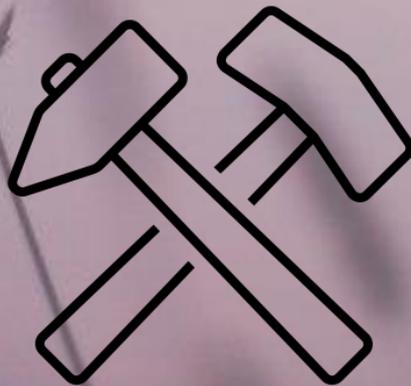


Coping with COVID-19:

*A practical toolkit for
Manitobans*



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Disclaimer: *This document was developed by one or more students on placement from the University's Rady Faculty of Health Sciences in accordance with their program requirements. The information provided in this document is intended to provide helpful information and is not intended to replace advice and guidance of a professional health care provider. There are no guarantees of completeness or accuracy with regard to the information contained in this document. All individuals involved in the creation of this document disclaim any liability in connection with the use of this document and of the information contained herein. This document is provided without warranty of any kind.*

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has transformed the world in which we live. We are all likely feeling a range of emotions such as fear, anxiety, anger, and sadness, which can affect how we feel and respond in daily life.

This toolkit was created to provide strategies and resources to help Manitobans effectively, and positively cope with the changes that COVID-19 has made in everyone's lives. The toolkit includes educational material, practical skills, local resources, and activities for living well during the pandemic.

While this toolkit is a resource to help you develop positive coping skills in the short- and long-term in response to the loss, grief, and other difficult emotions that have come with COVID-19; **if you are in an immediate crisis, call Manitoba Suicide Prevention Line toll-free (1-877-435-7170), Klinic Crisis Line toll-free (1-888-322-3019), or Crisis Response Centre (1-204-940-1781).** These lines are all open 24/7.

“We are all dealing with
the collective loss of the
world we once knew.”
-Brené Brown



Emotions

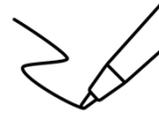
It is common to be experiencing many emotions as we try to navigate this new world. You may feel like you are on a never-ending rollercoaster of emotions as you watch the news, hear the updates, think about the losses, and what the future may hold. It is important to recognize these emotions and allow yourself to embrace what you are feeling.



With these challenging times bring feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, and grief. If you've felt any of these emotions in response to the pandemic, you are not alone. The following chart lists some common difficult emotions and how they can feel in your body. Take time to bring awareness to how you are feeling right now.

Activity: Circle the emotions and feelings that you have noticed in the last week. Feel and accept your emotions...there is no judgement!

Difficult emotions and how they affect your body:



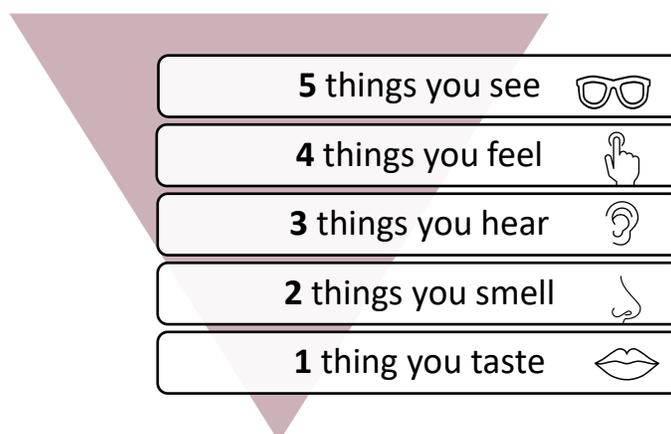
ANGER		SADNESS	
	Muscles tightening		Crying
	Teeth and jaw clenching		Feeling exhausted
	Feeling flush or hot		Difficulty swallowing
	Wanting to hit or throw something		Feeling empty
FEAR		GUILT	
	Breathlessness		Sweating
	Pounding heart		Difficulty sleeping
	Feeling butterflies in your stomach		Stomachache
	Wanting to run and hide		Feeling nervous, shaking

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is paying attention to what is happening in the here and now, and bringing awareness to your body, thoughts, and feelings, without judgment¹. Many people are experiencing higher levels of anxiety, fear, sadness, and guilt due to COVID-19. Mindfulness works to control stress, ease anxiety and depressive symptoms, improve relationships, control emotions, and decrease intense reactions to difficult situations². Here are some mindfulness activities for you to try! Discontinue any exercises if you feel pain or discomfort and seek help from your provider for assistance with these exercises if needed.

Mindfulness Activities

- 5 Senses³:** Make a conscious effort to notice the present moment through each of your 5 senses. Right now, what are:



- Mindfulness during everyday activities:** Pay attention to the 5 senses through activities you do every day. Examples include:



¹Adapted from Linehan (2015).

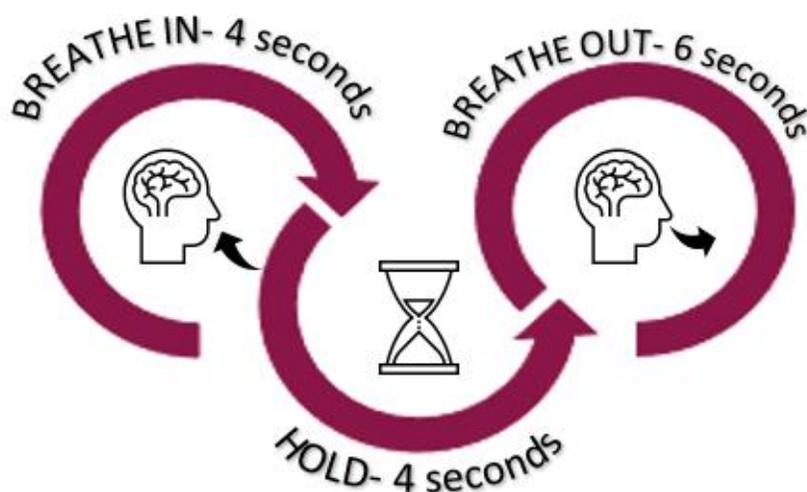
²Davis & Hayes (2011).

³Adapted from Therapist Aid (2017c).

3. Deep Breathing

Deep breathing is a relaxation exercise that involves breathing in and out, slowly and deeply. When experiencing anxiety, the body produces a stress response which results in higher heart rate, tense muscles, and shallow and rapid breathing. Deep breathing can promote relaxation, energy and alertness, and reduce feelings of anxiety, depression, confusion and anger¹.

How it works: Use your finger to trace the curves. Breathe in for 4 seconds. Hold that breath for 4 seconds, then slowly release that breath for 6 seconds. Repeat 5 times when needed².



4. Mindful Stretches³

Think about how each of your body parts feel as you try out these stretches³. Notice any sensations like pulling, tightness, discomfort, or pain. Stretch your body to the point where you can feel a slight sensation, but not to the point of pain. Hold each stretch for 15-30 seconds and complete daily. Check with your provider before starting any stretches.



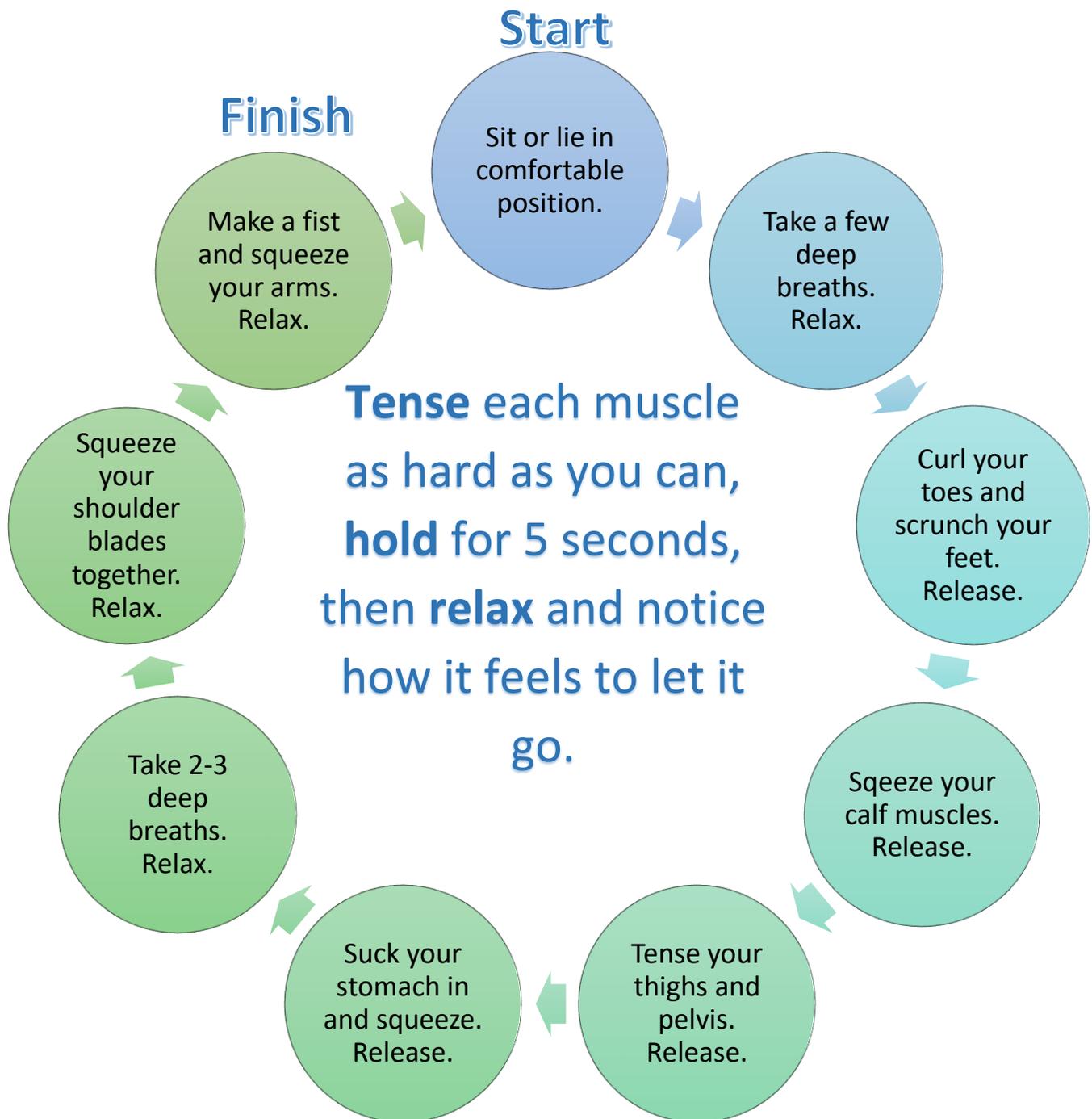
¹Zaccaro, Piarulli & Laurino (2018).

²Adapted from Therapist Aid (2017a).

³Images: <https://www.pinclipart.com>

5. Progressive Muscle Relaxation^{1,2}

This activity can help you let go of built-up stress and anxiety by tensing, then releasing your muscles one at a time. With practice, you will notice when you feel tension in your muscles, and when you need to relax your muscles. Additionally, be mindful of any injuries or pain you are experiencing and pass over those body parts.



¹Adapted from Therapist Aid (2017b).

²Adapted from Linehan (2015).

Positive Communication

Since the beginning of the pandemic, many people have experienced feelings of anger, loneliness, isolation, and anxiety. Such emotions can make it difficult to communicate with others. The DEARMAN¹ is a tool that is used when interacting with those around you and a good strategy to express your needs. This is important for maintaining healthy relationships.

D

Describe the situation. Use only facts and avoid opinions. For example, "You told me you would call me back and you didn't".

E

Clearly **express** your feelings. Don't expect others to know how you feel. For example, "when you didn't call me back, I got worried something bad happened to you".

A

Be **assertive**. Say what you need to say. For example, "I feel hurt when you don't remember that I am waiting for your call".

R

Reward people who respond well, and say how this change will benefit you. For example, "if you call me back when you say you will, I would be so relieved".

M

Be **mindful**. Stick to the point of the conversation and avoid arguing. For example, don't say: "I guess this means our relationship is never going to work", instead say: "No that's not it, I would just appreciate if you would call me back when you say you will".

A

Appear confident. Consider your posture, tone of voice, eye contact and body language. Avoid saying things like, "I'm not sure".

N

Be open to **negotiation** and be willing to offer solutions to the problem. For example, "If you can't call back, texting me to tell me you're busy is ok with me".

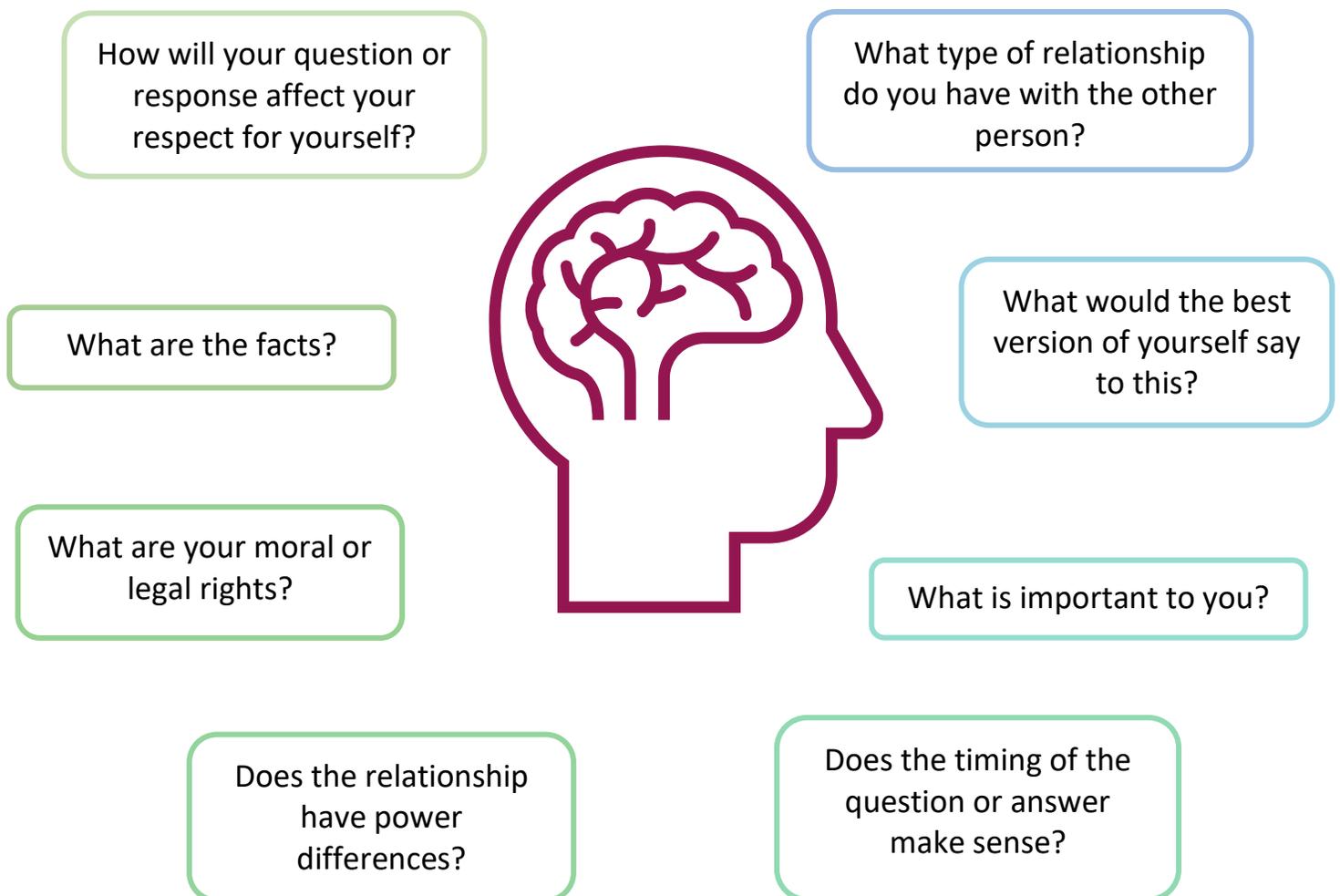
¹Adapted from Linehan (2015).

Healthy Boundaries for Requesting and Responding

When in an anxious or stressed state, it is important to remember that there are boundaries for what is or isn't appropriate to ask others. The same boundaries also apply when you are deciding whether to say "Yes" or "No" to what another is asking you. For example, you might call a friend or family member to ask for a ride, however, you would not ask your health care provider for the same request. Likewise, if a friend or family member asked you for a ride, you might say "Yes", whereas you might say "No" if it was a stranger.



When someone has asked something of you, or you are considering asking something of someone else, consider the following questions¹:



¹Adapted from Linehan (2015).

STOP Skill

The STOP skill¹ is used to bring awareness to the moment and **STOP** you from acting on your emotions. Instead, consider your thoughts, feelings, and the people involved when you're in a stressful situation. Here's what to do:



¹Adapted from Linehan (2015).



The Importance of Routine

As part of the human experience, our bodies thrive on routine. Having a routine is important for our physical and mental health¹. With the changes that have come with COVID-19, it has been difficult to maintain a daily schedule. Many things are out of our control with COVID-19; however, having a routine is something that we can take control over to make things more certain.

Some tips for keeping a regular routine:



If possible, go to bed at the same time everyday. This will help your body maintain a schedule so it knows when to shut down for the day, and get going in the morning.



Get dressed and get ready for the day like you did pre-pandemic, even if you are staying/working at home.



Continue to connect regularly with others via phone, email, or virtual platform, or by saying a distanced "hello" to neighbours or people outside. Staying connected with others is more important than ever during these difficult times!



Limit your consumption of daily news and seek information from credible sources only.

¹Robins (n.d.).

Activity: What is your routine?

Fill out this 7-day routine chart by writing down all the things you do in a day.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Think about the balancing your activities and answer the questions below:

- What activities would you like to add into your routine?
- What activities would you like to reduce or remove from your routine?
- What activities are the most important to you? What activities are the least important?



Goal Setting – making your goals SMART



In response to the pandemic, we may find ourselves coping in unhealthy ways. Goal setting can help to make positive changes in our lives (including healthy ways of coping) and help to figure out the steps needed to make those changes. The SMART method of goal setting works to help make goals more likely to achieve. Below are two examples of goals about practicing more mindfulness:



Goal: Do more mindfulness

This goal does not give much information about what steps I would need to take to practise mindfulness, which makes my goal much harder to achieve because I won't know if I've achieved it!



SMART Goal: Starting today, I will do a mindfulness meditation for 5 minutes/day on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays every week, for one month, as measured by checkmarks on my calendar.

This SMART goal is specific, realistic, can be measured, recorded, and has a time frame.

Activity: Think about a current coping behavior (for example: more substance use, watching a lot of TV, oversleeping) that you would like to change. Use the SMART goal setting worksheet below to make a plan on how you will change your behavior. Set 1 goal for this week, and 1 goal for the month.

<p style="text-align: center;">S Specific</p>	<p>Define your goal – who, what, when, and where?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">M Measurable</p>	<p>Can you track your progress and outcomes? How will you do this?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">A Achievable</p>	<p>Is it possible for you to achieve?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">R Realistic</p>	<p>Do you have the resources, time, and energy to complete the goal?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">T Timely</p>	<p>What is the timeframe for completing the goal?</p>

1

Goal 1: By 1 week, I will...

Goal 2: By 1 month, I will...

Self-Soothing Activities¹

When experiencing a stressful situation, take some time to soothe your five senses. This will help you regulate and tolerate any distress you are experiencing. This list is not exclusive and activities that might be soothing to one person, may not be to the next. The important thing to remember is to do what feels soothing for you and use all five senses.



Try
This!

Sight

- Find a spot to sit and people-watch
- Look at the stars
- Observe nature: do you see birds, trees, sky, people?
- Watch the sunset

Sound

- Listen to calming music or the sounds of nature
- Listen to your favorite song
- Play an instrument, or tap your feet
- Close your eyes and pay attention to what you can hear in your surroundings

Smell

- Step outside or open a window and smell the fresh air
- Breathe in a strong scent, such as coffee or mint
- Take a walk in the park or nearby forest and breathe in the fresh smell of wood and nature
- Light your favourite scented candle

Touch

- Pet an animal or a soft fabric
- Place a cold cloth on your forehead
- Put on comfy clothes or wrap up in a blanket
- Take a bath or shower

Taste

- Have a warm drink (ie. tea, coffee)
- Eat your favorite dessert
- Chew gum
- Close your eyes while tasting your food, and eat one piece at a time

¹Adapted from Linehan (2015).

Guided Imagery

Guided imagery involves using your imagination to picture a relaxing scene or destination that brings you joy and happiness. Visualizations use the mind to encourage positive feelings associated with that place.

You may feel silly or strange when you first try this, but practice this skill for a week before deciding on its effectiveness. Studies have found that guided imagery exercises can reduce cognitive and emotional stress¹.



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Instructions²:

1. Sit or lie down in a comfortable position in a room that is quiet and relaxing.
2. Close your eyes. Imagine a place that is calming to you. This could be up on a mountain with the fresh breeze blowing, sitting in the warm sand on a beach, at the cabin with the rain coming down on the roof, or sipping coffee in a cozy cafe.
3. Begin to visualize your chosen scene. Feel the temperature, breathe in all the scents, and listen to the sounds. Try to involve all of your senses in this process. Taste, touch, smell, sound, and sight.
4. Allow yourself to get lost in this imagery and embrace all the positive feelings associated with it. Relax your body and mind. Block out everything else and enjoy the experience.
5. After 5 or 10 minutes, slowly start to move your body again. Gently open your eyes. You can adjust the timing for longer or shorter sessions.



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¹Bigham, McDannel, Luciano, & Salgado-Lopez (2014).

²Adapted from <https://www.therapistaid.com/therapy-guide/relaxation-skills-guide>

Images from: Shutterstock.com.



Sleep

Sleep is so important for overall health and well-being. It can be hard to stick to a consistent sleep schedule right now since our routines have changed. You may stay up too late, find it difficult to get out of bed in the morning, or sleep restlessly. Listed below are some practical tips to improve your sleep!¹

- ★ Set a schedule — try to set a regular sleep routine; aim to go to bed and wake up at the same time daily. Most people need 7-9 hours of sleep a night.
- ★ Avoid caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine — these substances can affect ability to fall or stay asleep.
- ★ Check your environment — ensure your room is a comfortable temperature, quiet and dark enough. Consider a fan, room darkening blinds or curtains, eye-mask, or ear plugs to suit your needs.
- ★ Don't force it — If you are having difficulty getting to sleep after 20 minutes, get up and do something calming such as read a book, meditate, or write in a journal.
- ★ Avoid late naps — napping during the day will affect your ability to sleep at night. If you need to nap, keep it short and earlier in the day.
- ★ Only use your bed for sleeping — avoid watching tv, reading, and hanging out in bed during the day.
- ★ Exercise — exercising regularly has been shown to improve sleep. However, avoid strenuous exercise before going to bed.

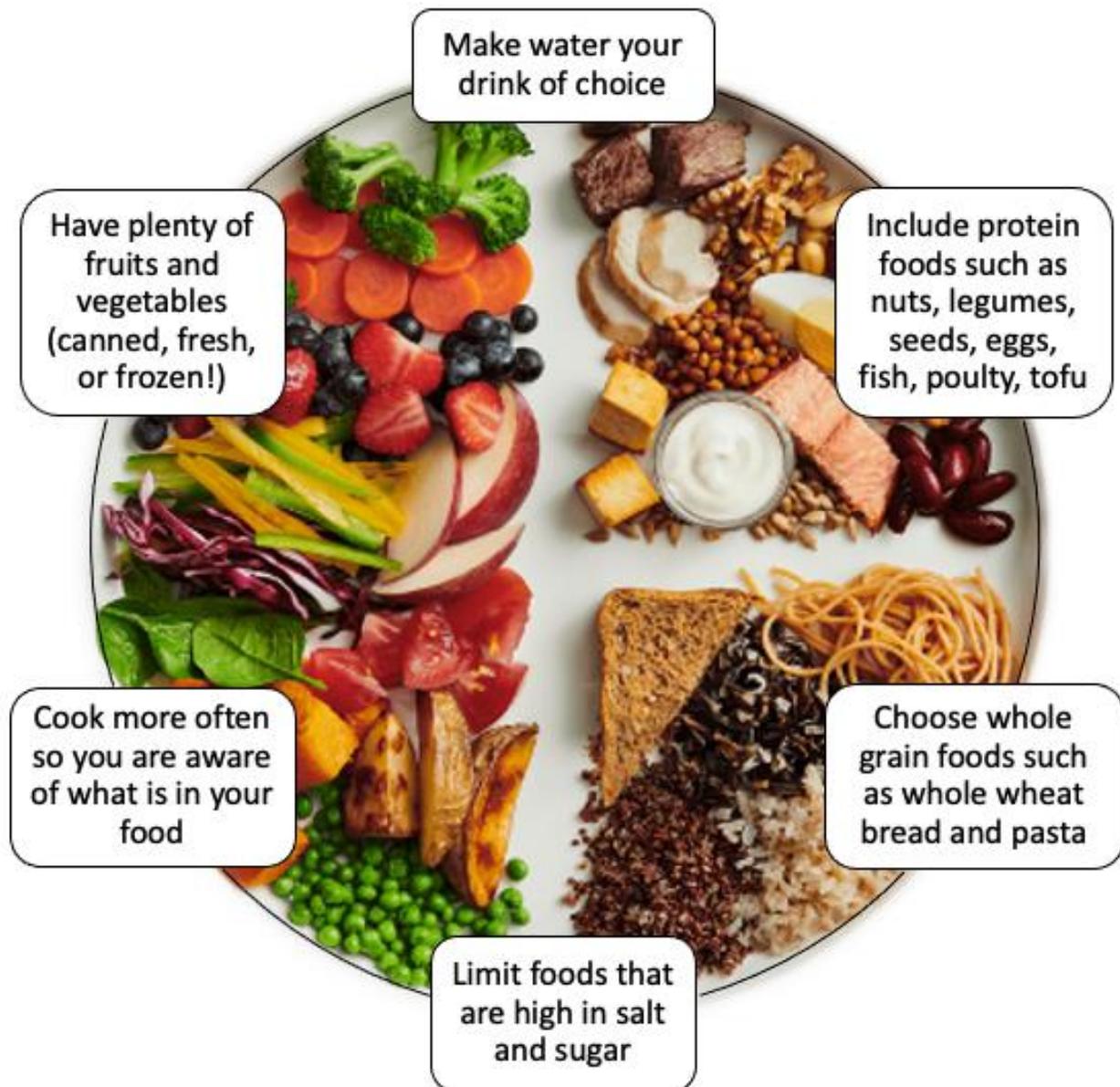


¹Adapted from Therapist Aid (2016).
Image from: Shutterstock.com.

Nutrition

COVID-19 has created challenges to healthy eating. We can no longer sit down and enjoy a meal with family or friends and a reduced income might mean less healthy food choices. We might be hesitant to run to the grocery store when we want something, making access to food more difficult. Eating a well-balanced diet with nutritious and healthy foods is important for your mood, energy, and overall well-being.

Canada's Food Guide recommends¹:



¹Adapted from Health Canada (2019).

Recipes

Here are some quick and easy recipes – Cut out the recipe cards to keep handy!

OATMEAL

Ingredients

½ cup quick oats OR 1-minute oats
1 cup water
*Optional top with:
1 tbsp. peanut butter
1 tbsp. brown sugar
Canned or frozen fruit of choice
Splash of milk

Directions

Add oats and water to cereal bowl.

Microwave for 1 minute and 30 seconds. Check to see if cooked. Cook longer if using large flake oats.



TUNA SALAD SANDWICH

Ingredients

1 can tuna
2 tbsp. mayonnaise
2 tbsp. diced onion
Salt + pepper to taste
2 slices bread
*Optional: add lettuce or cucumber

Directions

In a bowl, combine tuna, mayonnaise, onion, and salt and pepper.
Use a fork to mix together until evenly mixed.
Spread tuna salad onto bottom slice of bread, and place the other slice on top!



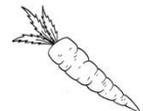
VEGETABLE STIR-FRY

Ingredients

½ cup rice
1 cup water
1 can vegetables of choice (ex. corn, peas, carrots, green beans, mushrooms)
2 tbsp. soy sauce
*Optional: 1 can meat of choice

Directions

Combine rice and water in a bowl.
Microwave rice for 2-5 minutes (depending on type of rice), stir and cook more if needed.
Add canned vegetables (and optional meat) and microwave until warm.
Stir in soy sauce.



BANANA OATMEAL MUFFINS¹

Ingredients

2 eggs
2 bananas
2 cups oats
1 tsp baking powder
1 tbsp. butter (or margarine or oil)
*Optional: 1 cup crushed nuts

Directions

Crack eggs into bowl, add bananas.
Mash bananas until larger clumps are broken down. Add oats and baking powder and stir until well-mixed.
Grease muffin tin with butter, then pour the mixture into muffin tin.
Bake at 375 degrees for 15-20 minutes or until golden brown.



¹ Adapted from Winnipeg Harvest (2019).

Physical Activity

The Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines¹ recommends the following:



- ♥ Participate in a variety of physical activities in different environments during all seasons!
- ♥ 150 minutes of moderate to intense aerobic activity per week.
- ♥ Examples: brisk walking, pickleball, dancing, cleaning your home, cycling, gardening, mowing the lawn, or anything that gets your heart pumping!
- ♥ Muscle strengthening activities at least 2 days/week
Examples: lifting weights, resistance training, or lifting groceries, books, or household items.



- ♥ Limit long periods of sitting to less than 8 hours/day.
- ♥ Limit leisure screen time to less than 3 hours/day.
- ♥ Take breaks! Break up long periods of sitting as much as possible by standing and moving around. Even 1 minute every hour helps!



- ♥ In addition to above, older adults (65+) should incorporate balance activities which are essential in preventing falls. For example, you can try balancing on one leg for 5 seconds while holding a table surface, alternate legs. Once you feel stable, you can progress your practice by taking away less support such as one hand on table, one fingertip on table, no hands, or while brushing your teeth². *Use caution, you must be stable before trying more challenging exercises*
- ♥ Other ways to prevent falls: removing clutter or throw rugs from the floor, wearing shoes that fit well, taking medications as directed, regular eye checkups, and managing overall health².

¹Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (2020)

²Staying On Your Feet (2016)

Images: <https://creazilla.com/nodes/38676-woman-is-walking-for-exercise-clipart>

<https://www.xbox.com/en-NZ/apps/family-settings-app>

https://www.123rf.com/clipart-vector/senior_exercise.html?sti=mul9rq5cehyawec8c

Self-Care Word Search

Puzzles and games are not just for fun! Activities such as these keep your mind active and engaged. Think of these activities like a workout for your brain! Find and circle the words listed below¹:



M E R R E A D I N G C P U N T
 G O X W E J O U R N A L I N G
 V J V E D T W C A R D S P B Q
 G O M I R A W A L K J A D U R
 P D Y G E C N K P Y C L X I M
 A V O H U F I C C G L E L L T
 I O G T F P Z S E A E A O D Y
 N Z A L W I O L E R A R E I P
 T K N I T T I N G D N N H N S
 I W T F U D R P U E I I H G I
 N L X T I I S R U N N N Z K N
 G M G I M U S I C I G G F O G
 C Z P N F B A T H N I R M V I
 M S X G R D G Y T G F T A C N
 M E D I T A T I O N C E T P G

GARDENING
 PAINTING
 EXERCISE
 BATH
 DANCE
 READING
 KNITTING

WEIGHTLIFTING
 MEDITATION
 CARDS
 BUILDING
 MUSIC
 SINGING

WALK
 LEARNING
 JOURNALING
 CLEANING
 YOGA
 MOVIE

¹Created using: <https://tools/atozteacherstuff.com/word-search-maker/wordsearch.php>



Gratitude

Gratitude is expressing appreciation for all the things in your life. It involves feeling thankful and grateful for the people and the world around you. Practising gratitude means accepting the negative aspects and learning to focus your attention on the things that matter to you. Having an attitude of gratitude can lead to improvements in mood, physical well-being and to greater happiness.

Gratitude Journal

Each day, take time to write down three things that you are grateful for. You could make this a daily habit when you wake up or before you go to bed. For example, you might be grateful to have a roof over your head, to have good friends and family, to be healthy, to not have burned the toast this morning, to be reading a great book, etc. Nothing is too big or too small when it comes to being grateful. Celebrate the positive!

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

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