

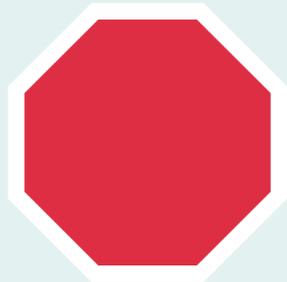
10 Strategies to Regulate Your Emotions

Distressing emotions can be very difficult to manage, especially when they accumulate. Find a strategy or a combination of strategies that work for you! The more we practice any of these strategies, the easier they will be to use when we need them the most.

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1. STOPP

STOPP can help us control our emotions by preventing them from accumulating. When you begin to feel distressed, follow these steps:



Stop what you're doing

Take a slow deep breath to calm down

Observe your:

- **Thoughts:** What is going through my mind?
- **Body sensations:** Where in my body am I experiencing them?
- **Feelings:** What emotions am I feeling right now?
- **Behaviour:** What am I doing? What do I want to do?

Put in some perspective: What's the bigger picture? Is there another way of looking at this situation? What would I say to a friend?

Practice what works: What is the best thing to do for me, for others, for the situation right now? What can I do that fits with my values?

3. Nutrition & Sleep

Mental health and wellbeing can be maintained through a balanced, nutritious diet and regular restful sleep. Below are tips that you can try to improve your nutrition and sleep:



Healthy Eating Recommendations (Canada's Food Guide)

- Eat plenty of vegetables and fruits, whole grain foods and protein foods
- Limit highly processed foods
- Make water your drink of choice



Tips for a Better Sleep

- Make your bedroom comfortable and free of disruptions
 - Block out light (e.g. use heavy curtains or an eye mask)
 - Drown out noise (e.g. use ear plugs or fan to drown out bothersome sounds)
- Keep a stable sleep schedule
 - Have a usual bedtime and wake-up time to get into a rhythm of consistent sleep (average sleep duration recommended for adults: 7-9 hrs)
 - Try to be electronic- or device-free 30-60 minutes before your bedtime
- Building healthy habits during the day
 - Getting daylight exposure can encourage quality sleep at night
 - Be physically active
 - Limit smoking and caffeine later in the evening as these stimulate the body and disrupt sleep
 - Reduce alcohol consumption in the evening as this is shown to disrupt sleep later in the night
 - Use your bed mainly for sleep to help your mind associate your bed with sleep

2. Relaxation and Mindfulness

Mindfulness activities help us gain awareness of the present moment, relaxing the mind and body. Try these mindfulness and relaxation strategies whenever you start feeling distressed:

Grounding 5-4-3-2-1 Technique

Observe the details of your surroundings using each of your senses: What are 5 things you can **see**? What are 4 things you can **feel**? What are 3 things you can **hear**? What are 2 things you can **smell**? What is 1 thing you can **taste**?

Breathing Exercises

Inhale: Breathe in slowly through your nose for 4 seconds

Pause: Hold the air in your lungs for 4 seconds

Exhale: Breathe out slowly through your mouth for 6 seconds

Repeat: Practice for at least 2 minutes

For child: imagine smelling a flower/blowing a candle or smelling a pizza and blowing on it to cool it down



4. Exercise

Exercise not only improves your physical health but your mental health too! Exercising can help us regulate our emotions and cope with stressful situations.



Try these exercises and find one that you like to do best: jogging, cycling, walking, dancing, sports

Aim to exercise for **30 minutes** for at least 3 days per week. You can break these exercise sessions apart throughout your day if it works better for your schedule (10-minutes of brisk walking in the morning, afternoon and evening = 30 minutes).

5. Gratitude Journal

Journal writing is a powerful tool that we can use to improve our emotional wellbeing. Writing about what we are grateful for can help us cope through difficult situations that may come our way.



Try this: Grab a piece of paper and pen. Think about 1 thing that you are grateful for and write about that in detail. Try to do this at least two times a week. If you ever have a hard time coming up with 1 thing, your entry can be as simple as, "It's a sunny day today, so I can go for a walk!"

Prompts: An act of kindness I witnessed or received...
Something I can be proud of... Something beautiful I saw...
Someone I can rely on...

6. Build Routines

Building routines can help you cope through difficult times as it can give you a sense of being in control. It can also act as a buffer between the impacts of stress and your wellness. From childhood to adulthood, routines are important!

Try this: Write down a daily routine that you want to try. Begin with setting a time for sleeping and waking. Then, create a morning and evening routine:

- **Morning Routine Prompts**
 - What do you like to do in the mornings after waking up?
 - Do you like to make breakfast right away or do you want to take your dog for a walk first?
- **Evening Routine Prompts**
 - When would you like to start making dinner?
 - How would you like to wind down for bed (e.g. reading)? When will you start winding down?

Creating a weekly and a monthly routine can also help!

- **Weekly Routine Prompts:** Which day of the week should you take out your garbage/recycling? When are your scheduled appointments?
- **Monthly Routine Prompts:** When are your bills (e.g. rent, utilities) due?



7. Meaningful Activity

Spending time doing a meaningful activity that you enjoy can improve your mental health and wellbeing by combating stress and low mood. These activities, especially done outside and/or with other people, can make you feel more content in your daily life. Meaningful activities can be anything from learning a new skill, enjoying the outdoors, reading, or doing something musical or artistic. What matters is that this activity is something you find enjoyable.

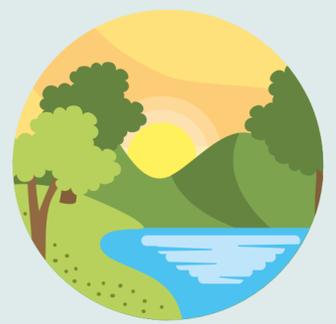
Try this: Write down activities that you like to do or are interested in doing. Your interests may be creative, athletic, academic, or something personal. Pick one activity from your list and engage in that activity for at least 10 minutes. How do you feel after engaging in this meaningful activity?



8. Nature

Regular exposure to nature can lead to better overall health, self-esteem and mood. You can spend time in natural settings through a daily walk in a park or on a local trail. You can also engage in exercise outdoors walking, jogging or cycling.

Try this: Aim for at least 20 to 30 minutes, three days a week of physical activity in natural settings. The goal is to get away from urban settings and surround yourself with a natural environment.



9. Social Supports

Having social supports can help us cope with difficult situations and help manage stress for better mental and physical health. There are many different kinds of social support:

- **Emotional support:** Someone you can talk to about a problem and share your thoughts and feelings
- **Knowledgeable advice:** Someone you can talk to when you need help problem-solving in a situation or to look at a problem from different points of view
- **Practical help:** Someone you can call when you need practical help (e.g. emergency childcare, drop off a meal when you are sick, or help with your workload)

Try this: Reflect on the social supports that are available to you. Social support can come from friends, family, community members, and/or your health care provider(s). Who are the people in your life that you can rely on? Who do you turn to for a specific issue?

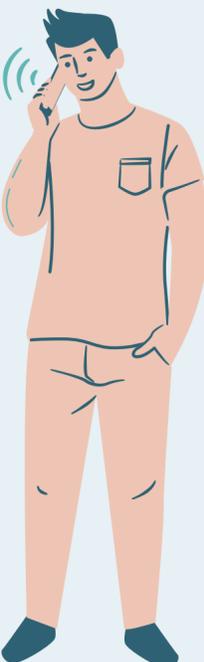


10. Seek Help

Last but not the least, it is always okay to ask others for help. Sometimes it can be difficult to manage our own emotions, which can heavily impact our day-to-day lives. Reaching out to others can be very intimidating, but you have the power to take that first step. You are not alone and you deserve to be supported.

When you are in crisis or in a “period of intense difficulty or trouble”, reach out to:

- [The Mental Health Crisis Line](#) (613-722-6914) answers calls for people ages 16 & older 24/7.
- [Kids Help Phone](#) (1-800-668-6868) provides confidential phone & web counselling for children/youth ages 20 & under, 24/7.
- [Youth Services Bureau \(YSB\)](#) provides youth and family counselling, crisis support, a 24/7 crisis line at 613-260-2360, walk-in counselling & online crisis chat service for youth at <http://chat.ysb.ca>.
- [Counselling Connect](#) provides free access to same-day or next-day phone or video counselling session (for children, youth, adults & families).
- [Telehealth Ontario](#) (Toll free: 1-866-797-0000)
 - Get 24/7 fast, free medical advice for any health-related questions or concerns.



In case of an emergency, call 911.

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