

## MENTAL HEALTH

### Nurturing your own personal needs

The Canadian Mental Health Association estimates that in any given year, one in five people in Canada will personally experience a mental health problem or illness.

Awareness of the importance of mental wellness is growing, but stigma and judgement remain an obstacle for personal and societal acceptance.

Have you ever grieved a death, or experienced stress at work or school? Has there ever been a time you worried about someone else's well-being? These scenarios and feelings, among many others, influence one's mental health.

Have you ever noticed a heaviness in your chest, ongoing headaches, shakiness, or other physical symptoms that can't be medically explained? Do you ever experience a desire to stay in bed or avoid social situations? These are examples of how feeling mentally unwell may impact one's body and behaviour.

Mental health is often perceived as "good or bad," but the truth is, it lies on a spectrum, and can fluctuate over the course of our lifetime. As with physical health, there are some ailments you can treat yourself, and others that require prompt medical attention. Everyone has different lived experiences and medical diagnoses that influence their ability to cope and practise mental wellness. Just because a scenario may seem easy to some doesn't mean it is easy for all.

For example, an invitation to a party may sound great to many, but for someone who struggles with anxiety, it may cause angst and worry about being liked or judged. It takes practice and skills to recognize and address unhelpful thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. As a result, we sometimes turn to unhealthy coping strategies such as avoidance, isolation, or alcohol or drug use, etc.

Experiencing mental illness is as justified and normal as experiencing physical illness. However, because it is not as visible, it can be more difficult to seek help. There are many strategies you can practise to reinforce mental wellness and resilience. Here are a few to consider:

**The mind-body connection** — Regular exercise has been shown to reduce symptoms of depression. Start by taking a walk, for example. Take baby steps; a small step is actually a big step.



**Healthy thinking** — Healthy thinking allows us to practise objectively looking at our thoughts in a balanced way. It means looking at all factors in a situation and then deciding how you feel about it. Consider if you are thinking from your emotional, rational, or wise mind. Using balanced thinking can improve your responses to stressful life events and maintain mental wellness.

**Positive support network** — Healthy relationships are crucial to mental wellness, and may involve going outside of your comfort zone and taking risks. This may mean reconnecting with previous friends and activities or trying something new.

**Find balance** — Take inventory of what is important to you, and strive to find your own boundaries. This may mean putting your needs above those around you.

**Be mindful** — Practise thoughtfully directing your attention to the present. Take a moment to notice the temperature and taste of your coffee, the feel of a breeze on your skin, or the scent of a fall rain.

**Get help** — Making a decision to seek help when you need it is a sign of strength, not weakness. Don't hesitate to reach out.

**Stay patient with yourself** — Remember, recovery is an evolution, not a miracle.

For more information, read the Canadian Mental Health Association's [Fast Facts about Mental Illness](#).

## Key community resources in Kingston for mental health support:

[Addictions and Mental Health Services KFL&A](#): 613-544-1536

\*[Crisis Line](#) (24-hour phone support): 613-544-4229

[Bereaved Families of Ontario](#): 613-634-1230

[BounceBack Ontario](#) (skills-building telephone support): 1-866-345-0224

[Centre for Abuse and Trauma Therapy](#): 613-507-2288

[Maltby Centre](#) (for children and youth): 613-546-8535

[QFHT](#) (anxiety and depression program): 613-533-9300, Ext. 73976

[Resolve Counselling Services Kingston](#): 613-549-7850

[Sexual Assault Centre Kingston](#): 613-545-0762

[Street Health Centre](#) (harm reduction centre): 613-549-1440

Employee assistance programs/benefits may also be available to you; check with your employer.

## Self Help

[Big White Wall](#) (online support)

Mind Shift (phone app)

[Centre for Clinical Interventions](#) (downloadable workbooks)

*“Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a battle you know nothing about.”  
(Quote by author Wendy Mass, “The Candymakers”)*

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