



WSD HEALTHY MINDS WEEK 2021



Daily Tips for Self-Care for Teens and Adults May 3 to May 7, 2021

May 3

Healthy Minds Tip: Mindfulness

Healthy Minds is a Winnipeg School Division initiative focused on promoting positive mental health and wellness and preventing mental illness. May 3rd to 7th is Healthy Minds Week in WSD. Now in its sixth year, Healthy Minds Week is a WSD week-long event devoted to recognizing and promoting mental health and wellness among students, families, staff, and the community.

With that in mind, we'd like to offer a daily Healthy Minds tip for teens and adults this week. Our first strategy is great for reducing stress and anxiety, helping us cope with emotions, and promoting relaxation. It is **MINDFULNESS**. It means paying attention to the present moment and it can be done anytime, anywhere. Simply sit in a comfortable position, breathe naturally, and focus on the air coming into and out of your body. If other thoughts or feelings come into your mind, just notice them and turn your attention back to your breath. Try doing this daily for a few minutes by making it part of your morning and/or nighttime routine. Apps like Mindshift, Headspace, and Calm in the Storm also offer free guided mindfulness practices. Try one out today!



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Healthy Minds Tip: Sleep

Do you know teens need about 9 to 9.5 hours of sleep each night while adults require 7 to 8? Today's Healthy Minds tip is about **SLEEP**. Getting a good night's sleep supports our brain functioning, mood, and body. It is as important for our well-being as eating healthy and drinking water but many individuals are not getting what they need. What can we do to improve our sleep?

- 1) **Maintain a regular sleep schedule.** Go to bed and wake up at about the same time each day, coming as close as you can on weekends. A consistent sleep schedule will help you feel less tired because it allows your body to get in sync with its natural patterns. You will find that it's easier to fall asleep at bedtime with this type of routine.
- 2) **Keep your sleep space cool, quiet, and dark.** Consider using blackout curtains or even garbage bags to cover windows at bedtime. Your body uses sunlight and darkness signals to know when it's time to sleep and wake. If you are in a noisy environment, a white-noise app may be helpful to drown out bothersome sounds.
- 3) **Let in bright light in the morning.** Open the curtains, shades, or blinds or get up and go outside for awhile. This signals to your body that it is daytime.
- 4) **Create a bedtime routine.** If you do the same few things each night before getting into bed, your body learns to associate those things with getting ready for sleep. Try to do some calming activities as part of your routine like deep breathing, mindfulness, or reading.
- 5) **Avoid caffeine.** Stay away from food and drinks with caffeine in the afternoon/evening like coffee, tea, soda, energy drinks, and chocolate.
- 6) **Turn off electronics.** Stop using screens like phones, TV, and tablets about an hour before bed because the screen's lights can make it harder to fall asleep. Keep your phone out of your bedroom so that your sleep isn't disturbed by notifications.
- 7) **Limit naps.** If you do need to take a nap, only sleep for 30 minutes or less and not too late in the day so that you are still tired at bedtime.
- 8) **Exercise regularly.** Getting 20 or 30 minutes of light physical activity daily helps our bodies to feel tired at night.



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Healthy Minds Tip: Connection

Connection is a basic human need like eating, drinking water, and sleeping. Today's Healthy Minds tip is about **CONNECTION**. Connecting, sharing our thoughts and feelings, and helping others all support our well-being. It is especially important to continue to connect with others given our current circumstances. In this time of physical distancing, we need to work a little harder to connect with others. Try calling a friend or setting up a virtual meeting to chat with a group of friends or extended family members. There are several free platforms available for this such as Google Meetings, Zoom, and Hangouts. Take a break from social media and truly connect with someone else by having a conversation.

Helping others is another great way to connect. Research indicates that doing things for others increases our happiness, health, and sense of well-being. There are countless simple ways to help others at home and in the community. Try doing a random act of kindness for someone else. Help an elderly neighbour with spring clean-up. Offer to make dinner for your family. Clean out your closet and donate clothing you no longer use. Send a quick note to someone to say thanks or tell them how important they are to you. Volunteer. Smile and be friendly. All of these small acts increase our connections, help you to feel happy, and make the world a better place.



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Healthy Minds Tip: Gratitude

It's Thankful Thursday! Today's Healthy Minds tip is **GRATITUDE**. Did you know that gratitude has several health benefits? Studies show that gratitude can increase our happiness, reduce feelings of depression, enhance empathy, improve self-esteem, and even help us sleep better. Here are some ideas to help you express gratitude:

- 1) Start a gratitude journal. Try to write down a couple of things that you're grateful for everyday.
- 2) Go on a walk and notice things in nature that you're grateful for.
- 3) Write a thank you note to someone in your life.
- 4) Create a gratitude board. Use post-it notes to write one thing you're grateful for each day and post them on a wall at home. Consider doing this as a family.
- 5) Go a whole day without complaining. Instead, focus on the things that you're thankful for in each situation.
- 6) Create a gratitude jar. Decorate the jar however you like. Each day, write at least one thing you are grateful for on a slip of paper and put it in your jar.
- 7) Take pictures of things you are grateful for. Create a virtual album of what makes you feel thankful.
- 8) Create a gratitude tree. Start by drawing a tree trunk and then cutting out several leaves that are large enough for you to write on. Write something you are grateful for on each leaf and attach to the tree trunk. You could even find a branch outside and attach your grateful leaves to it with string.
- 9) Use gratitude prompts such as I'm grateful for three things I see..., I'm grateful for three things I hear..., I'm grateful for these three friends..., I'm grateful for these three family members..., I'm grateful for these three teachers..., I'm grateful for three books I've read..., I'm grateful for these three experiences in my life, etc.
- 10) Find a rock that is unique or special in some way. Carry the rock with you in your pocket or place it in a spot at home that you will see. Whenever you touch or see the rock, spend a moment thinking of something you are grateful for.



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Healthy Minds Tip: Creative Expression

Our final Healthy Minds tip is **CREATIVE EXPRESSION**. When was the last time you did something creative? Did you know that being creative can help reduce stress and anxiety, increase positive emotions, boost the immune system, improve concentration, and help us feel happier? There are so many different ways to be creative like building something, cooking, baking, drawing, photography, music, singing, dancing, painting, colouring, or writing. And, you don't need to be perfect! Simply immerse yourself in creativity in whatever way makes sense for you. Have fun and improve your health at the same time. Try something creative today!