

Mental Health Matters

People tend to oversee the significance of mental health due to its intangible nature. Mental health is an essential aspect of our well-being and impacts how we feel, think, and behave. Mental health affects all of us every day and does not discriminate based on age, gender, or race.

Over the past year, the pandemic has negatively impacted almost everyone's mental health. Online school coupled with isolation have only made matters worse. With the lack of in-person experiences, students do not have as much help and may have to self-learn to keep up with class materials.

We at the Canadian Student Relief Charity understand how difficult these uncertain times can be. So we have prepared this document to provide **resources, helplines, and personal advice for students** to help you cope better and show you that you are not alone.

Signs that your mental health may be declining:

- You find it difficult to concentrate and feel a lack of motivation in doing so.
- You isolate yourself from family and friends and avoid contact with them.
- You have a shift in sleeping patterns. You either sleep too much or too little.
- Your appetite has changed. You either undereat or overeat.
- You find it difficult to get out of bed and do everyday tasks.
- You have a loss of interest in things you used to enjoy.

Academic Advice

- 1) Form a study group. This can help you feel accompanied and ensure that you aren't always studying by yourself. You can get your questions answered and have a mini-support group.
- 2) Take breaks! Constantly pushing yourself to do work will only lead to burnout.
- 3) Maintain a planner to help you keep organized and stay on track with your work.
- 4) If something happens in your life that is impacting your education, reach out to your professors and ask for help and/or extensions.
- 5) Search for mental health resources at your educational institute*.

*Universities and high schools often offer counselling services and therapy sessions for students who may need it. Try speaking to them to see if you can get any free or inexpensive help!

Self-Care Activities

- 1) Keep a journal to write down your emotions and thoughts as they come. This can help you stay focused after you process and reflect on your initial thoughts.
- 2) Engage in a non-work hobby. This can be anything from dancing, to painting, to a sport! You do not have to be good at it, as long as it helps take your mind off of work for a while.
- 3) Go for a socially-distanced walk around your neighbourhood.
- 4) Exercise and stay active!
- 5) Drink more water and incorporate more fruits and vegetables into your diet.
- 6) Unplug from social media and the internet for a bit.

Stress Management

- <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240003927>
Check out this guide created by the World Health Organization for practical skills to manage your stress.
- <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/stress-management.htm>
A hands-on article on tips you can implement immediately.

Resources:

- <https://advicewithmy.com/free-mental-health-and-self-care-resources>
- <https://wellness.mcmaster.ca/resources/websites/>
Check out McMaster's website for credible resources on topics such as anxiety, depression, health, procrastination, study skills, suicide prevention and more.
- <https://sass.uottawa.ca/en/counselling/get-started>
If you are looking for books, videos, worksheets, phone apps and additional resources then be sure to check out the resources offered through uOttawa. Their counselling services compiled a list of resources you can check out on topics such as managing emotions, self-care, mindfulness, sleep, body image, trauma, self-harm, depression and more.

There are also a number of websites that offer free counselling, helplines, and other mental health resources.

Here are a few:

- <https://www.7cups.com/>
- <https://cimhs.com/>
- <https://jack.org/Home>
- <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/mental-health-services/mental-health-get-help.html>

REMEMBER to go easy on yourself. You've already been through enough & you're doing the best that you can right now.

Hear from Us!



Meet Priyanka:
First-year student
York University for Bachelor
of Business Administration

Hi everyone! I think that it is so important to get educated about our mental health to understand the importance of it. Completing my first year of university online has not been easy but I have some self-care activities and tips to help me get through it. I try to keep a planner that has everything I need to get done in the week. This helps me prioritize my work and ensure I don't forget anything. If I do fall behind with my work (and it does happen, so don't stress out too much), having it written down reminds me to get it done eventually. Aside from academics, I try to keep myself busy with other things that I enjoy. For example I have joined a few clubs at school where I can make new friends and work on something other than school that I am passionate about. I also dance and play an instrument which helps me take my mind off of school. Whatever it is that you can do that is not school or work can help put your mind at ease for a bit. You don't have to do many things or even be amazing at your hobby, as long as it makes you happy!

Hear from Us!



Meet Mylynh

Alumna from the University
of Waterloo
Bachelor of Science and
Major in Biology

There are various simple steps I take in order to protect my mental space and maintain my sanity throughout the day. I set a time limit for my social media apps so once the limit has passed, it automatically shuts off the app on my phone. I also try to exercise and stretch as much as I can because I feel clear headed and less stressed afterwards. My advice is to find something that you enjoy doing and carve out time during the day to do those activities. Figure out when you have the most energy and dedicate those hours to work on the hard task.

Hear from Us!



Meet Sharmika
First-year student
York University for Bachelor
of Business Administration

Hi, my name is Sharmika and I'm a first year BBA student. Sometimes school can be stressful and in order to take care of my mental health, I try to allocate some time away from school work to focus on myself and what I love to do. I believe it is very important to use a planner to schedule your daily activities and room for "me time" so that your mind gets to de-stress. The activities I like to do on my own time includes exercising, taking long walks, and reading. A little fun fact about myself is that I used to dislike reading but after giving it a try, I couldn't go back! I found that reading makes me feel calm, relaxed and lowers my stress levels. All in all, I believe it is very important to schedule time for yourselves in your self-care routine.

Hear from Us!



Meet Yasmin

Alumna from Ryerson University
for Bachelor of Sciences,
Major in Biomedical Sciences

Hi beautiful people! My name is Yasmin. I am a recent graduate of Ryerson University. My fascination with sciences and human behaviours/interactions drove me to major and minor in biomedical sciences and psychology, respectively. While at Ryerson, I worked part-time and tried to stay in touch with friends and spend time with family. I was doing well both in school and at my job and remained active in my social life. Juggling everything at once was, without a doubt, difficult and exhausting. I was mentally and physically exhausted all the time because I failed to allocate some time to myself. I never prioritized myself and my mental health and it took a toll on me. Now, I dedicate time to myself every day, doing things I enjoy to avoid getting mentally and eventually physically exhausted like before. To me, this means going for a walk and watching the sunset with a warm drink in my hand. It means reading a few pages of a book every day while listening to relaxing music and sipping on my coffee. It means getting my heart pumping and exercising every day, even for a few minutes. It means writing three things that I'm grateful for each day (or in general) in my journal every night before going to bed. Self-care looks different for everyone. My advice is to try new things and find out what works for you and allocate time to yourself every day. Remember, mental health is part of your overall well-being. So take care of yourself!

Hear from Us!



Meet Kamyab
Master Student at Schulich
School of Business

Why do you think mental health is important?

Mental health is just as important as physical health. In fact, it directly affects your physical health. We need to realize mental health needs to be taken care of just as much as we care about other aspects of our life. We should pay attention to it. Understand it. Take the signs (physically and mentally - Good or bad) seriously. And once in a while, take a break.

What are some helpful self-care tips?

I play the guitar and love to cook and bake. Painting by number! I know nothing of painting and I started with painting by number and surprisingly it's fabulous! It's very calming. There are also meditation apps! Working out helps out too. Even if it's just a daily short walk. Do something you love - something that you look forward to! Mine is gaming haha

How do you balance school, work and your mental health?

Time management is key. It tends to be difficult at first, but being able to adjust yourself with your schedule, allocating proper briefings, allows you to get to things on time. P.S. it is OKAY not to get EVERYTHING done once in a while :)

Hear from Us!



Meet Minahil
Senior High School Student

Why do you think mental health is important?

I think our mental health has a huge impact on our capabilities and to what extent we are able to use them. Bad mental health makes us physically and intellectually less capable. Furthermore, if we don't take care of our mental health, we may unintentionally impact the people around us. Thus, taking care of one's mental health is important.

What are some helpful self-care tips?

I like to go on a walk or cook whenever I feel overwhelmed or frustrated. Sometimes watching a comedy movie or spending some quality time with family helps.

How do you balance school, work and your mental health?

One thing that I always remind myself of is that taking care of myself is also productive. Resting and investing time in myself is also productive. Using this principle, I am able to manage time accurately. I also like to plan my entire day in the morning while making sure to include some self-care time. I restrict certain days for work and the other days are for having fun and to relax. This helps me be more productive and it keeps me motivated without tiring me out.

Hear from Us!



Meet Stephanie
Senior High School Student

Why do you think mental health is important?

Neglecting mental health leads to poor academic performance, overall well-being, physical health, and can lead to one developing severe psychological strife.

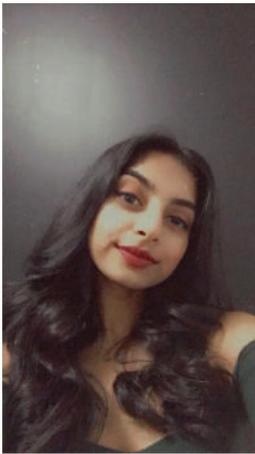
What are some helpful self-care tips?

Watch a comfort show. Maybe something you enjoyed in your childhood/adolescence.

How do you balance school, work and your mental health?

I understand my mental and physical limitations and plan out my actions in accordance with that. Sometimes it is difficult, but when you understand your needs, scheduling is much more effective.

Hear from Us!



Meet Niyati
Second year student
Carleton University for
Architecture

Why do you think mental health is important?

It is important to take care of your mental health because it is such a vital part of our lives. Dealing with your mental health can lead to a better quality of life where you can enjoy the activities you do everyday as well as have healthy relationships with your friends and family. It is essential to manage yourself emotionally in order to have a healthy physical lifestyle.

What are some helpful self-care tips?

Working out is such a great way to release stress when you're feeling overwhelmed and it's a great way to boost your energy at any time of the day. Another tip is to write in a journal. If you don't like talking to people about your emotions, writing them down helps so much because you don't have to hold back on anything you say - you'll be the only one seeing it!

How do you balance school, work and your mental health?

Something I like to do is take a self-care day once in a week. Obviously with school/work it is hard to take a whole day off, but I like to use an agenda to schedule tasks around that day so in the end, I have minimal homework to finish on that one day. Using an agenda makes me feel like I'm in control of my life and reduces the constant stress of missing an important deadline/activity. I spend the rest of the day doing things I enjoy to get myself in a good headspace.

I also like working out in the morning because it lets me start off my day with lots of energy and puts me in a good place emotionally to do my work throughout the day.