

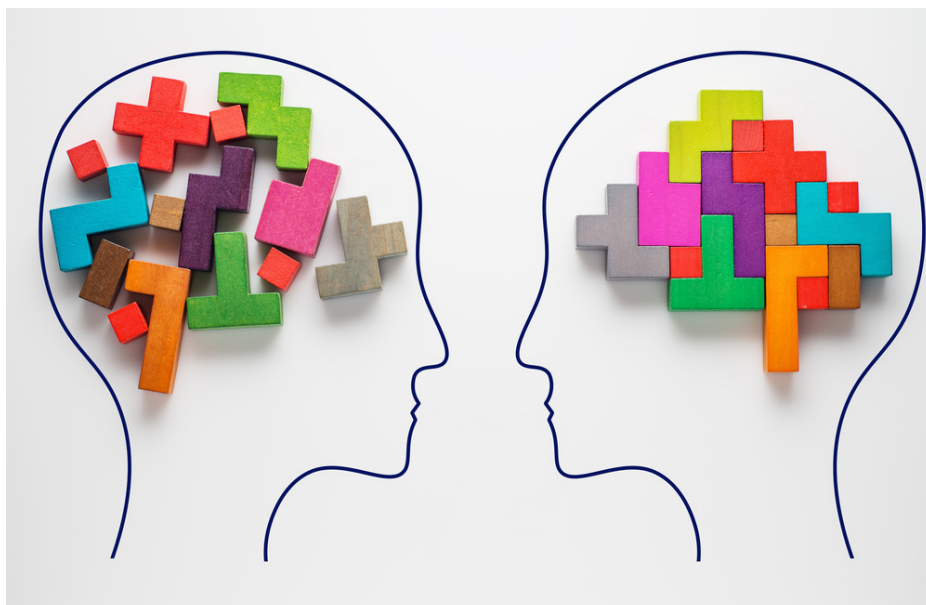
Treat your psychological health

Research from several studies indicates depression and anxiety were the most prevalent mental health conditions that affected employees in the workplace. Every week, 500,000 people will not go to work due to mental illness, according to the Mental Health Commission of Canada.

The situation deserves attention because many of us don't take stock in our emotional or mental well-being after we have gone through a rough patch. For example, if someone twists their ankle, immediate action takes place. The foot is elevated, an ice pack is found and the doctor is called.

But what happens when your brain gets twisted up after a reorganization takes place at work, or if some of your co-workers were laid off?

It's time to pay attention to our psychological health. Guy Winch, a clinical psychologist and author of Emotional First Aid suggests



to adopt the habit of “treating” common psychological “injuries” when you sustain them. Here's how:

Protect your self esteem. Whenever self-critical thoughts pop into your head, consider what you would say to a close friend who expressed similar feelings. Then address those exact thoughts to yourself. Practicing self-compassion and allowing your self-esteem to recover will give a big boost to

Take control after a failure. Make a list of all the factors that are in your control such as effort, preparation,

and planning, and give thought to how you can improve your execution of each of them. Focusing on variables that are in your control will balance out defeatist thoughts.

Find meaning after a loss.

Regardless of how painful or traumatic the loss, one aspect has been found to be extremely important for emotional recovery — our ability to find meaning in the events. Once you've begun to heal, think about possible ways in which you might derive some good from the situation.

Inside this edition

- Ways to calm your mind
- * Trouble losing weight?
- * Thinking about trying CBD?
- * Folate and folic acid
- * Controlling your blood sugar levels
- * Communication and relationships

- Exercise and mental health
- Tips for dealing with cold sores
- Healthier eating tips
- Spices to help fight inflammation
- Energy Zone: Carrots



Smart Workplace

health and safety communications partners



Trouble losing weight? This might be why...

We used to think that body weight was only determined by how much you eat, how many calories you burn while working out, and living. But while it's true that these factors matter, this equation is an overly simplistic understanding of the factors that influence body weight.

We all know somebody who can eat whatever they want and never exercise while still maintaining a lower bodyweight. We likely know at least one other person who diets and exercises regularly, but for some reason is still defending a higher body weight.

We need to look beyond the simple equation of calories in and calories out, according to weightlossoptions.ca. There are many biological and psychological factors involved in maintaining a healthy weight. Some of these can be changed and others cannot, so understanding the different factors can go a long way towards helping you successfully manage your weight.

Obesity is a medically recognized

chronic disease that is difficult to treat and requires a long-term treatment plan that extends beyond simple willpower. Lifestyle changes are important, but prescription medication can also help and a health-care team to surround the patient is critical.

Social, environmental, and cultural factors play a role. For example, the increasing number of food-related online apps and fast-food restaurants in our neighbourhoods make unhealthy foods easily accessible and available at a relatively low cost.

Behavioural factors are also important. These include our dietary habits, our understanding of nutrition, our levels of activity, mood, and other emotional factors. Sleep patterns, coping strategies, time, and stress management all play a role in weight control as well.

If you're having trouble losing weight, speak to a medical professional. You can also find more information at weightlossoptions.ca.

Tips to calm your mind

Sometimes situations can overwhelm us and even if we don't want to keep thinking about it, we do. Our thoughts keeps racing and racing, until we have thought of every bad scenario possible. There does not seem to be any escape. Can we get out of this vicious cycle?

According to the expert panel at Psychology Today repressing anxious thoughts won't work; they will just come back, sometimes with more intensity. But there are more effective techniques you can borrow from mindfulness-based stress reduction and cognitive-behavioural therapies:



1. Attempt cognitive distancing

We have been hearing about social distancing strategies, why not try cognitive distancing? Try to see your anxious thoughts as guesses, not as facts. Your mind is trying to protect you by predicting what could happen—but just because something could happen doesn't mean it will. Look at objective evidence: How likely is it that the negative outcome will actually happen? Is there anything good that might happen instead?

2. Practice mindfulness

Practice observing your thoughts, rather than reacting automatically to them. Think of your thoughts as clouds floating by. Which draw you in and which make you want to run away? Is there a way you can untangle yourself and just observe your thoughts, rather than reacting?

3. Get up and get going

Worrying over an issue without creating a solution will not help you solve the problem. It may, in fact, make you less likely to act by feeding your anxiety. When your mind is stuck in a loop, you can interrupt it by getting up and moving around or doing a different task or activity. When you sit back down, you should have a different perspective.



Publisher & CEO: Stefan Dreesen

Editor: Kate Van Hoof-Peeren

H&S Communication Specialists:

Alan Haycroft, Liz Slobodin,
Kevin Harvey

TOLL FREE: 1-888-655-4800

Mailing Address: 2010 Winston Park Drive, Suite 200,
Oakville, ON L6H 5R7

www.smartworkplace.ca | info@smartworkplace.ca

The information presented in Wellness Zone has been compiled from sources believed to be reliable. However, it cannot be assumed that all acceptable measures are contained in this article nor that additional measures may not be required under particular or exceptional circumstances, or your own company procedures, or by federal, state/provincial and local law.

Application of this information to a specific worksite should be reviewed by a wellness professional. Anyone making use of the information set forth herein does so at his/her own risk and assumes any and all liability arising therefrom. Specific medical advice should be obtained through consultation with a physician or other trained health care practitioner. Wellness Zone is published monthly by Smart Workplace Inc. www.smartworkplace.ca. All rights reserved. © 2023. No part of this publication is to be copied without permission from the publisher.



Thinking about taking CBD?

Cannabidiol, often referred to as CBD, is a compound derived from marijuana. It's also known as "medical cannabis." CBD was effectively legalized in Canada in 2001 for medical use. It was for two types of patients, those requiring end-of-life care and patients suffering from debilitating medical conditions. Since 2018, under the new Cannabis Act, CBD oil has been completely legal in Canada.

Scientists around the world are still conducting research into the benefits of CBD and how it affects the mind and body, but numerous studies have already reached positive conclusions. For example, a study in the Brazilian Journal of Psychiatry produced evidence of CBD's ability to reduce anxiety and depression. The World Health Organization has published a report finding no evidence of health-related problems or dependence potential.

The following are some of the reasons consumers are taking CBD.

1) Health benefits

CBD's anti-inflammatory properties mean it can be used to address a range of illnesses and reduce the symptoms of aging. Research to understand why CBD has a positive impact on general health is ongoing, but it's believed to be due to its integration with the body's internal processing system, the endocannabinoid system. Although medical evidence is unclear, millions of people take some form of CBD and believe it improves their quality of life.

2) It can relieve pain

Treating pain is a top priority for healthcare professionals. Researchers are continually looking for effective, non-addictive alternatives to opioids. Evidence that medical cannabis can inhibit the release of neurotransmitters from nerve endings, which can reduce perceived pain levels, is encouraging. Perception of pain varies between individuals due to previous experience, medical conditions, and stress levels, so CBD won't work for everyone.

3) It can relieve stress

CBD shows promise for reducing stress and anxiety. A 2015 study published by the National Institutes of Health examined how CBD interacts with receptors in the brain that regulate fear and anxiety-related symptoms. Unlike many other drugs used to treat stress-related disorders, medical cannabis is non-addictive. However, there can be side effects, including drowsiness and decreased appetite.

4) It can control nausea

Emerging research has provided positive evidence that taking CBD can provide relief from nausea and vomiting. This can be particularly useful for cancer sufferers receiving chemotherapy. A 2016 study carried out on human subjects by the National Institutes of Health found that medicines containing CBD reduced feelings of nausea. Animal research indicates that CBD's interaction with the hormone serotonin provides relief.

5) It can ease cancer symptoms

Some cancer sufferers have used cannabis illegally for decades. Now with the availability of legal products, CBD has become a more mainstream option for those with cancer. There are no conclusive results from clinical trials, but physicians around the world are now recommending it to some patients. Studies on mice have produced encouraging results indicating that CBD can inhibit the production of cancer cells. Currently, CBD should be regarded as a complementary medicine to ease symptoms for cancer patients rather than a potential cure.

The availability of CBD in the form of capsules, chewable gummies, and tinctures means it's easy to experiment with dosages. It's recommended that you start with low concentration and slowly increase if you don't feel any benefits. Seek medical advice first if you have medical conditions or are taking prescribed drugs.

The difference between folate and folic acid

Folate and folic acid are different forms of vitamin B9. While there's a distinct difference between the two, their names are often used interchangeably.

Vitamin B9 is an essential nutrient that naturally occurs as folate. According to Healthline.com it serves many important functions in your body. Vitamin B9 deficiency can lead to anaemia and might increase your risk of heart disease. It's also important during early pregnancy for a developing baby. Signs of deficiency include tiredness, weakness, shortness of breath, heart palpitations, and difficulty concentrating. Supplementing with vitamin B9 is common. Fortifying food with this nutrient is mandatory in many countries, including Canada.

Folate is the naturally occurring form of vitamin B9. Before entering your bloodstream, your digestive system converts it to the biologically active form of vitamin B9.

Folic acid is a synthetic form of vitamin B9. Folic acid is commonly used to treat or prevent folate deficiency anaemia or to help a baby's brain, skull and spinal cord develop properly in pregnancy, to avoid development problems (called neural tube defects) such as spina bifida.

It's best to get vitamin B9 from whole foods such as asparagus, avocados, Brussels sprouts and leafy greens like spinach and lettuce.

However, for some people, especially for someone who is pregnant, supplements are an easy way to ensure adequate vitamin B9 intake. You may also need higher doses of folic acid if you:

- Have kidney disease and are on dialysis.
- Have sickle cell disease.
- Have liver disease.
- Take medications to treat epilepsy, type 2 diabetes, lupus, psoriasis, rheumatoid arthritis, asthma, or inflammatory bowel disease.

Talk with your health care provider about taking supplements like folic acid. Be informed before you start.



70-100
Normal

101-125
Risk

126+
Diabetes

Six ways to lower your blood sugar levels

Type 2 diabetes has become a growing problem in the North America, as well as around the world, driven by diets that suit a fast-paced lifestyle but don't provide the best nutrition to fuel the human body. Maintaining healthy blood sugar levels is key to preventing many diseases. If you are concerned about rising blood glucose levels, here are a few tips for keeping them under control, so you can avoid diabetes medications or prevent the need for increasing your dosage.

Make Your Diet Healthier

Changing your diet can help to lower high glucose levels and prevent the onset of metabolic syndrome that leads to type 2 diabetes. A "clean" diet focusing on fresh fruits and vegetables, legumes, unsaturated fats, and fewer carbohydrates can help maintain healthy blood sugar levels. Avoiding processed foods should be a part of your effort to improve your diet to control your blood glucose levels.

Start a Regular Exercise Routine

Exercise not only helps lower your body's blood glucose levels, but it also helps to reduce insulin resistance that prevents your body from utilizing insulin efficiently, which can often lead to type 2 diabetes. At least 30 minutes of exercise five times per week can help you manage your blood sugar, so you can avoid serious damage to blood vessels caused by high glucose levels in the body. Nearly any exercise will do, from simple walking to more vigorous cardio routines, so if you want to reduce blood sugar levels, get moving and keep your body moving on a regular basis.

Lose Weight

Carrying excess weight causes insulin resistance in the body, which is associated with high blood glucose levels. Losing that extra weight can help to increase sensitivity to insulin, lower blood glucose levels, and manage or even eliminate type 2 diabetes. Maintaining a healthy diet and increasing your exercise also help you to manage weight and lower blood sugar.

Add More Fiber to Your Diet

Medical experts note that our modern diet does not provide sufficient fiber to maintain good health. Fiber is a carbohydrate found in vegetables, whole grains, legumes, and fruits. Not only does fiber help to keep your gastrointestinal system functioning well, but it also slows digestion and the absorption of glucose. Fiber can reduce cholesterol levels, support heart function, and reduce your risk for some types of cancers. By adding more fiber like oats, berries, nuts, avocado, and beans to your meals, you can reduce blood glucose levels.

Eat More Garlic

A 2014 review of studies on garlic consumption by Bayan, Koulivand, and Gorji confirmed that garlic can help to reduce blood sugar levels, lower cholesterol, and improve heart function. Adding raw garlic to salads, soups, and main dishes will provide additional support for blood sugar control and other health goals. If too much garlic causes intestinal distress, you can choose garlic supplements to use on a daily basis.

Try a Probiotic

Science is providing new evidence backing up the importance of a healthy intestinal microbiome to overall health. This is also true for high blood sugar levels. Good gut bacteria produce compounds called "butyrates," which help to support good bacteria in the intestines. These compounds help to improve insulin sensitivity and also support good immune system function. Spore-based compounds are the most desirable type of probiotic for helping to manage blood glucose, so add a supplement to your daily regimen to help manage or even prevent type 2 diabetes.

Managing blood sugar levels is critical to your overall health and can help prevent serious medical issues, such as kidney disease, blindness, and heart disease. Talk to your doctor about ways you can reduce your blood glucose levels and whether you need to take additional medication to control your type 2 diabetes.

Ways to improve communication in a romantic relationship

Communication is one of the most crucial components of any successful romantic relationship. For many people, it's easy enough to say you should communicate better than to explain how to do it. Here are a few ways to try:

Communication is a two-way thing

When communicating with your partner, do you use words like "I" often? If what you say to your partner is just about you, that's not a proper conversation. Instead, you need to use words like "we" and "you" more to show your partner that they and you as a unit are more important than just you as one person.

Just as relationships are about both parties involved -- they are a partnership -- so are conversations. There needs to be a steady and consistent back and forth. If you feel your partner dominates conversations and you have little to no chance to get your point or feelings across, you should address this issue.

Avoid trying to read your partner's mind

While it's true that sometimes you know what the other person is feeling by looking at their facial and body expressions, it's not the basis for excellent communication and productive relationships. Rather than trying to guess or imagine what your significant other is feeling or thinking, it's better to ask them.

If you are holding back and not sharing with your partner, you should not expect them to be able to read your mind. You need to realize that if they ask you lots of questions about issues you are having, it's because they care and are trying to work out how to improve things.

Look out for non-verbal cues

Humans give non-verbal cues about our feelings, even if they say something contrary. For instance, if your partner comes home from work and says that their day was okay, but you can tell they are angry, upset, or irritated about something, they may be holding back because they are not ready to communicate what's up. It may even be that they don't know how to express it.

Remember that how we say things is just as important as what we say. It can take a lot of time and practice but try looking at your partner's body language and hands and listen carefully to the tone of their voice. They may give away more than you think, even if they do not explain their thoughts.



The connection between exercise and mental health

Many who struggle with poor mental health are encouraged to exercise more frequently. But why is this? And does it actually work?

Mental health problems, regardless of their forms, are on the rise globally. WHO (the World Health Organization) reported that in 2019, close to 15% of the world was living with a form of mental disorder, and anxiety and depression were the leading disorders. Many researchers have put this down to the increased use of social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat, which encourage addictive behaviors, increase screen time, and promote damaging images that can cause self-esteem issues. However, others have placed the blame on wider socioeconomic problems. As the global economy depreciates, so does the mental health of the global population. Jobs, rent, and cost of living all directly impact quality of life, which is why mental health problems have become more prominent across all generations and ages.

As a result of this, mental health services are stretched thin, so it's important to understand how people can help themselves in times of need.

How Can Exercise Help Your Mental Health?

The connection between exercise and mental health has been widely researched over the last decade. Not only do active people experience physical benefits such as better organ function and a decreased chance of developing diabetes and heart problems, but they also receive impactful benefits to their mental health.

Exercising releases endorphins, which boost your mood and ease symptoms of depression and anxiety. Participating in physical activity can help with concentration, fatigue, and motivation and may leave you less frustrated or sad.

In addition, exercise can help us sleep better, allowing the body to fall into a deeper and longer sleep. According to a study by Columbia University in 2022, having trouble sleeping has been found to cause or worsen mental health issues significantly, so helping your body sleep better and get the rest it needs has many more benefits than you might think.

What Exercise Should I Be Doing?

There's no specific exercise routine that you should adopt if you're struggling mentally. Some studies suggest that symptoms of mental health issues ease with exercises that raise the heart rate significantly, but just simply going for a walk may give you the same benefits.

The form of exercise is completely up to you -- listen to your body, understand what exercises suit you, and prioritize the exercises you enjoy.

Research has shown that being outside in nature can positively affect your mental health, too. So, exercising outside, even if it's only a short walk in a park, can have positive effects.

Things to Consider

If you're taking medication for a mental illness or other physical ailments, consult your doctor to discuss exercising options. Some medications may hinder your ability to exercise. For example, beta-blockers will make your heart work harder while exercising. This can cause unnecessary strain and potential cardiac problems.

If you suffer from an eating disorder, certain workouts, particularly intense cardio, can be damaging depending on your condition.

Many people suffering from anorexia over-exercise, meaning they use exercise for its weight-loss 'benefits'. Using exercise in this way can negatively affect the way you perceive your body, exercise, and food, which can have damaging and long-term impacts on your mental health.

Final Thoughts

The connection between mental health and exercise is generally positive. Exercising for up to an hour once or twice a week can reduce symptoms of anxiety, depression, and insomnia. Exercising outside is the perfect way of balancing mindfulness with physical activity. You should feel more relaxed and happier after implementing exercise into your weekly routines.

Tips for dealing with cold sores

For the one in five Canadians who suffer from cold sores annually, quality of life can be significantly affected. An outbreak usually means ruined vacation photos, kiss-less anniversaries, and constant pain.

If you're living with cold sores, here are some tips for your lips:



Prevent outbreaks before they start

- Get plenty of rest and avoid triggers that react with the virus such as UV light, allergies, emotional stress and dry lips.
- Use sun protection on the lips and surrounding skin before sun or wind exposure.
- Be aware of unpreventable triggers (e.g.) menstruation, fever, illness, injury and trauma.

How to deal

- Don't squeeze, pinch, bite or pick at blisters.
- Rinse your mouth often with mouthwash or salt water (1 teaspoon per 500mL of water) to help soothe the sore.
- Avoid acidic foods such as pickles, tomatoes, citrus foods and salty snacks that may sting.
- Avoid direct contact with other persons during the period when the blisters are developing.

Managing the virus and outbreaks

- While there is no cure for cold sores, there are numerous options available in Canada such as topical and oral treatments (prescription-based and over-the-counter), and home remedies such as applying ice or lemon balm. Talk with a medical professional about options.

Lifestyle tips for healthier eating

Today's on-the-go lifestyles and the abundance of tasty, tempting fast food options can make sticking to healthy eating goals challenging. But maintaining a nutritious and appetizing diet can be easier than you think.

The College of Family Physicians of Canada's Prevention in Hand website offers one-stop-shopping for current information from numerous healthcare organizations to support your individual wellness, healthy lifestyles and the prevention of chronic diseases. Here is what some of their resources say about helping you and your family make good nutrition choices:

Make a plan. Take a few minutes on the weekend to plan out healthy meals and snacks for the upcoming week, including brown bag lunches for work and school. Having the dishes planned and ingredients purchased will encourage you to follow through on smarter eating and avoid reaching for the vending machine.

Find friendly fats. It's a myth that all types of fat are bad for your body. Healthy fats and oils help us absorb nutrients and add flavour to foods. Opt for natural fats from avocados, nuts and seeds, and oils like olive, coconut and flaxseed.

Make it a ritual. Research shows that eating together as a family can help you make better food choices, so try to enjoy at least one meal together every day. If varying work and school schedules prevent you from eating together, try breakfast together instead of the traditional family dinners. An omelet bar loaded with veggies is a fun and nutritious way to start your day.

Eat the rainbow. Enjoying a variety of fruits and vegetables with all the colours of the rainbow ensures you receive lots of vitamins, nutrients, fibre and antioxidants. Aim for at least one dark green and one orange piece of produce every day.

energy zone

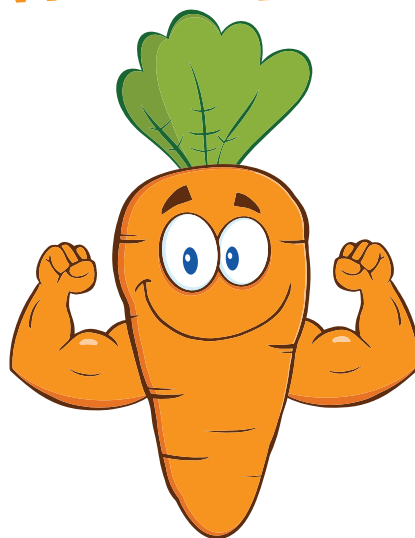
Thanks to the number of essential vitamins, minerals and antioxidants packed into each carrot, many experts have elevated this humble veggie to "superfood" status. Orange carrots get their bright colour from beta-carotene, an antioxidant that is converted to vitamin A in the body. Vitamin A contributes to eye and vision health. In fact, a 100-gram serving of carrots provides more than 100 per cent of the recommended daily intake of vitamin A.

Here are some other benefits of this superfood:

Carrots love your heart. The amount of fibre in a carrot (approximately 2g in a medium carrot) may help decrease blood pressure by reducing the amount of cholesterol found in the blood. Research also shows that drinking carrot juice may help promote heart health by increasing total antioxidants and decreasing lipid peroxidation.

Carrots have a low glycemic index. While carrots taste sweet and contain some sugar and carbohydrates, they are

What's up doc?



quite low on the glycemic index. Those with glycemic disorders can likely safely eat carrots without worrying about a sugar spike after eating them.

Carrots may help support bone health. The mix of vitamin K1, vitamin A and potassium in carrots can help support bone mass for excellent bone health.

Spices to help fight inflammation

(NC) Herbs and spices have been used for culinary and medicinal purposes for centuries. These four tasty seasonings enhance the flavour and aroma of a variety of foods, but did you know that they may also help reduce inflammation associated with health conditions such as arthritis?

Ginger

Ginger has been used as folk medicine for centuries. Gingerol is the main anti-inflammatory compound in ginger and functions similarly to COX-2 inhibitors, which are drugs used to treat joint pain and inflammation. Some studies have linked ginger to decreased joint pain and disability in people with osteoarthritis.

Ginger's unmistakable sharp and aromatic flavour can elevate many dishes including stews, rice, fruit sauces, muffins and more. Add zing to smoothies by incorporating a small piece of ginger.

Cinnamon

Cinnamon contains chemical compounds known as cinnamaldehyde and cinnamic acid. These compounds have been associated with reducing joint pain. Research has shown some promising results with cinnamon supplements in reducing inflammation and another condition called oxidative stress, which can lead to cell tissue breakdown and premature aging.

Cinnamon's sweetly spicy flavour is versatile and can be added to both sweet and savoury dishes. Try adding it to meat rubs or sprinkling it on your coffee.

Turmeric

Best known for its vibrant, rich yellow colour, turmeric is a spice commonly used in Indian cuisine. It also has a long history of being used as medicine in Chinese and Indian cultures. Turmeric contains a compound known as curcumin which is associated with lowering inflammation and easing osteoarthritis pain. Despite some promising early results, more research is needed to determine the safety and effectiveness of taking curcumin supplements.