

Thanks a Billion!

WELL AWARE

Each of our paths to mental well-being will be unique. We all have our own goals, our own challenges, our own talents, and our own supports. But good mental health is in everyone's reach. Below, find tips and activities to help you take a look at your own well-being, discover your strengths, and take action.

Build a healthy self-esteem

BELIEVE IN YOURSELF.

Self-esteem is more than just seeing your good qualities. It is being able to see all your abilities and weaknesses together, accepting them, and doing your best with what you have. Self-esteem means recognizing your unique talents and abilities, and using that confidence to follow your goals and interests without comparing yourself to others.

Activity: Build confidence

Take a good look at your good points. What do you do best? Where are your skills and interest areas? How would a friend describe you? Now, look at your weak points. What do you have difficulty doing? What things make you feel frustrated? Now, which list was easier to write? Remember that all of us have our positive and negative sides. We build confidence by developing our weaker areas and regularly reminding ourselves of the things we're comfortable with and proud of.

Build positive support networks

Good relationships take effort, whether it's relationships with family members, friends, or other important supporters. It takes courage to reach out and time to build trust. But social support is a very important part of mental health. People in our networks can offer many different kinds of support, like emotional support, practical help, and alternate points of view. Support can come from family and friends, neighbors, co-workers or classmates, faith communities, clubs or support groups for specific problems.

Activity: Make time

Make time just to be with important people in your life. Make time for simply having fun and enjoying each other's company, and time for serious conversations.

Get involved

Being involved in things that really matter to us provides a great feeling of purpose and satisfaction. You make a difference, no matter how big or small your efforts. Getting involved connects you with groups of people you might not normally meet. It can help you learn new skills, build confidence, and see your own experiences in a different way.

Activity: Volunteer

Be a volunteer. Read to children at your local library, visit people in a hospital or care facility, serve on a committee or board of your favorite charity, clean up your favorite park or beach, or simply help a neighbor.

Build resiliency

Resiliency means coping well with problems, stress, and other difficult situations. Problems and stress are a normal part of life. Situations like accidents or illness, unexpected life changes, and conflict happen to everyone. Resiliency is what helps you look at the situation realistically, take action when you can make changes, let go of things you can't change, and recognize the helpful supports in your life. Your resiliency toolkit might include skills like problem-solving, assertiveness, balancing obligations and expectations, and developing support networks. While some people learn these skills during treatment for mental health problems, we can really think of them as skills for everyone.

Activity: Build your own toolkit

Set aside time to think about the resiliency tools you already have. This might include skills like structured problem-solving or people who can help you during difficult situations. Remember to include strategies that have worked for you in the past. Keep your list on hand and use it as a reminder when you need help. It's also a good way to see where you might want to build new skills or supports. Page 3 has a Mega-list of coping skills that you can draw from.

Recognize your emotions

Emotional well-being is not about being happy all the time. Feeling sad, angry, and anxious at times is part of being human. Emotional well-being involves expressing our emotions in a way that respects everyone. Bottling up our feelings doesn't respect our own experiences, just as lashing out because we feel angry may not respect others. Emotional well-being also includes recognizing what influences our emotions, discovering how our emotions affect the way we think or act, taking action when our emotional response isn't helpful, and learning to accept our emotions—even the difficult ones.

Activity: Identify and deal with your moods

Find out what makes you happy, sad, joyful or angry. What calms you down? Learn ways to deal with your moods. Share

joyful news with a friend, and find support when you feel sad. Physical exercise can help you deal with your anger or anxiety. Keep a stack of your favorite funny cartoons, stories, or videos for times when you need to laugh. And don't forget the power of music to lift you up or calm you down.



Take care of your spiritual well-being

Spiritual well-being means getting to know ourselves, discovering our values, and learning to be at peace with who we are. It also involves finding and connecting to something bigger than ourselves and living with purpose. Spirituality can give us meaning and solace, help us overcome challenges, and help us build connections with others. This may mean religion for some, but it doesn't have to—it's really about how we feel on the inside.

Activity: Connect with yourself

Set aside quiet, quality time to be totally alone. Try a breathing exercise: count your breaths from one to four, and then start at one again. Or do something you love to do, like dancing, going to a baseball game, building a bird house, going for a hike, or whatever works for you!



Be yourself.
No one can say
you're doing it
wrong.

Charles M. Schulz

Positive coping strategies are any actions you take to manage and reduce stress in your life, in a way that isn't going to be harmful or detrimental in the long term. People who use positive strategies are not only better able to tackle challenges and bounce back from tough times, but they are also much happier.

Finding the right coping strategies

You will probably find that some strategies work better for you than others in terms of how well they reduce stress and help you manage. It's also worth noting that some strategies will work better or worse depending on the particular event or situation.

To find the best coping strategies for you, list the types of situations that you find difficult to manage. Pick a few ways to reduce stress (listed below). When the stressful situations arise, try out one of your strategies. Keep notes on how it went – things that worked, or didn't. You'll soon work out which strategies work well for you, and which situations favor certain strategies over others. Keeping tabs by writing things down in your WellAware journal will also help you to make using positive coping strategies a habit.

Brandt WellAware communications are intended to provide some resources to all Brandt employees on health and wellness.

If you've got an idea, tip or story on wellness, please send it in to share – it may even make the monthly communication!

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A mega list of coping strategies

- **Turn to someone you trust.** It can be a relief to share your thoughts with someone else, and it can be good to work through problems with the help of another person. Your healthcare provider or provincial tele-health services can provide support as well.
- **Write it all down.** Keeping a notebook handy for you to scribble your thoughts in whenever you feel like it can be a great way of expressing yourself. You may find it helpful to write about what is worrying you, or express yourself in a more creative way.
- **Set aside regular time for yourself.** Even if it's just ten minutes of 'you' time, taking some space for yourself where you turn off your phone, spend time alone, exercise, meditate, or listen to music can really prepare you for tackling stress or challenges.
- **Walk away.** Work out which situations you are likely to get stressed out by. If you feel like you're getting too angry, end the conversation, take some space, and don't resume talking until you are calm and ready.
- **Overcome negative patterns of thinking through self-talk.** Self-talk can help you see things from a more positive perspective and give a huge boost to your confidence.
- **Reduce your load.** Sometimes you just have to accept that you can't do everything. Keep track of your schedule and how you feel each day, and working out your optimal level of activity. You should be busy, entertained, and challenged, without feeling overwhelmed.
- **Consider the big picture.** When you're going through a stressful situation, ask yourself these two questions. 'How important is this?' and 'will it matter in the long run?' If you realise it doesn't, it's probably not worth getting too stressed out by.
- **Learn to forgive.** Move on from hurt, regret and anger. Whether you are angry at yourself or someone else, it doesn't help you to hold on to negative feelings like resentment.
- **Hone your communication skills.** If you know how to communicate a problem well, it will help prevent conflict from escalating, and could help solve the cause of the stress in the first place.
- **Build your optimism.** Optimism involves learning to think positively about the future - even when things go wrong. That's not to say you pretend that everything is fine when it isn't. Instead, it's about looking objectively at a situation, making a conscious decision to focus on the good. It can be hard to do, but if you practice, you're likely to get better.
- **Learn how to set goals.** Start out with every day things like eating breakfast!
- **Relax.** Relaxation is a great way to refocus your thoughts, particularly when things are becoming a bit overwhelming.
- **Build your gratitude.** Take some of your focus away from the negative things, and take 5 minutes each day to identify 3 things which you are thankful about.