



Love yourself this February 14



Valentine's Day can bring out the best and worst in people. Instead of celebrating the love we have in our lives be it from a partner, your family or even your pet, some of us focus on things we don't have which can lead to angst, blame, and disappointment. Taking a mindful approach will help you to avoid the pitfalls of needless drama and stress on Valentine's Day.

Here are a few examples from insighttimer.com:

1. Focus on gratitude

Instead of focusing on lack or what's missing, guide your awareness towards the abundance of what you already have in your life, even the basics like food, water, shelter, and air to breathe.

Engaging in grateful thoughts, feelings, and actions can increase your sense of happiness, meaningfulness, and connectedness in life. Gratitude also makes you less susceptible to the trap of scarcity thinking and negative self-talk by regulating your nervous system and putting you in a more relaxed, positive, and resourceful state of mind.

2. Redefine the way you measure your worth

While self-esteem and confidence are related to external factors such as achievements, self-worth is based on who you are as a person.

It's possible to have high self-esteem and low self-worth. Low self-worth can make you feel

ashamed or bad about yourself, and unworthy of loving yourself. To cultivate a healthy and stable sense of worth, bring mindful awareness to the idea that your worth isn't based on your appearance, possessions, or relationship status. Focus on who you are as a person, the values you stand for, and why. This awareness will help you to develop self-love, compassion, and acceptance, which in turn, will empower your self-worth.

3. Cultivate healing through mindful bodily awareness

Unresolved trauma often lives in the body and is activated when we feel triggered. If you notice that you're feeling triggered or having a stress or trauma response, guide your awareness to the breath. Set a timer and focus on breathing slowly into the belly for 5-10 minutes. This breathing practice will interrupt the stress response in your brain and will help you to feel more grounded and resourced. Pay attention to your body's signals and needs throughout the day. Commit to doing things that help you to feel embodied, stable, and safe. Over time, this practice of mindful grounding and breathing will help you to cultivate healing and a feeling of wholeness.

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Easy ways to add more grains to your plate

(NC) Grains are an important part of any healthy diet. Packed with essential nutrients that can be hard to get from other food groups, like iron, fibre and B vitamins, they also help reduce blood cholesterol, may lower the risk of heart disease and keep you fuller longer. Yet many of us still aren't consuming enough grains.

Here are some quick tips and ideas to add more grains to your diet:

Check your plate. An excellent rule of thumb is to divide up your plate to make sure you're getting the right amounts of everything you need to stay healthy. Fill up half with fruits and vegetables, a quarter with lean proteins and a quarter with grains.

Try a new recipe. The cold weather is a great excuse to experiment in the kitchen

with a new comforting recipe for a stew, soup or chili. Add foods like barley, whole wheat pasta, wheat berries, or brown or wild rice for a filling and nutritious meal. Look online or through your favourite magazines for inspiration that's high in grains.

Boost your snacking. Instead of reaching for the vending machine at work, pack some appetizing snacks at home that will satisfy your sweet or salty cravings. Try mixing oats and soy butter in an energy ball or grabbing a couple handfuls of trail mix. Mixing your favourite cereal with pretzels, raisins and nuts satisfies the sweet and salty. You can also dip veggies, pretzels or whole wheat crackers in hummus.

Reset your healthier side with powerful food pairings

Whether you're a foodie or not, you're probably familiar with the culinary concept of pairing certain foods and drinks, such as milk and cookies, or tomato soup and grilled cheese. But did you know there is more to food pairings than just flavour?

The way we combine foods can also have additional health benefits for our bodies, too. According to dietitians, certain staple foods can be paired to maximize their health benefits.

Here are some foods that dietitians say are better together:

Peanut butter sandwich and orange juice.

A peanut butter sandwich on its own is great for protein, healthy fats and iron, but the type of iron found in peanut butter is not easily absorbed in our body. Vitamin C can help. When paired with a peanut butter sandwich, the vitamin C in orange juice helps our bodies better absorb iron from peanut butter and other plant-based foods like beans, lentils, tofu, leafy green veggies and grains.

Beans and rice. This is a staple and nutritious meal around the world. Proteins are made up of building blocks called amino acids. Beans contain the amino acids that rice is missing, and rice contains the amino acids that beans are missing. So, when paired together, beans and rice make up a complete protein that helps build muscle.

Salmon and edamame beans. This is a meal that can provide a nutrient boost. Salmon is one of the few foods that naturally contain vitamin D. Edamame beans contain calcium. When enjoyed together, the vitamin D from salmon increases calcium absorption from the edamame beans. As a bonus, the omega-3 fats in salmon keep your brain and heart healthy.

Tomatoes and olive oil. Those juicy red tomatoes are a great source of lycopene, which is a type of antioxidant possibly linked to a lower chance of heart disease and prostate cancer. Research shows that lycopene is better absorbed in our bodies when tomatoes are eaten with a healthy fat such as olive oil. Consider pairing tomatoes with olive oil on pizza or in a homemade pasta sauce.



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How sleep affects your biological clock

Our biological clock, also known as our circadian rhythm, is a natural, internal process that regulates the sleep-wake cycle of our body. It's also sometimes known as our internal clock or body clock.

A biological clock can be viewed as the interplay between hormones and light, controlled by the suprachiasmatic nucleus (SCN) in the brain. The SCN is found in the hypothalamus.

The SCN receives information from our eyes about the amount of light in our environment and uses this information to regulate our body's functions, including the sleep-wake cycle. This is why our body naturally feels more awake during the day when there is more light and more tired at night when it's dark.

Our body's internal clock is important in controlling when we sleep and wake up. The biological clock is affected by many factors, some of which include traveling across time zones or working night shifts. When we travel to a different time zone, our biological clock is still synced to our home time zone, causing us to feel jet lagged.

Similarly, working night shifts can disrupt our biological clock, as our body is naturally programmed to sleep at night and be awake during the day.

This can lead to sleep disturbances and difficulty adjusting to a new sleep-wake schedule.

Consistency is key when optimizing sleep with your biological clock. Here are a few ways in which you can work with your internal clock to optimize your sleep:

Get morning sun

In addition to establishing a consistent sleep schedule, getting exposure to morning sun can also help optimize our sleep with our biological clock.

When we expose ourselves to natural light in the morning, it helps reset our biological clock and signal to our body that it's time to be awake and alert. This exposure to bright light early in the day can help regulate the production of melatonin, the hormone that helps regulate sleep, and improve our sleep quality. Those who don't get enough sun tend to sleep for longer hours and get a lesser sleep quality.

Establish a consistent sleep schedule

One of the best ways to optimize our sleep with our biological clock is to establish a consistent sleep schedule. This means going to bed and waking up at the same time every day, even on weekends. By doing this, we are training our biological clock to expect sleep at a certain time, making it easier to fall asleep and wake up at the appropriate times.

From wallflowers to warriors

Do you dread dragging yourself to the gym? Does the mere thought of exercise make you want to crawl back into bed? If so, you're not alone. Many people dislike the idea of pumping iron or running endless laps. But what if working up a sweat could secretly transform how you carry yourself in the world?

Physical activity unleashes a surge of self-assurance, helping even the biggest wallflowers blossom into warriors brimming with inner confidence. Breaking a sweat could give your confidence levels the boost you've been missing. Even better, you don't need to be a gym rat logging long hours to reap the benefits.

You've likely heard about those feel-good endorphins that get released when we exercise. But did you know that bathed-in-sweat glow after a solid workout can boost how you feel about yourself overall?

Research shows physical activity helps our bodies produce key hormones that brighten mood and outlook. Whether you opt for a pulse-raising spin class or a mellow lunchtime stroll, expect an endorphin rush to leave you perked up for hours afterwards. Regular workouts also seem to keep anxiety and depression at bay.

Plus, flexing those muscles can sculpt a rock-solid self-esteem. As fitness improves, many people report appreciating their bodies more and focusing less on those nitpicky imperfections. The result? A better body image and confidence that radiates from the inside out.

Here are a few more tips:

Stay realistic

Avoid biting off more than you can chew fitness-wise. Establish manageable workout goals based on your current activity level so you don't get overwhelmed and discouraged. Build gradually rather than expecting major changes overnight. Small progress is still progress!

Find your favourites

Pinpoint activities that feel more fun than tedious. Experiment until you discover a few go-to workouts you genuinely enjoy - maybe it's lively Zumba classes, scenic bike rides, or kickboxing sessions with punching bags. If it doesn't feel like a chore, you're more likely to stick with it.

Buddy up

Ask friends to join your new fitness journey. Having company can motivate you to show up even when you're not feeling gym-ready. An upbeat pal can make boring workouts more entertaining too! Just be sure they're as supportive as they are social.



Build better habits with a dopamine detox

A lot of us have bad habits and addictions that we'd love to kiss goodbye, such as spending too much time on social media or overeating when we're stressed out. Yet, knowing where to start can be overwhelming. Luckily, the science of dopamine and how it affects our daily routines can give us a great jumping-off point to shift from addiction to healthy habits.

Dopamine is a kind of chemical known as a neurotransmitter. Neurotransmitters are the brain's "messengers", and they transfer information needed for biological and mental processing.

Habits that we enjoy can trigger the release of dopamine, which works in the brain to provide pleasure, motivation, and satisfaction. We eventually start craving this dopamine spike that comes with our enjoyable habits.

What's more, over time dopamine not only spikes higher than normal during pleasurable events -- like engaging in a bad habit -- but also drops lower than normal after we get that fix. This can lead to an even stronger craving the next time, which can make it difficult to stop our bad habits even when we consciously know we should.

Unlike conventional detoxification, a dopamine "detox" isn't about removing the chemical from the body altogether since it's a natural part of us.

Instead, detoxing from a dopamine craving involves deciding to stop your

bad habit and engage in healthier activities that can also provide you with some pleasure.

This can help rebalance your dopamine levels so that your cravings for a delicious piece of pie or social media interactions start to subside.

Here are some strategies to help counteract your cravings from the National Institute of Health:

- Any act of self-control that you practice regularly helps, even if it's as simple as sitting up straighter in your chair every time a craving hits or keeping a regular food diary.
- Finding everyday activities that you used to enjoy, and starting to add those back into your day, can help as well. You can also add new, healthier experiences to your daily routines.
- Another strategy is avoiding physical locations that trigger the bad habit. For example, some people who are trying to break an alcohol habit stop going to bars with friends, while other people who emotionally eat only open the fridge at specified mealtimes.
- Breathing exercises may also be beneficial, especially breathing through your nose. This is because nose breathing sends nitric oxide throughout the body. Nitric oxide helps with the release of dopamine.

Treatment of common dental problems

Dental health is critical to your overall well-being, and common dental problems can cause many other health issues.

Since many of these problems can be prevented, it's essential that you talk to your dentist if you experience any of the following symptoms:

1. Tooth decay (cavities)

Tooth decay, also known as cavities, is the destruction of the hard outer layer of your teeth (enamel) due to plaque buildup. The plaque bacteria digest the sugars from our diet and produce acids that erode tooth enamel. Symptoms can include toothache, sensitivity, visible holes, or pain when eating or drinking. Regular brushing, flossing, and dental checkups can help prevent tooth decay.

2. Gum disease (periodontal disease)

Gum disease is an infection of the gums surrounding the teeth. It's primarily caused by poor oral hygiene leading to plaque buildup. Early-stage gum disease (gingivitis) can present symptoms such as red, swollen gums and bleeding during brushing or flossing. If left untreated, it can progress to periodontitis, causing gums to pull away from teeth, creating pockets that harbor infection. The treatment can include deep cleaning, scaling, root planing, and antibiotics. Severe cases may lead to surgery or tooth loss.

3. Tooth erosion

Tooth erosion is the loss of tooth structure due to acid attacking the enamel. Causes include excessive soft drink consumption (high levels of phosphoric and citric acids), fruit drinks (some acids in fruit drinks are more erosive than battery acid), dry mouth, and diet. Symptoms include sensitivity, cracking, and discoloration on the teeth. Treatment depends on the severity of tooth erosion and may include bonding, crowns, veneers, or dental implants.

4. Tooth sensitivity

Tooth sensitivity involves discomfort or pain in the teeth from sweets, cold air, hot drinks, cold drinks, or ice cream. Some people may also experience discomfort when brushing and flossing. It can be due to several reasons, including tooth decay, fractured teeth, worn fillings, gum disease, worn tooth enamel, or exposed tooth root. Treatment involves managing the underlying cause and may include using desensitizing toothpaste or having your dentist apply a protective coating to your teeth.

5. Bad breath (Halitosis)

Bad breath can be embarrassing and may be caused by various factors, including dry mouth, tobacco products, poor dental hygiene, or a medical disorder. Sometimes, halitosis is a sign of gum disease, cavities, oral cancer, or bacteria on the tongue. Treatment involves improved oral hygiene, tongue cleaning, hydration, quitting tobacco, and, if these don't help, a dental or medical evaluation.



Ways to unleash trapped emotions

Emotions can cause physical symptoms, such as muscle tension or pain. When these symptoms are persistent, it may feel as though emotions are trapped in the body.

According to Medical News Today, while the idea of emotions being physically trapped in the body is not proven in research, some people report experiencing a release, or catharsis, when they express difficult or long-held feelings, or when they engage in mind-body therapies, such as yoga.

It is well-established that emotions affect the body as well as the mind. If a person has persistent or unresolved feelings that cause physical symptoms, they may feel as though these emotions are trapped or stuck.

For example, people can feel stress as muscle tension, nervousness as butterflies in the stomach, or heartbreak in their chest.

These emotions may be something a person is aware of, or they could be subconscious, meaning they are outside a person's awareness. If they are subconscious or difficult to manage, they may continue affecting the body.

The exact mechanism behind this is still unclear, but scientists believe it is due to how the brain and nervous system process emotions.

Emotions can cause many sensations in the body. For difficult emotions, this could include:

- Muscle tension or tightness.

- A feeling of heaviness or tiredness.
- A “lump” or choking sensation in the throat aching or pain.
- Nausea or “knots” in the stomach.

Sometimes, releasing or expressing emotions comes easily. For example, if a child falls down, they may cry due to the pain or shock, but then recover.

In other situations, expressing feelings is more difficult. This can be for a variety of reasons. A person may feel shame or guilt about their emotions or what caused them. Alternatively, they might be afraid of their feelings, or simply be unaware of them.

A qualified therapist can help someone work through these difficulties. Some therapists work specifically with body-based approaches, which means they focus on the body as well as the mind.

You can also try:

Meditation: Meditation can help bring awareness to how a person feels, physically or emotionally. A 2022 study of 108 veterans found that a 10-week program of mind-body skills, including meditation, reduced symptoms more effectively than standard treatment.

Exercise: For some people, exercise is a source of catharsis. Some use exercise to “burn off” nervous energy or to express anger in a safe way.

If you have concerns about your mental health, or if you have unexplained physical symptoms, speak with a doctor or therapist for advice.

Colours to help increase your productivity and keep you calm

Your environment has a huge impact on your work performance.

Everything from background noise to how comfortable your chair is and the temperature of your workspace can impact your productivity and focus.

But did you know colours do as well?

A study conducted by the University of Texas found that the difference between office interior colours impacted worker productivity in relation to task performance and accuracy.

Cobaltworkspace.com shares a few best colours for productivity and focus:

1. Yellow for positivity

Think sunshine, smiley faces, and daffodils—yellow is a naturally positive colour. It may evoke memories of your favourite beach vacation or getting outside on a sunny day.

Using yellow accents in your office decor can help channel a positive mindset, which is key for productivity and motivation at work.

2. Green for calm

While you can't always be in nature during your work day, you can bring some into your workspace by incorporating the colour green. Evoking the calm of nature, green is a great colour for feelings of peace and zen—both of which will help you focus on work.

3. Blue for relaxation

A lot of people gravitate towards the colour blue because similar to green and yellow, it's readily present in nature. Blue can create a sense of relaxation—just think of daydreaming while looking at the sky or watching the ocean waves roll in.

One study of university students found that blue increased relaxation and calmness in comparison to other colours while they were studying.

4. Neutrals for focus

If you like a more minimalist aesthetic, this one's for you. Neutral colours—beiges, browns, white, creams—are ideal for deep focus. Because they aren't as stimulating as other colours, you won't be distracted by them. They create a seamless, calm environment for you to do your best work.

What are the first signs of cataracts?



(NC) As we age, our vision changes. Vision may become blurry and faces of loved ones become difficult to see. If you are experiencing these symptoms, you may have cataracts, a natural eye condition that usually forms as we age. If left untreated, cataracts can cause significant vision loss and blindness.

Cataracts affect over 2.5 million Canadians every year, but among patients who have cataracts, only 20 percent had a full understanding of

their condition. They occur when the lens in the eye becomes cloudy from natural proteins that build up over time, leading to clouded vision, light sensitivity and fading of colours.

The only way to repair cataracts is surgery. Modern cataract surgery is a safe procedure where a surgeon replaces the natural clouded lens of the eye with an artificial lens. Nowadays, there is a variety of surgical lens options available to achieve individual vision goals.

If you're considering cataract surgery, you need to have an informed conversation with your surgeon about your vision goals to select the cataract lens replacement that's right for you. Visit your eye care professional to learn more about cataracts, cataract surgery and lens options.

energyzone

Mushrooms



Known as a superfood, powerful for the immune system, mushrooms are on trend but not just for your risotto. Expect to find mushrooms in your coffee or flaked for tasty seasoning.

Mushrooms are a reliable source of:

- B vitamins, which help to provide energy from foods, and form red blood cells.
- Vitamin D, which helps maintain and build strong bones.

- Antioxidants, which help protect cells from damage and inflammation that might lead to chronic diseases.
- Potassium, which helps maintain healthy blood pressure.
- Fiber, which helps feed the friendly bacteria in the digestive system.
- Copper, a mineral that helps form red blood cells and keep bones and nerves healthy.

Stay warm and toasty without breaking the bank

The greatest objective most Canadians have in winter is feeling warm and toasty inside while the wind and snow howl and swirl outside. But what is the best way to keep your home heated without breaking the bank?

Here are a few heating myths debunked to help you find the most efficient way to keep the home hearth cozy:

Ceiling fans are a summer thing

Not true in some cases. Most ceiling fans have a switch on the side that will change the direction they spin from clockwise to counter-clockwise. By spinning counter-clockwise, the fan will force hot air down from where it has risen to, sending heat to more areas in your home.



Consistent heat is better

This is actually not the case. Turning down your thermostat for extended periods is actually a good idea and one that could save you some money. Energy.gov recommends setting your thermostat as low as you are comfortable with during winter months and lowering it further when you're in bed or away from home. This both lowers your home's environmental emissions while also saving you money on your energy bill.

Space Heaters are more effective

Sometimes it can seem like your furnace just isn't quite cutting it and a few space heaters are the perfect solution to cold spots throughout your home. While space heaters are adequate when used safely, they are nowhere near as efficient, and the electricity used to run them is going to end up costing money. Invest in upgrading your home's heating system instead so that it sufficiently heats your entire home.