

THE ELEMENTS OF Mental Wellness



9 Essential activities
to promote mental wellness

It's all connected

THE ELEMENTS OF

Mental Wellness



How it works:

Just like healthy eating and drinking are fuel for your body, the elements of mental wellness are fuel for your brain.

You are unique and so you might do some activities more than others, and this will change throughout your life. The most important thing is to do something every day.

The great thing is that the elements work together and often when you practice one activity, you are actually doing two, three, or even more elements at the same time.

Doing activities in the nine Elements of Mental Wellness will help you:

- Build your resilience when faced with life's challenges
- Improve your quality of life
- Improve your home, school, workplace environment experience
- Add to your physical health and well being

What is Resilience?

Resilience is like becoming fit...

We become fit little by little. We cannot run a marathon without first being able to walk around the block. Often it's hard to build healthy habits, so we may need the support of a trainer, an exercise buddy, a dog, or a team.

Resilience is the ability to cope and overcome hardships. Little by little we learn coping skills throughout our lives. This is how we gain the inner strength we need to bounce back in times of stress. Often to build resilience we need community, the support of friends, family and relationships – just like fitness is easier with a friend.

Symptoms of mental illness:

- Feeling sad or down with extreme mood changes of highs and lows and possible suicidal thinking
- Confused thinking or reduced ability to concentrate with inability to cope with daily problems or stress
- Excessive fears or worries, or extreme feelings of guilt
- Withdrawal from friends and activities
- Significant tiredness, low energy, or problems sleeping
- Detachment from reality (delusions), paranoia or hallucinations
- Major changes in eating habits and/or problems with alcohol or drug use
- Sex drive changes
- Excessive anger, hostility, or violence

If you are experiencing any of these symptoms please see the back of this brochure for support contacts.

WHAT IS IT?

SLEEP

Refreshing the Mind & Body

When you sleep, your body and mind slow down. This is the best time for it to repair and recharge. The more sleep you can get every night, the better for your health. 8 hours is a great goal for many of us.

WHY DO IT?

During sleep we flush toxins from our brains, memory improves, and we can learn better.

Good sleep is the basis of our daily well-being and our physical and mental development.

EXAMPLES

- Dark, cool, quiet room
- Use sound machine to muffle unwanted noise
- No electronics in the bedroom
- Stress-reducing activities before bed like meditation, journaling, or a hot bath
- Brief naps from time to time
- Sleeping in occasionally



PLAY

The Joy of Experimenting with Life

Physical or mental leisure activities done for amusement make us think, make decisions, and give us a reason to make an effort to win, to be funny, to create, and much more.

The pleasure of play helps us to have a positive mood and balance our emotions.

Play helps us to be creative, to change to meet challenges, and to try new things. Switching from winning to losing while having fun helps us cope with unexpected situations.

- Team sports
- Board games, cards
- Simple games like tag, hide-and-seek, etc.
- Traveling to somewhere new
- Humour - telling jokes or joking around, amusing texting



RELAX

Downtime: Disconnecting for Insight

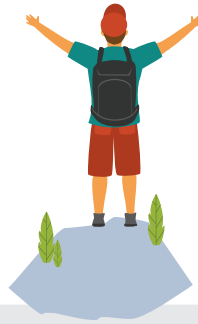
Relaxing is doing something with no goal in mind. Essentially, intentionally having no intention.

Daydream, and let your mind wander.

When we relax and disconnect, our minds are able to “sort” the activities of our busy days.

This allows our minds to integrate and experience insight, helping us to make complex decisions. Find opportunities to disconnect and let your mind wander.

- Listening to music
- Sifting through a magazine
- Sitting in a comfortable chair or in the shadow of a tree
- Laying on a beach
- Riding as a passenger in a car, look out the window instead of your screen



REFLECT

Tuning-In: Looking Inward Intentionally

Thinking deeply and carefully about yourself in a non-judgmental way is how you can reflect.

Take time to look inward, be present in the moment, and develop self acceptance.

The more we practice tuning in to ourselves, the better we will be at recognizing our feelings in the moment and reacting calmly.

Reflection improves self-control which leads to compassion for ourselves and others.

- Yoga
- Spiritual Practices
- Journaling thoughts and feelings regularly
- Exploring nature
- Meditation



CONNECT

The Healing Power of Relationships

Connection happens in a healthy, nurturing relationship between two living beings. This is often a friend or family member, but may also be a loved pet or the natural, living world around us (nature).

We are wired to be social, not isolated.

Connecting to others is a basic human need, much like food, shelter and clothing.

By having healthy relationships our mental wellbeing improves because we help each other and we feel we belong.

- Doing activities with friends (take a class, see a movie, visit a museum)
- Eating meals with family
- Get a pet or volunteer at your local SPCA
- Hiking or spending time in nature



STAY ACTIVE

Movement to Improve our Brain

Physical activity is any form of bodily movement. Even better if you can increase your heart rate and strengthen your muscles.

We are built to move. Exercise increases blood flow which sends nutrients to the brain.

When our bodies and brains are active we feel strong and confident which helps us manage stress.

Make movement a way of life!

- Walking
- Jogging
- Stretching
- Fitness classes
- Weight training
- Dancing
- Raking leaves

FOCUS

Attention Management for Performance

Focus is the opposite of multi-tasking. Learn to pay attention without distraction to a single task, concentrating on finishing and doing something well.

Focus helps us to think clearly. It improves our memory, learning, problem-solving, and decision-making.

Focus prevents feeling overwhelmed and reduces stress, which often comes with multi-tasking.

- Studying
- Work (adult) or homework (child/youth)
- Building a project
- Fine arts (painting, carving, weaving, creative writing)
- Learning to play an instrument

EAT WELL

Feeding your Mind & Body for Mental Wellness

Eating a balanced diet of quality vegetables and fruits, meats, healthy fats, and whole grains is one of the best ways to care for your body and brain.

Avoid sugar, drink water, and try to limit alcohol, and heavily processed foods.

Nutrients feed our brains as well as our bodies. They regulate our hormones, which help to balance mood, emotions and behaviour.

Mental wellness is supported when our minds and bodies get the nutrients they need.

- Healthy foods (following the Canada Food Guide)
- More water, less sugary drinks
- Make healthy snack choices
- Try growing your own food!

CONTRIBUTE

The Importance of Purpose

Purpose can be as simple as having a daily routine with some structure, or as complex as having a goal that you are determined to reach. One way to actively live with purpose is to contribute to your community.

Having a purpose gives us a sense of meaning in our lives. It helps us to set and achieve goals.

Contributing through work, volunteering, or helping others makes us feel responsible, needed, important, and fulfilled. This is key to well-being.

- Participate in a community event
- Actively support your friends, family, neighbours by:
 - Joining a group
 - Mentoring
 - Raising kids
- Support local causes

ADVICE FOR DIFFERENT *Ages & Stages*



CHILDREN

Kids who **eat well** and are **physically active** have healthier minds and bodies. They also **sleep** better, which makes them more able to handle physical and emotional challenges. Did you know children need 9-11 hours of sleep each day?!

Connection and purpose are as important for children as they are for adults. **Connection** starts with the bond between parent and child, and grows to include extended family, friends, neighbours, and the people at school, sports, clubs, etc. **Purpose** can be as simple as being responsible for household chores or getting ready for school.

Did you know that many children are suffering from deep anxiety? **Reflection** helps children to become self-aware and tune in to their feelings, thoughts and actions.

Kids need a good balance between **focus** time and relax time. The ability to focus involves paying attention, remembering and learning to do something well. **Relaxing**, the opposite, is time to unplug and daydream, the opportunity to feel bored. Occasional boredom is good for kids – this is when creativity is born! Decrease screen time as much as you can - we know that **play** is critical to children's development and comes naturally and easily to kids – encourage it!



YOUTH

Mental health issues (like anxiety and depression) in young people have become one of the biggest challenges facing parents today. **Staying active, sleeping 8-10 hours a day, and eating well** can reduce stress, depression, and other mental health issues. We are biologically, cognitively, physically, and spiritually wired to love, be loved, and belong, and this is never truer than in the teenage years. Find ways to create and enhance teenagers' sense of **connection** whenever possible.

It is critical for teens to have **purpose** and meaning in their lives – to know the “why” for their existence. This forms a secure foundation to cope with an overwhelming world. Teens today face distractions unlike generations before with excessive access to social media and screen time. Distractions can make **focusing** on a single task, like studying, very challenging. Support teens in learning to manage their priorities.

Many teens are over-scheduled and feel pressure around school/work, so opportunities to **relax** are essential. They also need moments of silence to **reflect** and discover who they are and what they value – developing their unique identities. For teens, **play** might seem unproductive, but things like art, books, movies, music, and comedy bring joy.



ADULTS & SENIORS

Staying **active** and **eating well** improve brain function and keep muscles strong and agile, helping to prevent falls. Good **sleep** flushes out brain toxins, helping to support memory.

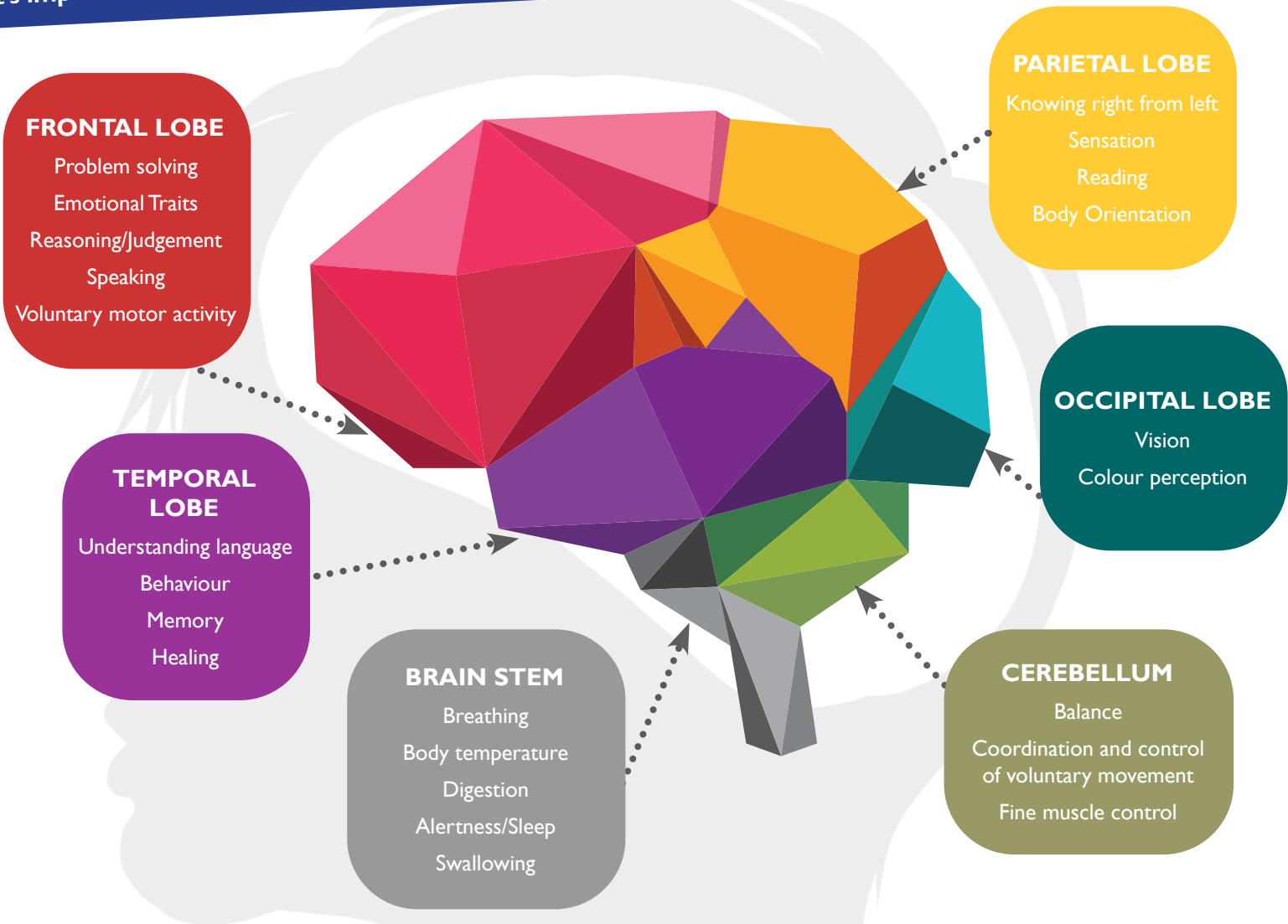
Stress affects every system in our body including our brain. It is important to find enjoyable ways to **relax** and exercise them every day. Many adults think play is just for kids, but play increases dopamine, the feel-good hormone. **Play** keeps our mind sharp and helps us cope with unexpected events. **Reflection** helps us to tune in and look back on a life well-lived. Also to experience acceptance in becoming an elder, and observing the joy of daily life.

As we age, we have unique challenges – physical decline, medical concerns, decreased mobility, and waning independence leading to social isolation. Enjoying people and events are opportunities for **connection, one of the most important of the elements of mental wellness!** Finding ways to express interests that **contribute** to community allows others to benefit from your lifetime of knowledge and wisdom.

Focused activities are important in the retirement years. By learning new things or challenging ourselves in regular activities (try using your non-dominant hand), we make new connections in the brain.

Though the Elements apply to everyone, here are some additional tips relating to specific ages & stages

The different parts of our brain have different jobs but all work together to affect the way we live. It's important to take care of our mental wellness so we can give our brain the best chance to perform well.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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DO YOU NEED HELP?

- Canada Suicide Prevention Service 1-833-456-4566
- BC Crisis Line 1-800-SUICIDE (784-2433)
- BC Mental Health Support Line 310-6789
- BC Seniors Distress Line 604-872-1234
- Fraser Health Crisis Line | 877-820-7444
- Chilliwack Adult Mental Health 604-702-4860
- Chilliwack Youth Health Centre 604-819-4603
- Child and Youth Mental Health 604-702-2311

Chat Line Websites:

youthinbc.com | crisiscentrechat.ca