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Mental health and substance use
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**Canadian Mental
Health Association**
British Columbia
Mental health for all

where can I find help for mental health problems?

www.heretohelp.bc.ca



Getting help for a mental health problem can be a hard step to take at first, but an important one on your road to recovery. Here are some resources in BC to know about.

Do you need to talk to someone right away? Call the BC Mental Health Support Line at 310-6789 (no area code).

A family doctor or GP

A family doctor (or GP) can look into other causes of your symptoms. Some doctors may be able to treat you themselves, or they can refer you to more specialized services. Go to www.healthlinkbc.ca to find health services like walk-in clinics if you don't have a family doctor.

Settings and networks you may have

A way many people access free mental health care like counselling and other services is through settings and networks they're already connected to:

- A workplace Employee and Family Assistance Program or extended health benefits (yours or a family member's)
- School or campus counselling services

Public mental health care services

Public mental health services, like a program at a hospital, mental health centre, or team are funded by the government and covered by MSP. That includes seeing a psychiatrist (a specialist doctor for mental illnesses). A referral from a doctor is usually required. Talk to your doctor or look up mental health services in your area on your health authority's website.

Private mental health care services

Some service providers are not covered by MSP so you need to pay for these yourself. This includes psychotherapy or counselling by private practitioners. Just call them up—no referral required. For registered psychologists, visit www.psychologists.bc.ca. For registered clinical counsellors, visit www.bc-counsellors.org.

Need help finding help?

- Email askus@heretohelp.bc.ca to contact our information and referral volunteers
- Call 811 or visit www.gov.bc.ca/mentalhealth
- Call the BC Mental Health Support Line at 310-6789 (no area code)
- Contact a local mental health organization, such as a branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association (www.cmha.bc.ca) or BC Schizophrenia Society (www.bcscs.org)
- Visit crisiscentrechat.ca to chat with a crisis line volunteer and find resources
- Parents-in-Residence and Youth-in-Residence can help you find services and resources across BC specific to child and youth mental health. Visit www.familysmart.ca or www.keltymentalhealth.ca



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depression

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Depression, also called major depressive disorder, is a mood disorder. It affects the way you feel about yourself and others. It's more than a bad day. Depression may be more likely to come up during changes in your life, but it can also seem to come up for no reason at all. Depression can affect anyone.

Symptoms of depression can include:

- Losing interest in activities you used to enjoy
- Feeling worthless, helpless, hopeless or guilty
- Feeling tearful, irritable or numb
- Feeling very tired or run-down
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Changes in eating habits
- Difficulties concentrating or making decisions
- Frequent physical complaints like stomach aches or headaches
- Thoughts of death or suicide

Different people experience depression in different ways. For example, some people feel sad or tearful, others feel irritable or angry, and some don't feel much at all.

What can I do about depression?

The good news is depression is treatable. It is usually treated with one or more of:

- **Psychotherapy**—helps you build healthy thinking skills and improve your relationships with others. Common psychotherapies for depression include cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), interpersonal therapy (IPT), and acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT).
- **Antidepressant medications**—especially when it is severe or other approaches don't seem to work. There are many different types, so you will work with your doctor to find the best medication for you.
- **Self-help strategies**—simple steps you can take every day, such as getting some physical activity every day, building healthy sleep and eating habits, or spending time with family or friends.

Where can I go from here?

If you need to talk to someone, have thoughts of suicide, or don't know where to go, call the BC Mental Health Support Line at 310-6789 (no area code). It's open any time of day or night.

- Talk to your doctor (or a doctor at a walk-in clinic). They can refer you to specialized mental health services, if needed
- Visit the Mood Disorders Association of BC at www.mdabc.net
- Try Bounce Back[®], a free program for British Columbians with mild-to-moderate depression or anxiety. See www.bouncebackbc.ca
- For more on different kinds of service providers and how to access low-cost counselling services, see www.heretohelp.bc.ca/ask-us or email askus@heretohelp.bc.ca

This card is a short version of a longer resource.

For more information and help, see

www.heretohelp.bc.ca/factsheet/depression



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working with your doctor

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Your doctor is part of your recovery team. When you work together well, you can share information and perspectives with each other, which can help you make more informed decisions about your health.

Step one: defining the problem

When you go to see a doctor, they will talk with you to assess your problem. You need to give as much information as you can. Bringing notes or even a support person can also be helpful. Doctors need to know:

- What exactly you're experiencing
- How it affects your life
- If you've experienced something similar in the past, and if so, what worked (or didn't work)

Step two: setting goals

If you are going to be happy with your treatment plan, it must help you deal with the way a mental illness impacts your own life. Doctors need to know:

- Your treatment priorities, such as which symptoms you most want to manage or which concerns are most troubling

Once you've decided on some of the concerns you can realistically address, you need to decide on some concrete goals that you plan to achieve in treatment. Concrete goals are specific enough that you can picture what they will look like in your daily life.

Step Three: Making decisions

Now that you've decided what you want to change, the next step is figuring out how you're going to change it. Deciding on a treatment plan that you can live with involves different parts:

- Considering the evidence. How does a treatment work? What are the risks and benefits?
- Considering your own preferences and values. Do you have fears around a particular treatment? Does the treatment fit your understanding of the problem?

Step Four: Monitoring results

Once you've started a treatment plan, monitor your results. While some treatments take time to work, it's also important to speak up if you don't see the results you expect or you don't feel you can stick to the plan.

Many people find that it takes a few tries to find a treatment option that works best. This is frustrating, but it's important to keep working through different options. If you and your doctor work together to explore and test options, odds are good that you will find something that works for you.

This card is a short version of a longer resource. For more information and help, see www.heretohelp.bc.ca/factsheet/working-with-your-doctor-for-mental-illnesses



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dealing with a depression diagnosis

www.heretohelp.bc.ca



Receiving a diagnosis of any health problem can be hard, but a mental health diagnosis can be particularly hard to deal with. You may have a lot of complicated or conflicting feelings, like:

- Relief that the problem has a name
- Shock or denial
- Anger or guilt
- Shame
- Hope for the future

What can I do?

Moving from 'Why me?' to 'What now?' can take a while for any diagnosis. A diagnosis is only a starting point. Even if you suspect that you've been living with depression for a long time, you may need more information to help you on your recovery journey.

Find more information

It's a good idea to learn about depression so you understand what's happening and how it might affect you. You can find information through your health care provider, mental health organizations, books, and trusted websites. Good information to cover includes:

- How depression can affect your life
- Treatment—and what to expect
- What you can do to support your recovery

Learn from others

Connect with others who have experienced depression or are experiencing depression. It's an opportunity to find support, share advice, and learn from people who have been there, too.

Recovery and beyond

Depression is not a life sentence. It may take time to find the right combination of treatments and supports for you, but you should expect to recover. A diagnosis of depression may feel overwhelming or even scary, but it's the first step on your journey to wellness.

Where can I go from here?

If you're having a hard time dealing with a diagnosis, think about seeking outside help. Your family doctor, a loved one, a mental health organization, and support groups are all good options.

You can also email us at askus@heretohelp.bc.ca and volunteers at the Canadian Mental Health Association will connect you to good information and help in your community.

This card is a short version of a longer resource. For more information and help—including answers to common questions about your diagnosis and a worksheet—see

www.heretohelp.bc.ca/factsheet/dealing-with-a-depression-diagnosis



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mood disorders

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Mood disorders are a group of mental illnesses that affect how you feel and think about yourself, other people and life in general.

Depression is low mood. Depression can make you feel sad or “numb,” irritable, hopeless and guilty. People living with depression lose interest in things they used to enjoy and many experience changes in sleep and appetite too.

Dysthymic disorder (or dysthymia) is milder depression that lasts for a longer period of time.

Bipolar disorder is made up of depression, mania and normal feelings. Mania is what makes bipolar disorder different. Some people experience this as feeling very happy, but others feel very irritable or angry during an episode of mania. Common symptoms of mania include feeling very powerful, not needing much sleep and having racing thoughts.

What can I do about a mood disorder?

Counselling: The most common forms of counselling for people living with a mood disorder are cognitive-behavioural therapy and interpersonal therapy. Cognitive-behavioural therapy or CBT helps you understand the relationship between your mood, thoughts and behaviours. Interpersonal therapy can teach you skills to improve how you interact with other people.

Medication: Depression is usually treated with a group of medications called antidepressants and bipolar disorder is usually treated with a group of medication called mood stabilizers.

Self-management: There are some things you can do on your own to help keep you feeling better:

- regular exercise
- eating well
- getting enough sleep
- managing stress
- spending time with friends and family
- spirituality
- monitoring your use of alcohol and other substances

Where can I go from here?

It's best to talk to your doctor first if you're concerned about a mood disorder. Here are other places to try:

- If you are in distress right now, call 310-6789 (do not enter an area code) 24 hours a day to connect to a BC crisis line.
- Email us at askus@heretohelp.bc.ca and volunteers at the Canadian Mental Health Association will connect you to good information and help in your community.

This card is a short version of a longer resource.

For more information and help, see

www.heretohelp.bc.ca/factsheet/mood-disorders



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bipolar disorder

www.heretohelp.bc.ca



Bipolar disorder is a mood disorder. People with bipolar disorder experience episodes of depression and episodes of mania, with periods of wellness and balanced moods. There are three different types of bipolar disorder.

Symptoms of depression can include:

- Losing interest in activities you used to enjoy
- Feeling worthless, helpless and hopeless, or guilty
- Feeling tearful, irritable or numb
- Feeling very tired or run-down
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Changes in eating habits
- Difficulties concentrating or making decisions
- Frequent physical complaints like stomach aches or headaches
- Thoughts of death or suicide

Symptoms of mania can include:

- An unusually elevated mood, feeling unreasonably optimistic
- Feeling very irritable or angry
- Talking very quickly
- Racing thoughts or ideas
- Feeling very energetic or restless
- Little need for sleep at night
- Uncharacteristic behaviour changes and risk-taking
- Believing things that can't be true or seeing or hearing things others can't

What can I do about bipolar disorder?

The good news is bipolar disorder is treatable. It is usually treated with a combination of:

- **Medications**—such as mood stabilizers, anticonvulsant medications, or antipsychotic medications.
- **Psychotherapies**—such as cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) and interpersonal therapy (IPT).
- **Self-help strategies**—simple steps you can take every day, such as getting some physical activity every day, building healthy sleep and eating habits, or monitoring drug or alcohol use.

Where can I go from here?

If you need to talk to someone, have thoughts of suicide, or don't know where to go, call the BC Mental Health Support Line at 310-6789 (no area code). It's open any time of day or night.

- Talk to your doctor (or a doctor at a walk-in clinic). They can refer you to specialized mental health services, if needed
- Visit the Mood Disorders Association of BC at www.mdabc.net
- For more on different kinds of service providers and access to free or low-cost counselling services, see www.heretohelp.bc.ca/ask-us or email askus@heretohelp.bc.ca

This card is a short version of a longer resource. For more information and help, see www.heretohelp.bc.ca/factsheet/bipolar-disorder



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seasonal affective disorder

www.heretohelp.bc.ca



Seasonal affective disorder, or SAD, is a kind of depression that appears at certain times of the year. It often starts in the fall, when days become shorter, and lasts through the winter. However, a less common type of SAD affects people in the summer months.

An episode of depression in SAD is the same as major depression. People experience signs and symptoms such as:

- Low or irritable mood
- Hopelessness
- Change in sleep patterns
- Change in appetite
- Lack of interest in activities they used to enjoy

SAD appears to be more common in northern countries, where the length of daylight may vary a lot between seasons. About 2–3% of Canadians experience SAD, and 15% may experience a milder form that doesn't seriously impact their daily lives.

What can I do about seasonal affective disorder?

It's important to talk to a doctor if you suspect you might experience SAD to rule out other causes (or types) of depression. Common treatments for SAD include:

Light therapy: This involves sitting in front of a special light for a short period of time each day. It can be very effective for SAD. However, light therapy may cause side effects, so it's important to talk with your doctor first.

Medication: Medications may be helpful for treating all kinds of depression, including SAD. Different kinds of medication work in different ways.

Counselling: Counselling may be very effective for SAD. In particular, a type of counselling called cognitive-behavioural therapy (or CBT) can help break negative patterns of depression. CBT may be used alongside other treatments like light therapy or medication.

Self-help: There are many strategies that you can try on your own. Getting enough exercise (especially outdoors during the day), eating well, connecting with family and friends, and managing stress can really help.

Where can I go from here?

It's best to talk to your doctor first if you're concerned about seasonal affective disorder. Here are other places to try:

- If you are in distress right now, call 310-6789 (do not enter an area code) 24 hours a day to connect with a BC crisis line.
- Email us at askus@heretohelp.bc.ca and volunteers at the Canadian Mental Health Association will connect you to good information and help in your community.

This card is a short version of a longer resource.

For more information and help, see www.heretohelp.bc.ca/factsheet/seasonal-affective-disorder



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postpartum depression

www.heretohelp.bc.ca



Postpartum depression is a form of depression that a mother can experience within the first few weeks, months, or even up to a year after having (or adopting) a baby; symptoms may even begin during pregnancy. Postpartum depression can also affect partners.

Women who experience postpartum depression may feel very sad and may feel hopeless, guilty, inadequate, or resentful of the baby or other family members. They may have problems sleeping, eating, or making decisions. They may find themselves withdrawing from family and friends.

Women may even have scary thoughts about harming their child, even though it's the last thing they'd want to do. Cases of women harming a child are very rare, and they usually aren't related to postpartum depression.

What can I do about postpartum depression?

It's important to seek help if you suspect you might be experiencing postpartum depression. Treatment may include:

Counselling: There are a few different types of counselling that may help. Cognitive-behavioural therapy teaches you skills to change the thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that drive depression. Interpersonal therapy and marriage or relationship counselling can help both partners build healthy relationships.

Medication: Medication may be helpful when depression is moderate or severe, or doesn't improve with other treatments. Talk to your doctor about the risks and benefits if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

Self-help: There are also things you can do on your own alongside other treatments. Finding short periods of time for exercise or relaxation, sleeping when the baby sleeps, eating as well as possible, and seeking support from family and friends can be very helpful. These are useful for all new parents, but they're especially important to prevent or manage postpartum depression.

Where can I go from here?

It's best to talk to your doctor or public health nurse first if you're concerned about postpartum depression. Here are other places to try:

- If you are in distress right now, call 310-6789 (do not enter an area code) 24 hours a day to connect with a BC crisis line.
- Connect with Pacific Post Partum Society at www.postpartum.org or 1-855-255-7999 (toll-free) for telephone support, support groups, and other resources.
- The BC Reproductive Mental Health Program has a self-help workbook based on CBT skills at heretohelp.bc.ca/workbook/coping-with-depression-in-pregnancy-and-postpartum

This card is a short version of a longer resource. For more information and help, see www.heretohelp.bc.ca/factsheet/postpartum-depression



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older adults, depression and anxiety

www.heretohelp.bc.ca



Getting older can be a great time in your life, but it can also be stressful: your work or income situation, social circle, and physical abilities can change. Depression and anxiety, however, are not a normal part of ageing.

What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a feeling of worry or stress. It's a normal reaction when you're in danger or when you're concerned about someone else. Anxiety can be a problem when it:

- Is unexpected or stronger than you'd expect in a situation
- Affects the way you go about your life (for example, some people start to avoid certain activities or feel like they have to do things a certain way to feel safe)
- Causes a lot of physical problems like sleep problems, upset stomach, or muscle tension

What is depression?

Depression is low mood that lasts for a long time. Some people experience depression as irritability. Depression makes it hard for older adults to go about their daily lives. Many people feel very tired and have a hard time concentrating, working on everyday tasks, or remembering information. In some older adults, signs of depression can mask or mimic signs of dementia.

What can I do about depression and anxiety?

- **Talk to your family doctor.** They can look for other causes of anxiety or depression, and they can treat mental illnesses like anxiety disorders or depression.
- **Learn skills.** You can learn to manage stress, anxiety, negative thinking, and other unhelpful feelings. And you can learn how to boost behaviours that reduce isolation and limit behaviours that may be doing more harm than good. Many mental health organizations offer courses, or they can help you find useful books or websites.
- **Find support.** Keep in touch with family and friends. Let caregivers know what kind of help you need. Consider joining a support group in your community.
- **Get involved.** Take part in activities or hobbies you enjoy—or find new activities!

Where can I go from here?

If you are in distress right now, call 310-6789 (do not enter an area code) 24 hours a day to connect to a BC crisis line.

Email us at askus@heretohelp.bc.ca and volunteers at the Canadian Mental Health Association will connect you to good information and help in your community.

For more information about mental health, including screening self-tests and articles about and by older adults and their families, visit us at www.heretohelp.bc.ca



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anxiety disorders

www.heretohelp.bc.ca



Anxiety disorders are a group of mental illnesses related to anxiety.

- **Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD)**—feelings of anxiety most of the time, usually around aspects of daily life, like finances, work, or health.
- **Panic disorder**—fears around having panic attacks. A panic attack is a burst of intense anxiety or fear with uncomfortable physical sensations. People with **agoraphobia** avoid spaces that might be difficult to escape if a panic attack came up.
- **Specific phobia**—fears around a specific thing, object, or situation. These fears lead people to avoid the object or situation, to the point that it disrupts their life.
- **Social anxiety disorder**—also known as social phobia, the fear of being embarrassed or feeling judged in social settings.
- **Selective mutism**—a young person refuses to speak in some situations only

- **Separation anxiety disorder**—extreme anxiety when a young person is or expects to be separated from their parents or caregivers.

Two illnesses, obsessive-compulsive disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder, used to be considered anxiety disorders but are now in different groups of mental illnesses.

What can I do about anxiety disorders?

The good news is anxiety disorders are treatable. They may be treated with one or more of:

- **Psychotherapy**—helps you build healthy thinking skills and look at fears more realistically. Common psychotherapies for anxiety disorders include cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT), and exposure therapy.
- **Medications**—such as antidepressants or antianxiety medications
- **Self-help strategies**—simple steps you can take every day, such as getting some physical activity every day, building healthy sleep and eating habits, and learning relaxation strategies.

Where can I go from here?

- Talk to your doctor (or a doctor at a walk-in clinic). They can refer you to specialized mental health services, if needed
- Visit AnxietyBC at www.anxietybc.com for information and self-help resources
- Try Bounce Back®, a free program for British Columbians with mild-to-moderate depression or anxiety. See www.bouncebackbc.ca
- For more on different kinds of service providers and how to access low-cost counselling services, see www.heretohelp.bc.ca/ask-us or email askus@heretohelp.bc.ca

This card is a short version of a longer resource. For more information and help, see www.heretohelp.bc.ca/factsheet/anxiety-disorders



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social anxiety disorder

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Social anxiety disorder is a mental illness. People who experience social anxiety disorder feel much more nervous than expected in social situations like meeting new people or doing things in front of people. They understand that their anxiety is greater than expected, but they feel like they can't control their anxiety.

People who experience social anxiety disorder have a lot of fears around their interactions with others. They might believe that others will think their ideas are stupid or fear that they'll say the wrong thing and embarrass themselves in front of others.

Social anxiety disorder is not the same as shyness. The illness can cause a lot of problems in relationships with partners, family, and friends. It has a big impact on school or work—people may avoid contributing, turn down opportunities, or take a lot of time off work because they feel very anxious.

What can I do about social anxiety disorder?

Social anxiety disorder is a treatable illness. Here are some things to try:

Counselling: A form of counselling called cognitive-behavioural therapy (or CBT) may help people work through the thoughts, feelings, or behaviours that drive anxiety and learn new helping strategies to manage anxiety and build confidence in social situations.

Exposure: Exposure may help you “unlearn” anxiety associated with a specific situation.

Medication: Anti-anxiety medications or antidepressants can be used in combination with counselling or exposure to reduce your body’s response to anxiety.

Self-help: You can try different strategies on you to help manage anxiety and feel well. Regular exercise, eating well, managing stress, spending time with family and friends, spirituality, and monitoring your use of alcohol and other drugs can make a big difference.

Where can I go from here?

It’s best to talk to your doctor first if you’re concerned about social anxiety disorder. Here are other places to try:

- If you are in distress right now, call 310-6789 (do not enter an area code) 24 hours a day to connect with a BC crisis line.
- Email us at askus@heretohelp.bc.ca and volunteers as the Canadian Mental Health Association will connect you to good information and help in your community.

This card is a short version of a longer resource. For more information and help, see www.heretohelp.bc.ca/factsheet/social-anxiety-disorder



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obsessive-compulsive disorder

www.heretohelp.bc.ca



Many of us have repetitive thoughts, worries, or rituals, but they don't create problems in our lives. Obsessive-compulsive disorder, or OCD, on the other hand, is a mental illness. It's made up of two parts: obsessions and compulsions. **Obsessions** are unwanted and distressing thoughts, ideas, images, or impulses that happen over and over again. **Compulsions** are the behaviours or mental acts that you do to ease the anxiety caused by the obsessions.

For example, you might worry that if you forget to turn off an appliance, the house will catch on fire. In response, you spend a lot of time checking and re-checking to make sure that everything is turned off before you can leave the house. Your worry is the obsession and checking the appliances is the compulsion.

Most people who experience OCD usually know that their obsessions and compulsion aren't realistic, but they still have a hard time controlling them.

What can I do about OCD?

Obsessive-compulsive disorder is treatable. There are a number of different ways to treat OCD. Many can be used in combination, including:

Counselling: Many people with OCD benefit from a form of therapy called cognitive-behavioural therapy (or CBT). In CBT, you learn skills like challenging unhelpful thoughts, coping with obsessions, and managing anxiety.

Medications: There is no specific medication just for OCD, but different types of medication may help with some symptoms, including antidepressants, anti-anxiety medications, and antipsychotics.

Support groups: Support groups are a great way to share your experiences and learn from others.

Self-help: You can try different strategies on your own to keep yourself feeling well. Regular exercise, eating well, managing stress, spending time with friends and family, spirituality, and monitoring your use of alcohol and other drugs can help manage anxiety.

Where can I go from here?

It's best to talk to your doctor first if you're concerned about OCD. Here are other places to try:

- If you are in distress right now, call 310-6789 (do not enter an area code) 24 hours a day to connect with a BC crisis line.
- Email us at askus@heretohelp.bc.ca and volunteers as the Canadian Mental Health Association will connect you to good information and help in your community.

This card is a short version of a longer resource. For more information and help, see www.heretohelp.bc.ca/factsheet/obsessive-compulsive-disorder



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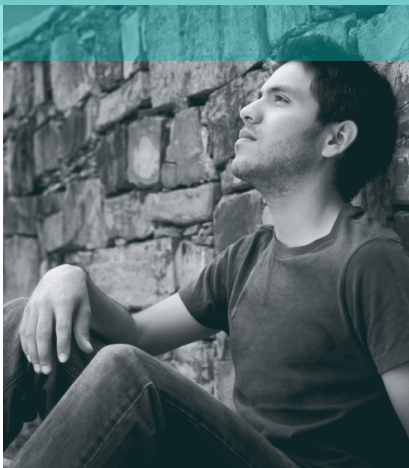
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suicide

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Thoughts of suicide can be very frightening. While many people say that they've thought of suicide at some point, it's important to know that thinking about suicide doesn't mean that you or someone you care about will attempt suicide. Thoughts of suicide do mean that someone is in need of support right away, so it's very important to take thoughts of suicide seriously and seek help.

If you have thoughts of suicide:

- If you have a mental health care provider, tell them what's happening.
- Call a crisis line. 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433) is the best place to call any time of day or night. They're trained to help people who are thinking of suicide and they can help you connect with other mental health resources. (If you prefer live web chat instead, BC teens can try youthinbc.com and BC adults can try crisiscentrechat.ca)
- If you think you're in danger, call 911.

Is someone you know thinking about suicide?

Most people who die by suicide show some noticeable signs that they are thinking about it beforehand. A big warning sign is talking about or threatening suicide. There are other warning signs, like mentioning that they have no reason to live or purpose in life, expressing hopelessness, withdrawing from family and friends, and changes in mood, anxiety, or substance use.

If you recognize these signs, you can take immediate action and give support.

If you are concerned about a friend:

- Ask directly if they're thinking about suicide. It's a myth that talking about suicide gives people ideas.
- Help your friend connect with a crisis line like 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433). If your friend refuses to seek help, call the crisis line and tell them what's happening.
- If you think your friend is in immediate danger, call 911.
- When the crisis is over, think of how you can continue to show support. You can learn more at www.heretohelp.bc.ca/factsheet/helping-a-friend-youre-worried-about.

Where can I go from here?

- Call 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433) if you are concerned about yourself or someone else. It's available 24 hours a day and it's toll-free.
- Visit www.sfu.ca/carmha/publications/coping-with-suicidal-thoughts.html to learn more about staying safe when you have thoughts of suicide.

This card is a short version of a longer resource.

For more information and help, see

www.heretohelp.bc.ca/factsheet/suicide



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mental health and substance use in the workplace

www.heretohelp.bc.ca



Mental health and substance use problems are leading causes of sick leave, lost productivity, and short-term and long-term disability. Unfortunately, many people don't seek help because they fear they may lose the respect of co-workers—or even lose their job.

Mental illnesses and substance use problems can have a big impact on the way people work. An illness may cause fatigue, thinking problems, anxiety, mood problems, irritability, challenges working with others, and other barriers. These barriers aren't permanent—with treatment and support, employees can go back to their usual work successfully.

Does my workplace have to help me?

Mental illnesses and substance use problems are considered disabilities if they affect your ability to work. The law says that employers have to make reasonable accommodations if you have a disability. You may be able to arrange accommodations, which are changes that help people work more effectively. Accommodations can be very small, short-term changes or larger, long-term changes.

Accommodations may include:

- Changing your start time
- Reducing your work hours or workload
- Changing the way you receive information or instructions
- Changing your workstation

Will anyone have to know about my illness?

You don't need to say what illness you're dealing with, but you will need to describe what reasonable changes would help you work well. You may need a note from a health care professional. Employers have to keep your health information private. If co-workers will be affected by your accommodations, you and your manager will have to figure out how you'll let them know about the changes to work procedures. For information about the risks and benefits of telling your employer, visit www.mentalhealthworks.ca and click the Employees tab.

Where can I go from here?

In addition to talking with your doctor or mental health care team, manager, and union representative, check out the following resources:

- Employee (Family) Assistance Plans (EAP/EFAP) are outside agencies that provide confidential help. See if your workplace offers this benefit.
- Visit www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com for tools and strategies around workplace solutions and accommodations, seeking help, and returning to work.

This card is a short version of a longer resource. For more information and help, see www.heretohelp.bc.ca/factsheet/workplace



heretohelp

Mental health and substance use
information you can trust



Canadian Mental
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British Columbia
Mental health for all

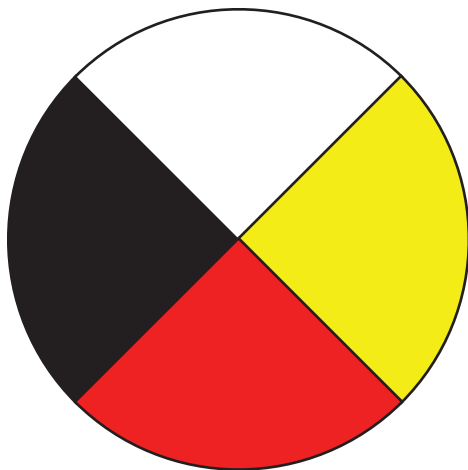
the medicine wheel and mental health

www.heretohelp.bc.ca

The medicine wheel is a general term that represents different Aboriginal teachings. Each part of the circle represents a direction (north, east, south, and west) and the attributes, actions, or medicines of that direction. The medicine wheel explains how many different parts of our lives work together. Each part is connected to the others and dependent on the others to create a complete circle that is whole and balanced. When the circle is whole and balanced, all parts move together in harmony.

The four parts of the medicine wheel often include:

- Physical health (the body)
- Mental health (the mind)
- Emotional health (the heart)
- Spiritual health (the soul)



In order to achieve good health and well-being, we have to pay attention to all four parts equally. If we neglect some parts or spend all of our time improving only one or two parts, the circle will not be whole and balanced, and we may not find the good health and well-being we want to achieve.

The goal isn't to make changes once. The circle is always in motion and we always have opportunities to see where we could make changes.

Different Nations and cultures have their own teachings based on the medicine wheel. What everyone can learn, though, is that we need to take care of different parts of our lives in a balanced way to achieve good health and wellness—everything is related and connected.

Where can I go next?

If you're experiencing a crisis and need help right away, call 911 or go to your local emergency room.

If you need to talk to someone right away, call a crisis line:

- KUU-US Aboriginal crisis line at 1-800-588-8717
- BC Mental Health Support Line at 310-6789 (no area code)
- Suicide Helpline at 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)
- Visit www.youthinbc.com (to age 25) or www.crisiscentrechat.ca to chat online—they're open from noon to 1:00am every day.

Connect with Aboriginal health services through your Band, local Friendship Centre, or an Aboriginal group in your community to find help like counselling services and support programs.

The First Nations Health Authority offers mental health services like counselling to eligible clients. Talk to a health service provider in your community or visit www.fnha.ca/benefits/mental-health to learn more.

Visit the First Nations Health Authority at www.fnha.ca for resources like:

- *Planning Your Journey to Wellness: A Road Map*
- *The Health & Wellness Daily Organizer*
- *First Nations Perspective on Wellness*



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Mental health and substance use
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cannabis and mental health

www.heretohelp.bc.ca



Cannabis, also known as marijuana, has a complicated reputation. On one hand, some people use cannabis as medicine. On the other hand, others link it to mental health problems. So what do we know?

Does cannabis cause psychosis or schizophrenia?

Psychosis is a break with reality: a person may sense things that aren't real or have strong beliefs that can't possibly be true. There is a relationship between cannabis and psychosis, but researchers aren't sure if cannabis alone causes psychosis or if there are other factors involved.

The same is true for schizophrenia. Cannabis may be one factor that interacts with other factors. For example, people who use cannabis often may have a higher risk than people who use only occasionally.

Does cannabis improve or worsen anxiety or depression?

Some studies do find that people who use cannabis are more likely to experience depression. It isn't clear if cannabis causes depression or how much social situations and other factors contribute to those study results. Cannabis can both improve and worsen anxiety, depending on the individual and other factors. More research is needed.

What do I need to know to make good decisions for myself?

Many researchers agree that using cannabis at a young age, while the brain is still developing, is not the healthiest option for the brain overall. Using cannabis frequently, in combination with driving, or in combination with other drugs may also increase the risk of harm.

The benefits and risks of using any substance depend a lot on the situation that they're used in. Occasionally using a little on the weekend might have fewer risks and may be enjoyable for some people. But using cannabis frequently to cope or fit in or using cannabis in unsafe situations may increase the risk of harm.

How can I can reduce the risk of harm?

- Avoid using too much or too often
- Avoid mixing cannabis with alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs
- Use cannabis in a safe space—such as with people you trust
- Use cannabis safely—don't drive high

Learn more

Visit www.heretohelp.bc.ca for more information, including *Learn About Cannabis (Marijuana)*, *Cannabis Use and Youth: A parent's guide*, and *You and Substance Use: Stuff to think about ... and ways to make changes*.

If you'd like some support or local resources, call the Alcohol and Drug Information Referral Service at 1-800-663-1441 or 604-660-9382 in Greater Vancouver.

a safe night out

www.heretohelp.bc.ca



You can have a fun night out—and keep yourself safe. If you decide to drink, drink moderately, and have a plan to get home safely before you leave your home. You can also make an informed choice about the clubs and bars you choose to visit.

If you choose to drink

When you go out, it's a good idea to avoid overdoing it. Drinking too much puts you at risk of making bad choices that may seem fun or funny at the time, but may cost you afterwards in terms of health, relationships, money, or the law. Here are some tips:

- Set limits and stick to them
- Drink slowly
- Alternate alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks
- Eat before and while drinking
- Stick to one substance at a time—alcohol can magnify the effects of cannabis and some other drugs in unpredictable ways



Low-risk drinking guidelines

- From late teens to age 24, youth should never have more than 2 drinks (for females) or 3 drinks (for males) in a day
- For adults, women who wish to avoid intoxication should have no more than 3 drinks on a single occasion while men should have not more than 4 drinks

Deciding where to go

Many risks around alcohol are related to consuming it in a crowded place. It's a good idea to choose a venue that makes an effort to provide a safe environment.

Outside the venue:

- Clear sidewalks
- A clear space to line up
- Good lighting

Inside the venue:

- Clear pathways and exits
- Comfortable sound, lighting, and ventilation

Servers and security staff: Staff with skills in defusing tense situations or tactfully refusing to serve someone when they've had too much to drink

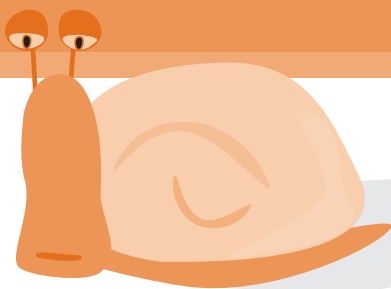
A safe ride home: Look for the availability of a safe way to get home, such as a taxi service, other safe-ride options, or easy access to public transportation.

Stay with your friends

When going out, stay with trusted friends. That way, you have someone who can help if an unsafe or unpleasant situation comes up. It's also important to be aware of where security staff are situated in case you need help.

MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

Mental health is just as important to our lives as our physical health



Mental health is not just the absence of a mental illness. Mental health includes:

- How you feel about yourself, the world, and your life
- Your ability to solve problems and overcome challenges
- Your ability to build relationships with others and contribute to your communities
- Your ability to achieve your goals

Many people take care of their physical health before they feel sick. They may eat well, exercise, and try to get enough sleep to help maintain wellness. We can take the same approach to mental health. Just as we may work to keep your body healthy, we can also work to keep our mind healthy.

4 basic dimensions of mental health and well-being

1. **Thoughts:** The way we think about something has a big impact on mental health. If we can only see the negative side of things, it's hard to feel well. If we ignore anything bad and only focus on the best side of things, it's hard to get a balanced picture.

2. **Body reactions:** Body reactions are changes in your body functions such as heart rate, breathing, digestion, hormones and more. Thoughts and emotions can cause changes in your body, and changes in your body can affect thoughts and emotions.
3. **Behaviours:** Behaviours are the helpful or harmful things you do. Other people can usually see your behaviours. Behaviours like avoiding other people can worsen mental health, but helpful behaviours like exercising regularly can improve mental health.
4. **Emotions:** Emotions are the way you feel. They can be pleasant or unpleasant. How we think and act impacts emotions, and emotions impact the way we think and act.

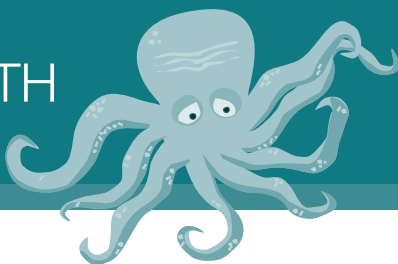
Why should mental health matter to you and your family?

When your mental health suffers, it can become hard to enjoy life. You may start to feel run down, both mentally and physically. Many of these changes can make it harder to enjoy a balanced and rewarding life. Everyone can benefit from learning how to enhance and protect their mental health—whether or not they've experienced mental illness or a substance use problem.



To learn more about mental health, see where to go next, or take a wellness quiz, find the Mental Health Matters Wellness Module at www.heretohelp.bc.ca/wellness-modules

COPING WITH STRESS



Stress isn't necessarily bad, but too much stress can start to take a toll on health and well-being. Here are a few tips to help you manage stress:

Focus on what you can do

There is usually *something* you can do to manage a stressful situation, even if it won't solve the problem right away. Resist the urge to give up or run away.

Seek support

Other people can be very helpful, especially when you feel like you can't cope on your own! Family, friends, co-workers, and health professionals can all be important sources of support.

Focus on the positives

Dwelling only on the negative part of a situation can make a solution feel impossible and can take away your motivation to make things better. Problem-solving can help you look at situations in a more balanced way. Visit www.heretohelp.bc.ca/wellness-modules for more on problem-solving.

Take care of yourself

Good self-care is very effective for stress, but is often the first to disappear when we're stressed. Self-care strategies might include eating well, getting enough sleep, making time for regular exercise, and relaxation techniques like yoga.

Take care of your relationships

Other people may be affected by your stress. They might also be the cause of your stress. If you have trouble saying no, try practicing assertiveness. Assertiveness means that you express your needs without hurting others.

Consider spiritual practices that fit your beliefs

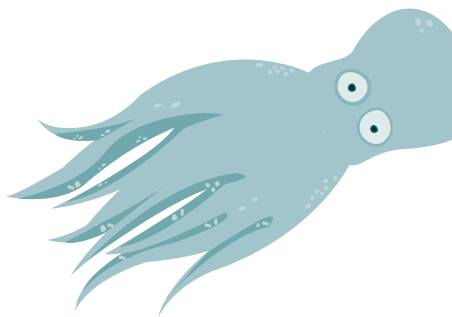
People who engage in spiritual practices often experience lower levels of stress and distress.

Accept that you can't always change something

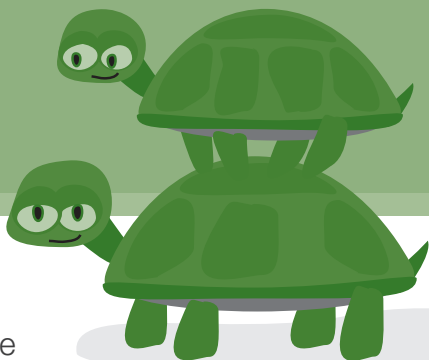
Acceptance may help manage distress or grief. This can be a very challenging process, so give yourself time and patience.

Distract yourself

It's a perfectly reasonable tool to manage short-term stress that you can't control. Distraction can be a problem when it's used to avoid taking action on things you're responsible for or can control.



SOCIAL SUPPORT



Social support is the physical and emotional comfort given to you by your family, friends, co-workers and others. It's knowing that you are part of a community of people who love and care for you, value you, and think well of you.

Social support plays a huge role in health and well-being and can make a big difference whether we're coping with everyday stresses or managing a more serious health problem or illness.

Do you need help building your social support network? Here are some strategies to try:

Think about what you need and make a plan

Think about the type of support you need most at this time. If you need support for a highly specific problem, like managing a health problem, a formal support group may be the best option.

Let go of unhealthy relationships

Walking away from any relationship is painful—even when the relationship is causing harm—but it may be necessary. Use your judgement, though. It may be possible to spend less time with some people you can't avoid without fully abandoning the relationship.

Get more from the support you have

It's easy to assume that other people know what you need, but this usually isn't true. You may need to tell others what you need. However, be careful not to overwhelm your support providers.

Reach out

Ask the people you know to help you broaden your networks and introduce you to other people or invite you to opportunities to meet others.

Take risks and create new opportunities

Seek out new people and introduce yourself. For example, you may decide to go to a party, even though you won't know anyone else at the event. Or, step outside of your usual activities. You may meet new people when you join a club or group or get involved in an organization.

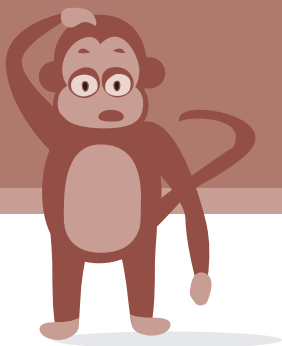
Be patient

Making new friends can take time. You may need to meet many new people to make just one new friend. Building intimacy also takes time. It can take several months to feel close to someone and feel like you can count on their support.

Take care of your relationships

You're more likely to build strong friendships if you are a good friend, too. Keep in touch with your support network, offer support to others when they need it, and let them know that you appreciate them.

SOLVE YOUR PROBLEMS



We solve problems every day. Many problems are small and can be solved easily. Other problems are not so easy to fix. Ignoring problems can make them worse—and leave us feeling upset, frustrated, stressed, and even depressed or hopeless. Here are seven steps to help you take control of your problems.

Step 1: Is there a problem?

It's easy to overlook problems or concerns until they become bigger or more complicated. Pay attention to your feelings—they might be telling you that there is a problem that needs to be fixed.

Step 2: Define the problem

You can't solve a problem until you know what the problem is! Ask yourself:

- What's the situation right now? What's making me feel upset?
- What would I like the situation to be?
- What's standing between me and my ideal situation?

Step 3: Choose a goal to help you describe what needs to change

Remember that goals should be SMART: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**ealistic, and **T**ime-limited.

Step 4: Think about solutions

Look at every solution that comes to mind (even ridiculous ones!). Sometimes the best solutions aren't the solutions that come to mind first. Write down as many as you can think of. Ask for help from people in your life.

Step 5: Choose a solution

The perfect solution rarely exists. Choose the solution that is most helpful. A good solution ...

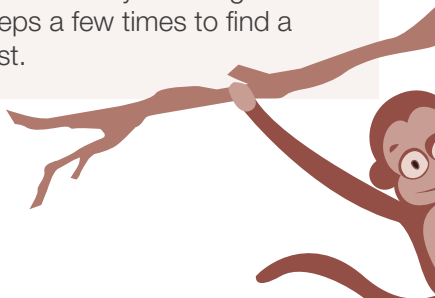
- Actually solves the problem
- Makes you feel better, or doesn't make you feel bad
- Takes a realistic and appropriate amount of your time and energy
- Benefits you and others more than it harms you and others

Step 6: Put your solution into action

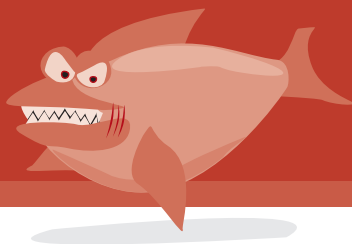
Try writing out each step in your plan so you know exactly what to do.

Step 7: Evaluate the outcome

Did your solution solve the problem? If it did, congratulations! If not, that's okay. You might need to work through the steps a few times to find a solution that works best.



MANAGING ANGER



Everyone feels angry sometimes. It's not a bad feeling—it can even help you make positive changes. But too much anger (or too often) can start to take a toll on well-being and relationships.

Here are three strategies to help you better manage anger.

Managing emotions

- **Practice relaxation skills.** You can't be relaxed and angry at the same time! Mindfulness, deep breathing, guided imagery, and progressive muscle relaxation are just a few techniques that can help.
- **Try to find humour.** It's also hard to be angry when you're laughing, so see if you can find something lighter in something you might be taking a bit too seriously.

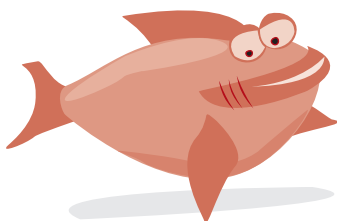
Managing thinking patterns

- **Use realistic thinking** to manage angry thoughts. Ask yourself: What does the evidence say? What are some other ways of viewing the situation or conflict?
- **Build empathy.** You may feel angry when you think someone's behaviour was intended to hurt you in some way. Often, other people's behaviour isn't personal and usually reflects how they are coping with things in their own lives. Ask yourself: What might this situation feel like for the other person?

Managing behaviours

- **Solve problems.** A big part of anger management is learning constructive ways to solve problems. This means making sure that your response to your angry feelings is directed at solving the problem, not at other people. You can learn more about problem-solving in the link below.
- **Be assertive, not aggressive.** Being assertive means that you can communicate needs or concerns while respecting other people. Being assertive does not mean behaving aggressively to get your own way.

If you have a hard time managing your anger, it's a good idea to talk to a professional. They can recommend courses or other resources in your community.



To learn more about anger management, see the Anger Management Wellness Module at www.heretohelp.bc.ca/wellness-modules



**Canadian Mental
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GETTING A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP _{zzz}



Not sleeping well or enough? Many people find that their mental and physical health improves when they prioritize sleep and take action to manage sleep problems. Try some of the small strategies below:

Caffeine gives you energy, which isn't helpful when you're trying to wind down and fall asleep. It can be found in coffee, some teas, chocolate, energy drinks, soft drinks, and some medications.

It might seem like alcohol helps you fall asleep, but it disrupts the deep, restful sleep that makes you feel refreshed in the morning.

Stress has a big impact on sleep, so it's important to take some time to relax before bed. TV, videos or smartphones can negatively affect sleep, so limit screen time before bed.

Research shows that people who exercise regularly have deeper sleep (but it's best to exercise earlier in the day).

Try to keep the same sleep and wake schedule every day—including weekends.

GETTING A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

Avoid naps—if they cause problems

If you do nap, try to keep them 30 minutes or less, and cut out naps completely if you experience sleep problems at night.

Avoid going to bed to hungry or too full

Try to avoid large meals before bedtime. If you're hungry at bedtime, try a light, healthy snack.

Get up if you don't fall asleep in 30 minutes

Trying too hard to sleep usually backfires! Instead, get out of bed and do something relaxing until you feel drowsy.

Make your bedroom comfortable

Use your bedroom only for sleeping—not working or studying.

Let go of the idea that your sleep *must* be perfect

Most people can get through the next day if they feel a little bit tired (unless that puts people in danger, of course). Worrying about your sleep only makes it harder to sleep well.

If you often have problems falling asleep or staying asleep, often wake up feeling tired, or often feel so tired that it affects your daily activities, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor.



Find more tips and a sleep skills diary in the Getting a Good Night's Sleep Wellness Module at www.here-to-help.bc.ca/wellness-modules

EATING AND LIVING WELL



Most of us know that we need to aim for a healthy, balanced diet and regular exercise to maintain our physical health. These same goals are also important when maintaining our mental health and well-being.

Healthy living is all about moderation, balance and flexibility. There will be some days when you don't eat healthy foods and some days when you don't do enough exercise. This is totally normal in your busy, sometimes stressful, life. You get a more accurate picture of how you've been doing if you look back over the past month or so. For the month ahead, aim to make small changes that will improve your health, both mental and physical. Here are some ideas:

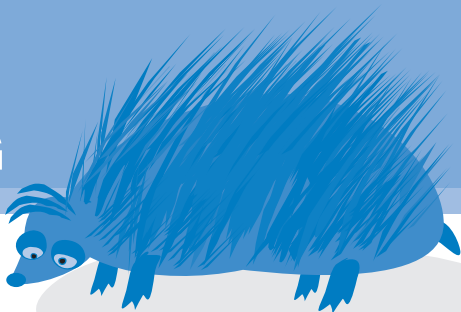
- Nourish your body throughout the day—avoid skipping meals.
- Eat a variety of foods and aim for a balance over the month.
- Rather than worry about 'good' versus 'bad' foods, remember that moderation is the key.
- Try to eat more fruits and vegetables.
- Drink lots of water. It helps reduce fatigue and replenishes the body.
- Use caffeine in moderation, particularly if you are prone to anxiety or sleep problems.

- Listen to your body's signals—it will let you know when you are full or hungry. Become more conscious of why you eat when you are not really hungry. Try to find other ways to cope with feelings of boredom, unhappiness, loneliness or social pressure.
- Use exercise as a way to deal with stress.
- Slowly increase your physical activity level.
- Try the free Carrot Rewards smartphone app which gives you points toward free stuff just for walking.
- Consider joining a gym or other formal exercise program.
- Check out your local community centre for a range of fun options and programs for people of all ages.
- Try adding in extra activity throughout your normal day, such as getting off transit early and walking the rest of the way. Even getting up to change TV channels can make a difference!
- Remind yourself that weight and shape are not the only way to evaluate your self-worth—think of at least one other way that shows you are a worthwhile, loveable, talented person who has something to offer the world.

Try talking to your family doctor, a trained health professional or local service provider for creative and manageable ways to make healthy choices. Start slow, reward yourself when you achieve your goals, and involve your friends and family in your plan.

For more on balanced eating, healthy exercise, and body image, find the Living and Eating Well Wellness Module at
www.heretohelp.bc.ca/wellness-modules

HEALTHY THINKING



Thinking traps

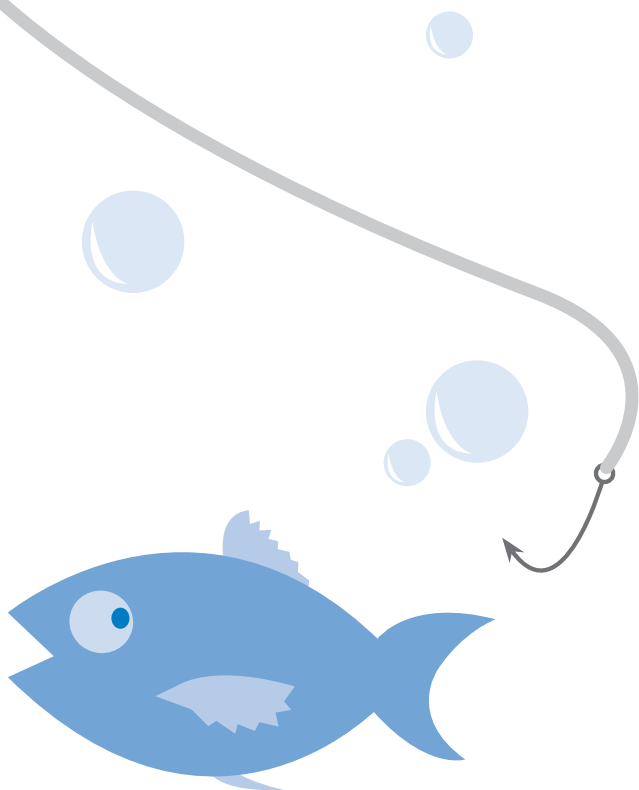
What you tell yourself about a situation affects how you feel and what you do. These thinking traps are unhelpful thoughts that only distort the real situation—and make you feel bad or upset.

Do you think this way?	Try this instead! Ask yourself ...
Something bad always happens! Things never work out for me!	Is this always true? Can I think of some times when this hasn't been true?
I made a tiny mistake. This entire project is a complete failure!	Am I looking at the whole picture? Have I discounted anything important?
I put a lot of work into this, but I just know that it isn't going to work out!	What does the evidence say? Do I have enough information to make a conclusion?
I should be able to get everything done. I should be able to do it perfectly!	Am I being realistic? Am I being objective?
One person didn't reply to my email. They must not like me!	Do I know enough to say that it's true? If a friend was in the same situation, what would I tell them?

HEALTHY THINKING

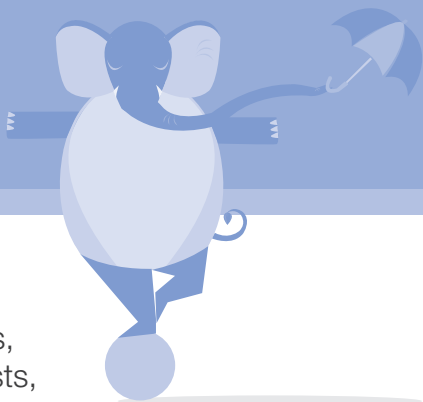
Everyone falls into unbalanced “thinking traps” from time to time. You’re most likely to distort your interpretation of things when you feel sad, angry, anxious, depressed, or stressed. You’re also more vulnerable to thinking traps when you’re not taking good care of yourself, like when you’re not eating or sleeping well.

Are you stuck in a thinking trap? Don’t try to get out of a thinking trap by just telling yourself to stop thinking that way. Challenge it!



Find more on healthy thinking tools, thinking traps, and the Healthy Thinking Worksheet, find the Healthy Thinking Wellness Module at www.heretohelp.bc.ca/wellness-modules

FINDING BALANCE



We have all kinds of priorities, obligations, relationships, interests, and activities that compete for our time. There are things we really must do and things that we want to do because they make us happy. Balance means taking care of both categories ... without changing the number of hours in the day.

When you find balance, you can feel fully engaged in whatever you're doing. You don't feel guilty or worry that you should be doing something else.

How can I find balance?

Balance is about prioritizing your own wellness. It means understanding that your obligations to yourself—the things that make you feel well, like that Sunday book club—are just as important as your obligations to your boss, teachers, family members, and anyone else who expects your time.

Balance is also about learning to say no. This can be harder than it sounds! A good strategy is called assertiveness, which helps you talk honestly about your needs while respecting others. You can find assertiveness courses through community organizations, campus services, and other organizations.

Quick tips

- Set a schedule that includes all of your obligations and fun activities—and stick to it
- Make sure that your to-do list is realistic. It's easy to underestimate how long a task will actually take
- Try to start assignments early so unexpected issues won't be as difficult to work around
- Take your breaks away from your desk, and try to work in some physical activity. A short walk is a great way to take a break and reduce stress!
- Take advantage of resources. You may be able to access supports through your school, campus, or workplace
- Join a group, club, or team around something you enjoy—it can be fun and broaden your social networks
- Give everyone in your home a chance to discuss their needs and expectations. You can work together to figure out how you can share obligations equally



For more on finding balance, including a quiz to see if you're in balance, see the Finding Balance Wellness Module at www.heretohelp.bc.ca/wellness-modules

STAYING MENTALLY HEALTHY WITH TECHNOLOGY

Feel anxious when
you're not checking
your phone?
Compare yourself
often to others
on social media?
Think it might be
good to reduce
your screen time?



For most of us, completely giving up technology is not realistic, nor is it likely necessary. Good strategies can help us find a healthy balance—enjoying the benefits while minimizing harms. Here are some ideas:

- Set a schedule—and stick to it. Give yourself a set period of time each day to check social media or personal email, for example.
- Unless it's part of your job, ask yourself how quickly you really need to respond to texts, emails, or other messages. Think about setting limits or guidelines so others know what to expect.
- Set guidelines and discuss your expectations with others. For example, you and your friends might agree to put your phones away when you're out for dinner, or you might stop checking messages after a certain time.
- If you have a hard time limiting technology use, take advantage of apps and programs that limit your access to certain website, apps, or other features. Consider turning off unnecessary notifications, too.

- Take regular breaks during the day. Get away from your computer, turn off your phone, and spend time without technology. It doesn't have to be a long break—even an hour or two can help.
- Consider a 'digital vacation.' Choose one day a week to completely stay away from a device. If that feels overwhelming, start with a half-day vacation.
- Try to reduce screen time before bed and keep screens out of the bedroom. It's easy to stay up much later than intended when you're online, gaming, or trying to write a few emails before bed. There is also evidence that the blue light emitted by devices may affect healthy sleep, long after you've turned the device off.
- Regularly choose off-screen activities over on-screen activities. For example, choose to play soccer with friends over playing a video game of soccer.
- Reduce distractions. Many of us split our attention between a few different activities, like playing games while watching a movie or watching TV while eating dinner. Instead, focus on the most important activity.
- Avoid comparing yourself to people you see online, including your friends. Remember that people usually just post their good news and their best pictures online—and a lot of people edit their photos and use filters to make them look as good as possible.
- Practice mindfulness, which is a skill that helps you fully experience the present moment. For more, see our Mindfulness wellness module at www.heretohelp.bc.ca.

For more on finding a healthy balance with technology use, find the Staying Mentally Healthy with Technology Wellness Module at www.heretohelp.bc.ca/wellness-modules



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MINDFULNESS



Mindfulness is the simple act of recognizing what's going on inside of ourselves and what's going on around us, in the present moment and without judgement. Mindfulness is a tool that helps us manage thoughts and emotions, notice more of what's happening in a situation, and immerse ourselves in the present moment as it unfolds.

We can think of mindfulness as two parts: attention and curiosity.

Attention means that we take time to focus our attention and awareness on physical sensations, thoughts that come up, or the environment around us.

Curiosity means that we notice things that come to our attention without judging. We are interested in the experience without trying to change it.

Are you ready to try mindfulness? Here are some simple ideas to try:

- Bring mindfulness to your meals. Instead of eating in front of the TV or computer, really focus on what you're eating and enjoy each bite.
- Bring mindfulness to your commute. Try to turn off distractions and stay in the present moment sometimes on your commute to school or work, or while walking the dog.

- Bring mindfulness to work or school. Check in with yourself a few times throughout the day. What are your thoughts like? How does your body feel?
- Bring mindfulness into your relationships. If you're talking with friends and loved ones face-to-face, put away phones or other distractions. Really listen to what they're saying, and pay attention to how it makes you feel. Enjoy each other's company without judgements or expectations.
- Bring mindfulness to observations. Really focus your attention on something you see or pass every day. Take note of what emotions or thoughts come up.
- Bring mindfulness into sensations. Spend one full minute simply following your own breath. When your mind wanders or thoughts come up, take note and gently guide your attention back to your breath. With practice, you can try to challenge yourself by adding more time.
- Practice on a regular basis. It's by practicing regularly that we develop the skills we can use in our daily lives. Commit to a few minutes of focusing on the breath once a day for a week. Take note of how you feel at the end of the week.





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what is depression?

Part of the Plainer Language Series

www.heretohelp.bc.ca



Depression is a mental illness. It affects the way you feel. The way you feel is called your mood. Depression is a very low mood. Depression makes it hard to feel happy or to enjoy things.

Depression can start at any time and lasts for a long time. You can't just get over it on your own. Depression is a real health problem.

Here are common signs of depression:

- No longer liking things you used to like.
- Feeling sad or down.
- Feeling hopeless, like things will not get better.
- Feeling empty, like you have no emotion.
- Feeling irritated or angry.
- Thinking that nothing makes you happy any more.
- Thinking that problems are your fault.

- Thinking that you are not good enough.
- Having a hard time thinking clearly, concentrating or making decisions.
- Eating much less or eating much more than usual.
- Trouble falling asleep or sleeping more than usual.
- Feeling tired or run down most of the time.
- Feeling restless, like you cannot sit still.
- Having aches and pains that do not seem to be caused by another health problem.
- Thinking about dying or ending your life.



If you are thinking about ending your life, call 1-800-SUICIDE. It stands for 1-800-784-2433. If you think that a loved one is in danger, call 9-1-1.

If you think that you have depression, talk to your doctor. Your doctor will work to see what is causing these feelings. You can:

- Visit your family doctor or a walk-in clinic.
- Call 310-6789 (no area code) and ask for help.
- Visit www.mdabc.net to learn more about depression.



Where can I go from here?

This is the short version of a booklet. Read or listen to the full version of the booklet at www.heretohelp.bc.ca/factsheet/what-is-depression



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what is anxiety?

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www.heretohelp.bc.ca



Anxiety is what we feel when we are scared and think that something bad might happen.

Anxiety is normal. Everyone feels anxiety at times.

Anxiety can help us. It warns us when we might be in danger and can help us get away from danger.

When we feel anxiety:

1. Our thoughts tell us that something bad might happen.
2. Our bodies get ready to take action. Our hearts may beat faster. It may feel hard to breathe. We may feel hot and sweaty. We may feel shaky.
3. We take action. We may fight by acting out or talking back. We may run away or try to avoid something. We may freeze or have a hard time thinking clearly.

Anxiety is a problem when it gets in the way. We may avoid things or change the way we do things because we feel anxious.

Pretend that you are very anxious about taking tests at school. If you let anxiety get in the way, you may stop going to school.

Anxiety is also a problem when it comes up often, even when you are not in danger. People who have a lot of problem anxiety may not know why they feel anxious.

It is important to get help if you have a lot of problem anxiety. You can:

- Talk to your doctor or go to a walk-in clinic.
- Call 310-6789 (no area code) to ask for help.
- Visit www.anxietybc.com to learn more about anxiety.



Where can I go from here?

This is the short version of a booklet.

Read or listen to the full version of the booklet at www.heretohelp.bc.ca/factsheet/what-is-anxiety



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what is suicide?

Part of the Plain Language Series

www.heretohelp.bc.ca



Suicide means ending your own life. It is sometimes a way for people to escape pain or suffering. When someone ends their own life, we say that they “died by suicide.” A “suicide attempt” means that someone tried to end their life, but did not die.

Important! If you are worried about yourself or someone else, call 1-800-SUICIDE. It stands for 1-800-784-2433. **If you think that someone’s life is in danger, call 9-1-1.**

If you have thoughts of suicide

Thinking about suicide is scary. You may have strong feelings that are hard to deal with. You may feel like things will never be better, but you are not alone. Many people think about suicide. Thinking about suicide does not mean that you will do it. It does not mean that you are “going crazy.”

If you have thoughts of suicide, you can:

- Talk to your doctor or a counsellor
- Call a phone line like 1-800-SUICIDE
- Talk with a family member or friend

If you are worried about someone else

It is important to talk about suicide. Talking about suicide will not give a person ideas. You need to talk about it to find out how you can help.

If the person has a plan to end their life, call the crisis line at 1-800-784-2433. This is an emergency.

If it is not an emergency, you can still do a lot to help:

- Listen to the other person. Make sure they know that they can trust you and you are taking them seriously.
- Connect them to help. This could be a doctor or counsellor. It could be another person they trust. You can also help them call the phone line at 1-800-SUICIDE at any time of day. This phone line can also help in many different languages.



Where can I go from here?

This card is a short version of a longer resource. For more information and help, see www.heretohelp.bc.ca/factsheet/what-is-suicide



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what is a mental illness?

Part of the Plainer Language Series

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A mental illness is a real health problem that affects the mind. A mental illness changes the way you think, feel, and act. These changes can be very upsetting.

There are many different mental illnesses. Each illness is different, but there are common signs to look for.

Common signs of mental illnesses

A mental illness can change your mood. You may have a very strong mood like sadness or excitement that lasts for a long time.

A mental illness can make you feel very scared or anxious. This anxiety can feel like it comes up on its own and you cannot control it.

A mental illness can make you feel angry or upset very easily. You may feel very angry for no reason.

A mental illness can make it hard to stay focused or concentrate. It may be hard to work or study at school.

A mental illness can change the way you think and understand things around you. You may sense things that are not real. You may have very strong beliefs that cannot possibly be true.

A mental illness can change the way you act. You may stop doing things you enjoy. You may avoid going out with family or friends. You may avoid things that make you worry.

How to find help

If you think you might have a mental illness, talk to your doctor.

If you do not know where to go or you want to talk to someone right away, call a help line at 310-6789.



Where do I go from here?

This is the short version of a booklet. Read or listen to the full version of the booklet at www.heretohelp.bc.ca/factsheet/what-is-a-mental-illness



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what is anger?

Part of the Plainer Language Series

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Anger is a normal feeling. We all feel angry sometimes. Different people feel and show anger in different ways.

Anger can mean:

- ☐ We cannot get something we want
- ☐ We see something that is not fair
- ☐ We are upset, hurt, or scared
- ☐ We are feeling too much stress

Anger can help you:

- ☐ Get out of danger
- ☐ Make changes in your life
- ☐ Stand up for something that is wrong

Anger is a problem when:

- ☐ You feel angry all the time
- ☐ You often get into fights with other people you care about
- ☐ You feel like you can't control yourself when you get angry
- ☐ Your anger lasts a long time or scares you

How can I manage my anger?

- 1. Learn how to solve problems.** Solving problems means that you find helpful ways to deal with things that make you angry.
- 2. Learn how to be assertive.** Being assertive means talking directly about something that is making you angry in a respectful way. You look at everyone's point of view, not just your own.
- 3. Learn healthy thinking skills.** Healthy thinking means that you look at the facts in a balanced way. You see a situation for what it really is.
- 4. Find ways to relax.** Some people do yoga or deep breathing to help them relax. Even simple things like going for a walk, listening to music, or writing in a journal can make a big difference.
- 5. Talk to your doctor or community nurse** if anger is causing a lot of problems.



Where do I go from here?

This card is a short version of a longer resource. For more information and help, see www.heretohelp.bc.ca/factsheet/what-is-anger



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tips for good mental health

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You have probably heard about different ways to take care of your body. Did you know that you can take care of your mind, too? Mental health is the way we think and feel about ourselves and the world around us.

Good mental health does not mean that you are happy all the time. It means you can enjoy life and also handle the sad or difficult things that happen.

Keep reading for a couple of tips for better mental health.

Watch for thinking traps

The way we think about something has a big effect on the way we feel.

Sometimes, we think that something is bad, even when it is not true. These are called “thinking traps.” A common thinking trap is jumping to conclusions before you know what really happened. E.g., “My friend did not call me back. She must not like me very much.”

The next time you notice yourself falling into a thinking trap, try to look at the facts.

Solve problems

We face problems every day. When we do not take action, stress can build up in our minds and bodies.

How to solve problems:

- Figure out what the problem really is
- Think of different ways to solve the problem
- Try one solution out and see if it works

What else can I do for my mental health?

- Take care of your body. Eat well, exercise regularly, and try to get enough sleep.
- Find time to slow down and relax.
- Make time for fun!
- Connect with others.
- Find help when you need it.



Where can I go from here?

This card is a short version of a longer resource. For more information and help, see www.heretohelp.bc.ca/factsheet/tips-for-good-mental-health