

5 tips to curb stress and boost mental health

With the COVID-19 pandemic, it can feel like there is a lot to worry about – and that worry can negatively impact our mental health. To help, we've put together some tips to help you navigate this stressful time in the healthiest way possible.

1. **Normalize** your feelings

Pay attention to how you're feeling and then normalize those feelings. With the uncertainty of the pandemic, we've all experienced stress and anxiety as we worry about the safety of our loved ones and ourselves. Reassure yourself that what you're feeling is normal to help calm your mind.

2. **Stay connected**

Now more than ever, it's important to keep in touch with the people in your life. Reach out to friends or family you've missed and plan outdoor or socially-distant visits to reconnect. It's likely you're not alone in feeling stressed or anxious and it might help to talk about it.

3. **Pick up a hobby**

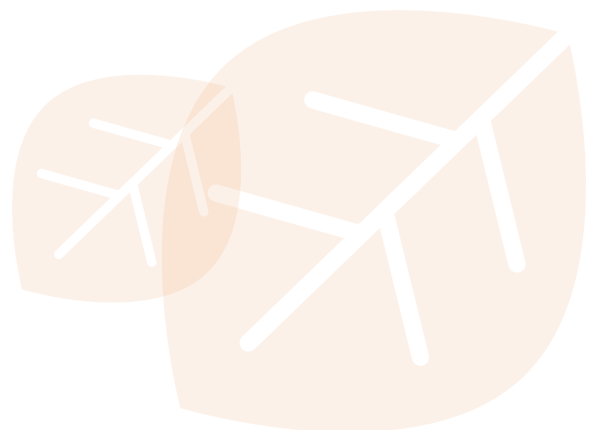
Curl up with a good book, play a board game with the family, start a new puzzle or try teaching yourself how to knit. Taking time to do an activity that brings you joy will help you to manage stress and feel happier.

4. **Get active**

Exercise is important for boosting mental health. It reduces stress hormones and improves mood. Go at your own pace and choose activities you enjoy, whether it's going for a walk, playing tag with the kids, doing an online yoga video or lifting weights.

5. **Practice gratitude**

It's easy to get caught up in the stress of our everyday lives – and especially during times of uncertainty. Make an effort to focus on the simple pleasures of daily life to remind yourself what you are grateful for.



Healthy habits for fall

Fall can feel like a fresh start as summer vacations come to an end and school starts again. It's the perfect time to get back into the daily routines that keep us happy and healthy. Here are five tips to help you create and maintain those healthy habits.



1. Find your **why**

Start with your motivation. What do you value in life? Are your habits helping you get there? What are you willing to change to make it happen? Write your answers down so you can look at them throughout your journey to keep you going.



2. Set **goals**

Setting goals can help you improve your health, but they can also be overwhelming. Keep them specific and SMART to make them more attainable. A SMART goal is **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant and **T**imely. For example: "I want to get eight hours of sleep each night so that I have energy to exercise."



3. **Nourish** your body

The truth is that health exists on a spectrum, and so does healthy eating! Healthy eating means nourishing your body and mind with food that fuels you and makes you feel good. Focus on eating plenty of fruits and vegetables (frozen is great), drink lots of water, explore new recipes and listen to your body's hunger cues to avoid eating out of stress or boredom.



4. **Move** your body

As we get back to work and school, sedentary desk work can often lead to muscular imbalances that have the potential to become injuries. Experts recommend stretching for five minutes every hour that you're doing seated work. It can improve circulation and flexibility and contribute to stress relief and pain reduction. [Click here for five simple stretches you can do at home.](#)



5. **Be ready** for barriers

Identify behaviours that could sabotage your goals and think of some ways to overcome them. For example, your goal may be to eat at home but you still get fast food every week because you run out of time to cook. When you identify what actions are getting in your way and why you keep doing them, it's easier to find solutions to overcome them.