



Canadian Mental  
Health Association  
Ontario

Association canadienne  
pour la santé mentale  
Ontario

**TAKE 15 MINUTES  
JUST FOR YOU**



# TAKE 15 MINUTES JUST FOR YOU

We understand that things are tough right now. More than a year into the pandemic and we're all feeling the effects. Many of us are struggling with burnout, loneliness, and depression. Balancing the tasks of everyday life – work, parenting, caregiving – has now become more stressful and exhausting. And the idea of taking even a few minutes to practice healthy coping techniques can feel like just another chore.

But looking after yourself is especially important when you're struggling. Self-care is about self-preservation. It's a necessity, not an indulgence.

A self-care task should not be big or complicated – in fact, when energy and resolve is low, it's important to make it as simple as possible. This is what we're offering here – we are sharing simple 15 minute ideas to help you feel better.



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# TAKE 15 MINUTES TO HELP WITH BURNOUT

Burnout is defined as the depletion of physical and emotional resources. It can lead to feelings of worry, dissatisfaction and dreading daily activities. Try taking 15 minutes every day and implement the steps below into your routine to help prevent burnout and build resilience.

## RE-FOCUS YOUR TASKS AND CHECK IN ON YOUR VALUES

Taking a moment to reflect on your personal or professional values can help reduce feelings of ambiguity and inefficiency that can lead to emotional exhaustion, often the first manifestation of burnout.

For example, if you're struggling on the job try and remind yourself why you began working in your profession. Bring to mind examples of how you positively impact the lives of your clients, customers, patients or community.

If you work in a health-related field, for example, it's extremely difficult right now. Demands are high and you may be surrounded by illness, injury, pain and hurt. The impact of your work may not be immediately apparent to you. Remind yourself why you chose to work in health care in the first place and how your daily tasks benefit others.

## RE-FRAME YOUR MINDSET TO FIGHT CYNICISM

When we seek to constantly avoid negative experiences rather than seeking positive ones, it can lead to feeling pessimistic, isolated, detached or unmotivated. Practice shifting your thought process to see the positive whenever possible.

Using health-related workers again as an example, try to note one positive aspect from every interaction with a client, patient or colleague. It can be something as small as smile or a "thank you" for helping them. Take time to dwell on these interactions and write them down. Over time, constantly noticing the positive can increase motivation and growth and decrease anxiety.

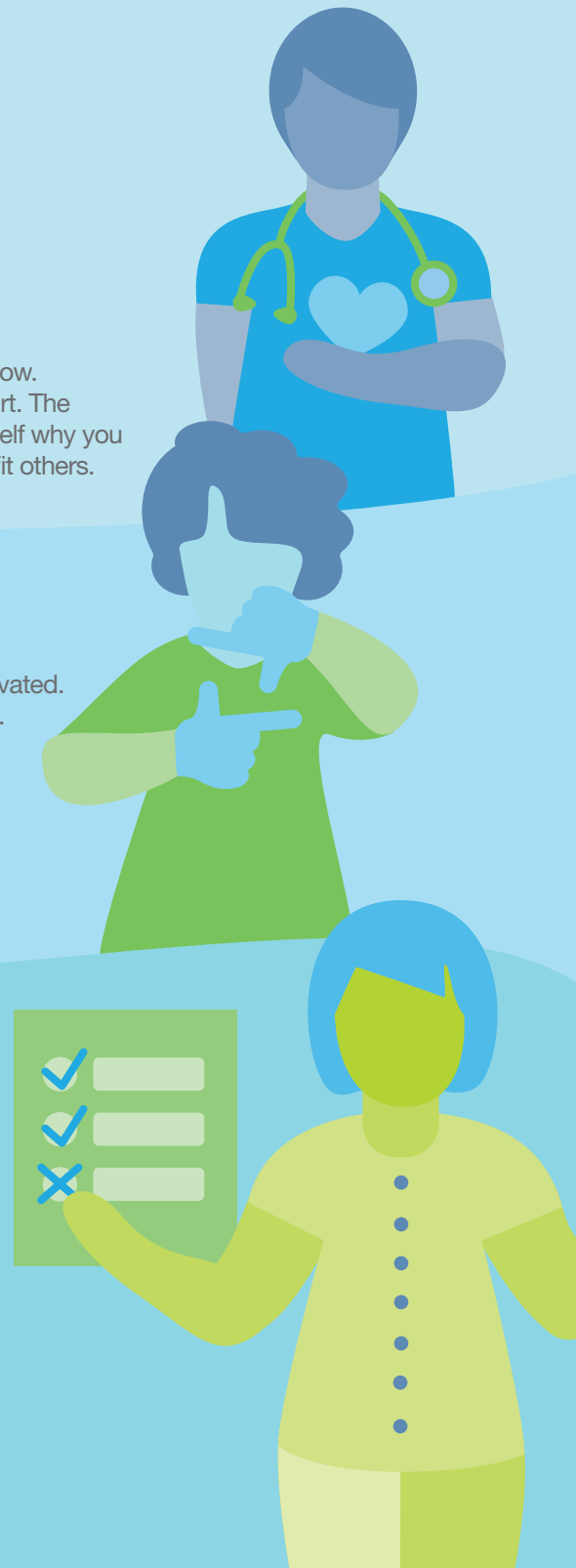
## RE-BALANCE YOUR TASKS TO INCREASE MOTIVATION

We all have daily tasks. Try ranking each task as either a 'want-to' or 'have-to.' If you find there are many more 'have-to' tasks, jot down a small list of 'want-to' tasks to create a healthy balance of each.

By balancing 'want to' versus 'have-to' tasks each day, we increase the chance of maintaining self-control and focus. Improved daily self-control increases feelings of self-efficacy and decreases the chance of burnout.



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# 15 MINUTES FOR YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is more than the absence of a mental health condition or illness; it's the capacity to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face. If you're struggling with maintaining positive mental health, please know that you're not alone; a recent CMHA Ontario poll shows that rates of stress, anxiety and depression during the pandemic are worse than ever.

## HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR YOUR MENTAL HEALTH BREAK:

### LOG OFF

Feeling informed can be calming, but the constant stream of information on the news can have the opposite effect. Take 15 minutes away from the news and stretch or go for a walk.

### ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

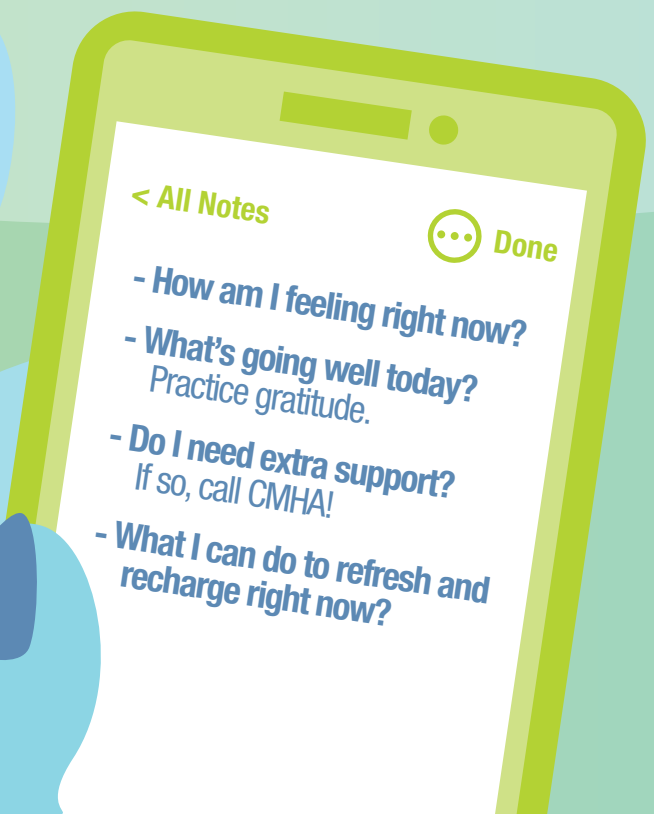
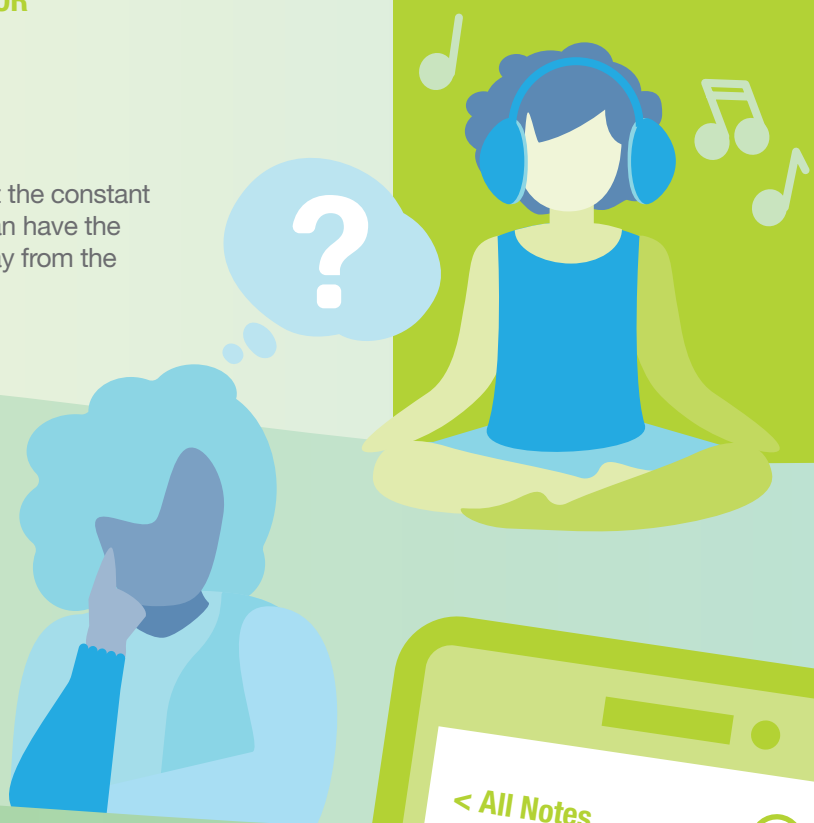
Read, do a crossword, work on a jigsaw puzzle or watch a quick video on a topic that interests you.

### CHECK IN WITH YOURSELF

If you're feeling anxious, remember that it's normal to feel anxious or worried about the COVID-19 pandemic. Try to notice and challenge your thoughts that may be extreme or unhelpful.

“

My COVID mantra has been 'Do your best. Let go of the rest',” says Bonnie Tourond, Geriatric Mental Health Lead at CMHA Fort Frances. “It is important to remember that we are living through extraordinary times and give ourselves a break.”



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# 15 MINUTES FOR YOUR EMOTIONAL HEALTH

Having good emotional health is a fundamental aspect of fostering resilience. Keep in mind that having good emotional health does not mean you're free from negative emotions. It's about having the skills and resources to manage the ups and downs of day-to-day life.

## HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO TEND TO YOUR EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING:

### WRITE OUT YOUR FEELINGS

When we put our feelings into words, we are actively constructing and making meaning of our emotions. Without words for emotions, our feelings might seem unclear to us. Naming and writing about our emotions helps to ease anxiety and decreases our anger or fear response.

### DO SOMETHING SMALL THAT BRINGS YOU JOY

Take a photo, bake a treat, spend some time in the garden. Whatever works for you and is a healthy way to cope.

### ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR GRIEF

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to everyone experiencing a wave of losses: economic, social, physical and emotional. It's important to take the time to acknowledge and mourn these losses. For more information on this topic, check out [our resource on loss and grief during the pandemic](#).



Working on our emotional health is just as important as taking care of our physical well-being," says Camille Quenneville, CEO of CMHA Ontario.



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# 15 MINUTES FOR YOUR PHYSICAL HEALTH

Although stay-at-home, quarantine, and physical distancing measures reduce transmission of COVID-19, research has shown that these measures can lead to more sedentary leisure behaviors and declines in physical activity.

## HERE ARE SOME QUICK WAYS TO MAINTAIN GOOD PHYSICAL HEALTH:

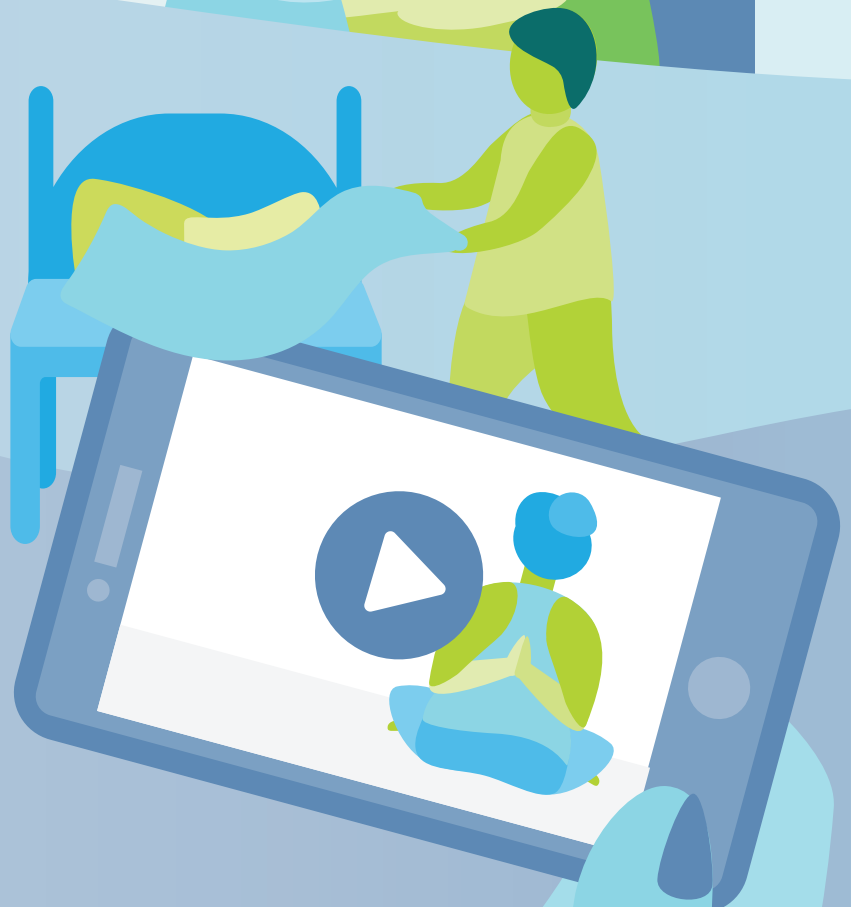
### FUEL YOUR BODY

Grab a healthful snack that helps nourish your body and gives it the energy you need to maintain wellness. Ensure you stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water throughout the day.



### TIDY UP

Make your bed, wash dishes or tidy your desk. A sense of order in your life can help maintain physical well-being and reduce mental fatigue.



### EXERCISE

Research shows that just 15 minutes of exercise every day can help circulation, improve your mood, boost metabolism and increase life expectancy. Take a walk or jog outside, climb the stairs or do a quick workout video on YouTube.

“

Your brain and your body work together. When you take care of your physical health, you're taking care of your mental health too," says Lisa Carricato, Mental Health Educator at CMHA Algoma.



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# 15 MINUTES FOR YOUR SOCIAL HEALTH

Our social connections have faced an unprecedented challenge thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite pandemic restrictions, it's important that we take the time to maintain our relationships. Individuals who are socially well often live longer and enjoy better health.

## HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO TAKE A SOCIAL HEALTH BREAK:

### USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO CONNECT, NOT SCROLL

Studies show that when people spend a lot of time passively consuming information on social media – such as scrolling, reading, and clicking on links – they report feeling worse afterward. In contrast, when people actively engage online by sharing, posting photos, and commenting, it can increase positive well-being. Use social platforms to help feel connected to others. Check out CMHA Hamilton's recommendations of [online resources for social connection and mental wellness](#).

### CONNECT VIRTUALLY

Schedule a coffee break online or over the phone with a friend, family member or colleague. Even a 15 minute chat is enough to catch up and lift your spirits.

### FIND WAYS TO HELP

Research shows that doing things for others strengthens our own mental health. Check on your neighbours, the elderly, family and friends to see how they're doing and if they need help picking up groceries, medications and other important household items.

“

Social support is even more important when you feel unwell,” says Abby Drimmie, Special Events Coordinator at CMHA Grey Bruce. “It’s an important way to manage and reduce stress, which is good for the whole body.”

HA HA  
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# 15 MINUTES FOR YOUR SPIRITUAL HEALTH

Spiritual wellness is about connecting with what is meaningful to you in a way that lightens or enriches your spirit.

## OTHER WAYS TO ENHANCE YOUR SPIRITUAL WELLNESS INCLUDE:

### INDULGE YOUR CREATIVITY

Creativity can be an effective tool for enhancing our spiritual growth and help us to express our emotions. Try painting, drawing, writing, poetry, knitting, or practicing a musical instrument.

### SPEND TIME IN NATURE

Studies show it has a powerful positive effect on mind and body and that even spending 15 minutes per day outdoors in nature can be beneficial.

### PRACTICE GRATITUDE

Write down three things that you're grateful for and why. Or take the time reach out to people that you love and tell them you appreciate them.

“

Research shows that spirituality is linked with physical well-being, and spiritual wellness can bring comfort and lend strength for handling life's challenges,” says Tara McKendrick, CEO of CMHA Niagara. “Try exploring radical self-compassion, perhaps through learning simple meditation techniques that provide your mind a rest from doing.”



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## CANADIAN MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION, ONTARIO

If you or someone you know is struggling with mental health and addiction at any time, please reach out. Help is always available.

[ONTARIO.CMHA.CA](https://ontario.cmha.ca)

[LOCAL CMHA BRANCH SUPPORTS](#)

[PROVINCIAL MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS](#)



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