind.



Build physical activity into your daily routine

Exercise delivers feel-good endorphins and improves physical health and mental well-being.



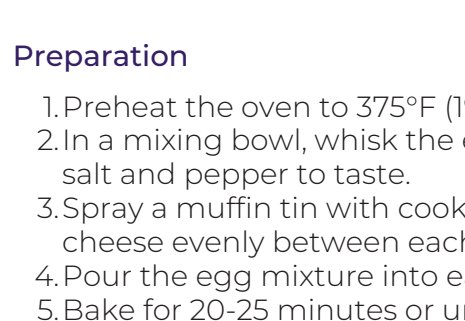
Relax and breathe deeply

Become aware of your senses, focus on your breath and relax your muscles to help soothe your nerves.



Vent your thoughts and feelings

Write in a journal or talk to a friend or therapist—don't bottle up your emotions. Talking about stress is the best way to release it. It can also help you find the source and ways to relieve it.



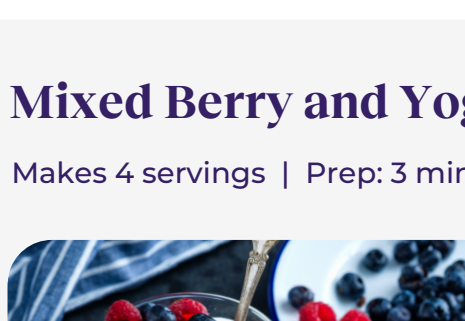
Do activities you enjoy

Don't make life "all work and no play." Have hobbies, go on adventures and take care of yourself.



Adopt healthy habits

Eat well-balanced meals and limit your alcohol intake for healthy well-being.



Set priorities and boundaries

Decide what you must get done and say "no" to what you feel is too much.

Making big changes is always tough, so start small

Combating stress means taking a good, hard look at how we spend our time and energy. We often think to check in with our friends, our kids and even our social media. But when was the last time you checked in with yourself?

¹ <https://www.concordia.ca/cunews/offices/provost/health/topics/stress-management/stress-signs-symptoms.html#physical>

² <https://www.canada.ca/en/financial-consumer-agency/services/financial-wellness-work/stress-impacts.html>

³ <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/promoting-positive-mental-health.html>

Healthy brunch ideas

Looking to treat yourself and your family to a delicious brunch? These healthier versions of classic staples will be great additions to your brunch spread or as a standalone breakfast.

Avocado Toast with Poached Egg and Smoked Salmon

Makes 4 servings | Prep: 5 minutes | Cook: 20 minutes



Ingredients

- 2 slices of whole grain bread
- 1 ripe avocado
- 2 large eggs
- 2 ounces of smoked salmon
- Salt and pepper to taste

Preparation

1. Toast the bread to your liking.
2. While the bread is toasting, mash the avocado in a small bowl with a fork and season with salt and pepper.
3. Poach the eggs using a non-stick spray or a small amount of oil instead of butter.
4. Spread the mashed avocado on each slice of toast and top with a few slices of smoked salmon.
5. Use a slotted spoon to remove the poached eggs from the water and place them on top of the smoked salmon.
6. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Nutrition information per serving

Calories: 340 | Total fat: 20 g | Sodium: 360 mg | Total carbs: 21 g
Fiber: 8 g | Sugars: 1 g | Protein: 19 g

Mini Frittatas with Spinach and Feta

Makes 4 servings | Prep: 3 minutes | Cook: 25 minutes

Ingredients

- 6 large eggs
- 1/4 cup of milk (use low-fat milk if desired)
- 2 cups of baby spinach
- 1/4 cup of crumbled feta cheese
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Cooking spray

Preparation

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F (190°C).
2. In a mixing bowl, whisk the eggs and milk together until well combined. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
3. Spray a muffin tin with cooking spray and divide the baby spinach and crumbled feta cheese evenly between each cup.
4. Pour the egg mixture into each muffin cup, filling about 2/3 of the way full.
5. Bake for 20-25 minutes or until the frittatas have puffed up and are set in the center.
6. Serve warm and garnish with additional feta cheese and spinach, if desired.

Nutrition information per serving

Calories: 140 | Total fat: 8 g | Sodium: 280 mg | Total carbs: 4 g
Fiber: 1 g | Sugars: 2 g | Protein: 11 g

Mixed Berry and Yogurt Parfait

Makes 4 servings | Prep: 3 minutes | Cook: 10 minutes

Ingredients

- 2 cups of Greek yogurt (use low-fat Greek yogurt if desired)
- 1/2 cup of fresh blueberries
- 1/2 cup of fresh raspberries
- 1/2 cup of fresh strawberries, sliced
- 1/4 cup of honey
- 1/4 cup of granola

Preparation

1. In a small mixing bowl, whisk the Greek yogurt and honey together until well combined.
2. In four serving glasses, layer the yogurt mixture with the mixed berries and granola.
3. Repeat the layering until all ingredients are used up, ending with a layer of mixed berries on top.
4. Serve immediately or chill in the refrigerator until ready to serve.

Nutrition information per serving

Calories: 380 | Total fat: 19 g | Sodium: 100 mg | Total carbs: 51 g
Fiber: 3 g | Sugars: 30 g | Protein: 3 g

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