

# Preserving your Mental Health

We are going to start this presentation with a slow breathing exercise. Many of us are familiar with deep breathing, but we will be starting with slow breathing. The essence of this is to stimulate your parasympathetic nervous system, which promotes a state of calmness, in both your body and mind.

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The key is to breathe from your abdomen and not from your chest. Many times when we deep breathe, we do so from your chest. But, today we will be breathing from the abdomen, we will be placing both hands on the abdomen and breathing in very slowly. The slower you go, the more likely your body will calm down faster. While we breathe in, we will be internally counting to 3, we hold our breath for 3 seconds, and upon breathing out, we will do that for 3 seconds as well. We will do this a few times and then start this presentation.

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What does it mean to preserve your mental health? What does that look like to you? Many people may associate preserving your mental health with things like, less work, more time to sleep and exercise, maybe seeing a counsellor once every month. And yeah, they aren't wrong, but it's also much simpler than that too. It also includes having a hobby that distresses you, prioritising quality

family and friends time, it's also ensuring that your meals are as balanced as possible.

Today, we will be using an aspect of guided imagery (which is also a stress management technique), to stimulate your appetite for preserving your mental health. I will also be handing out a few papers, nothing hard, you'll just be sharing your views on a few stuff. And for every strategy that I will be presenting to you, we will be closing our eyes and picturing the scene being created.

**Skip slide and hand out sheets.**

1. Practice self-care
2. Stay connected
3. Learn stress management
4. Set realistic goals
5. Establish boundaries
6. Practice mindfulness
7. Seek professional help
8. Engage in positive self-talk
9. Maintain a healthy lifestyle
10. Engage in meaningful activities
11. Engage in creative expression

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Let's now take a look at a few suggestions on how we can practically apply it to our life:

1. Have a 10-minutes game session every departmental meeting to loosen a few tense shoulders.
2. Use one departmental meeting every month as a connection session.  
Share your highs and lows of the month, and share useful tips to make the next working month more fruitful.
3. Determine what makes for managing your stress levels. If your current strategies are not working, you may have to go back to the drawing board.
4. Prioritise your personal and professional life accordingly. Being in control of your days gives you more control over your mind.
5. Know that it is okay to push your limits, but even more important to know your limits.
6. Remain aware of your emotions and state of mind. If you find it hard to determine what's going on, pull out a piece of paper and dump your thoughts onto it. You might be surprised that it all starts making more sense.
7. If you are one who struggles with giving yourself compassion, designate someone or something to help you with that. You can even download an app that sends daily affirmations.
8. Engage in meaningful activities. All work and no play makes jack and jill very dull.

9. Ensure that you develop good stress management techniques. This is especially crucial for your line of work.

Let's close out with a 2 minute slow breathing session. While we breathe in, we will be internally counting to 3, we hold our breath for 3 seconds, and upon breathing out, we will do that for 3 seconds as well.

Thank you for your time and attention.