

MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

Your mental health is important.

To you, and to us too.

Taking care of your mental health is crucial, which is why it's important to take the time to understand and address the factors that can contribute to its improvement.

To help you tackle this challenge, **iA Financial Group** offers a practical guide that invites you to assess the essential pillars of mental health:

- Stress management
- Life-work balance
- Physical activity
- Sleep
- Nutrition

Content, challenges and resources will guide you in this process.



Explore the 5 themes

How are you doing?

Take the time to answer this frequently asked question honestly.

Stress management

A good way to improve your concentration and productivity.

Life-work balance

Avoid burnout and get the tools you need to achieve total fulfillment in both spheres of daily life.

Healthy living

Physical activity, sleep and nutrition have a significant impact on your state of mind.

Check-up

Take time for yourself and take stock of your wellbeing. It's an excellent investment.

How are things?

How many times have you been asked this question and unconsciously answered “I’m fine”? This being Mental Health Week, we encourage you to take the time to think about this question and answer it honestly.



TAKE UP THE CHALLENGE

Fill out the Canadian Mental Health Association’s (CMHA) short [mental health evaluation questionnaire](#).

If you get a low score in some sections, feel free to consult the resources on the CMHA website and ask for help if needed.

The following is a brief portrait of mental health in Canada:

- 1 in 3 people in Canada will experience at least one episode of mental illness in their lifetime
- Mental illness indirectly affects all Canadians at one time or another, whether through personal experience or that of a loved one
- Each year, 500,000 Canadians are absent from work because of a mental health problem
- People who are victims of discrimination in the workplace are twice as likely to experience high or extremely high levels of stress: 43% compared to 21% for those who have not experienced discrimination

These statistics clearly demonstrate that we need to continue to talk about mental health issues and be proactive in providing more support for those who are more at risk.



Recognize the signs that something is wrong

Because mental health problems are so commonplace among the general population, it is important to recognize the signs that a situation is affecting your mental health or that of someone you know. We encourage you to pay particular attention to these examples:

- 1. Physical changes**
Fatigue, lack of energy, weight loss or weight gain
- 2. Psychological changes**
Sadness, isolation, irritability or lack of consideration for others
- 3. Cognitive changes**
Difficulty making decisions, memory impairment or more frequent mistakes
- 4. Changes in the workplace**
Absenteeism, tardiness or reduced productivity and motivation



Favorite resources

[Atomic habits](#) (book)
James Clear

[Get help Supporting a loved one](#) (articles)
CMHA website

[View sources](#)

Stress stressing you out?

74%

of Canadians report that they are affected in some way by stress in the workplace or in their personal lives. Therefore, we feel it is important to address this issue within the framework of Mental Health Week.



TAKE UP THE CHALLENGE

Take a “zen break” by trying 1 of the 4 distinct [approaches of meditation](#) for deep rest and stress reduction suggested by CBC Life.

Who knows? You might want to make it a habit!



What is stress?

First and foremost, let’s debunk the myth: stress is not necessarily a bad thing.

In fact, it’s essentially a physical reaction that increases your level of vigilance to face a possible danger. It’s when the body is in a state of stress for a prolonged period of time or in inappropriate situations that are not really threatening, that the harmful effects on your health can occur.

That’s why when you notice that your stress level has been high for a while, it is important to take action to better manage it.



5 ways of preventing and managing stress

- 1. Get moving**
Exercise stimulates the brain’s feel-good hormones. It can be a great way to reduce stress and improve your mood.
- 2. Eat healthy and get enough sleep**
By eating balanced meals and getting enough sleep, your body and brain will have the energy and rest they need to function properly.
- 3. Control your breathing**
An increased heart rate is a common symptom of stress. Breathing slowly and deeply calms your mind and body.
- 4. Maintain positive social interactions**
Surround yourself with people who have a positive effect on your life.
- 5. Talk openly about your concerns with someone you trust**
Simply expressing your feelings and getting the attention you need may help you feel better.

If your stress level is high and you are having difficulty managing your emotions and behaviour, do not hesitate to contact a healthcare professional for assistance.

If you have a group insurance plan, ask your employer about the resources available to you.



Favorite resources

[The stress proof brain](#) (book)
Melanie Greenberg, Ph.D.

[CBC music playlist for meditation, concentration or relaxation](#) (music)
CBC

[View sources](#)

Have you found your balance?

As we have observed for several years, the world of work is in a state of flux. Expectations and practices related to life-work balance are evolving.

Historically, salary and benefits have always been key motivational factors. According to the results of a recent survey, we learn that life-work balance now trumps salary.

What is life-work balance?

In fact, achieving balance is not just about distributing time equally between our personal lives and our jobs, but rather about feeling fully satisfied with the place that each of these two aspects occupies in our lives.

Imbalance generally arises when the demands of one are incompatible with certain responsibilities related to the other. This creates a life-work conflict, which can lead to feelings of burnout, overwork and stress.



TAKE UP THE CHALLENGE

We invite you to do an affirmation exercise by highlighting all the positive things that happened throughout the day.

You can use the [gratitude journal](#) we have designed for this purpose.



5 tips for finding the right balance

1. Take breaks

It is important to make time in your workday for activities you enjoy.

2. Cultivate connections

Maintain camaraderie with your colleagues. Touch base with them from time to time to check in, laugh and relieve the pressure.

3. Allow for a buffer period after the workday

As you know, it's not easy to instantly switch to relaxation mode after an intense day of work. To make it easier to disconnect, try doing something fun.

4. Give yourself the right to disconnect

At the end of your workday, close your computer and turn off notifications on your smart devices to create a break between your work hours and your free time.

5. Manage your expectations

Set realistic goals in both your personal and professional lives. Make allowances for yourself in the busier times and remember to celebrate your wins.



Favorite resources

[The happiness advantage](#) (book)
Shawn Achor

[Off the Clock: Feel Less Busy While Getting More Done](#) (book)
Laura Vanderkam

If you feel that you are **experiencing an imbalance between your personal life and your work**, do not hesitate to contact a healthcare professional for help.

If you have a group insurance plan, ask your employer about the resources available to you.

[View sources](#)

Stay active. Sleep well. Eat healthy.

Everyone knows that staying active, getting enough sleep and eating a balanced diet are beneficial to our physical and mental health. It is therefore to our advantage to pay particular attention to these three areas in order to have healthier lifestyles.



TAKE UP THE CHALLENGE

We propose 3 challenges related to physical activity, sleep and nutrition.

🏃 Physical activity

Challenge 1

Take advantage of the beautiful weather to go for a walk in the fresh air. If you work from home, why not attend one of your meetings while walking?

Tips and tricks

- Kill two birds with one stone: some tasks such as housework, gardening or shovelling snow are great opportunities to get moving.
- Do one or two [strength training exercises](#) a day without moving from your workstation.
- Take a walk after eating to aid in digestion, replenish oxygen and vitamin D and boost your energy level for the rest of the day.

🌙 Sleep

Challenge 2

Do a [10-minute meditation exercise](#) in bed. You may fall asleep more quickly and wake up less frequently during the night.

Tips and tricks

- Turn off screens and electronic devices before bedtime to avoid blue light as much as possible. It hampers the production of melatonin, a hormone that helps you fall asleep.
- Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day and try to develop a relaxing routine before going to bed.
- Avoid late meals; they can prevent you from falling asleep and affect the quality of your sleep.

🍏 Nutrition

Challenge 3

At lunch or at dinner time today, prepare a [healthy meal](#) that respects the proportions of Canada's food guide plate. The combinations are practically endless!

Tips and tricks

- Have your meals at the table, without the television, telephone and computer.
- Plan your meals for the week, choosing healthy recipes that combine protein, whole grain carbohydrates and fibre-rich vegetables and fruits.
- Always have a bottle of water with you to keep yourself sufficiently hydrated throughout the day. Try to drink between 1.5 and 2 litres of water a day.



Favorite resources

[“How Foods and Nutrients Control our Moods” podcast](#) by Andrew Huberman
[InsightTimer](#) and [Calm](#) apps, to help you relax and sleep well

[View sources](#)

And now, how are things?

Now that you've gone through a variety of content on stress management, life-work balance and the effects that physical activity, sleep and nutrition have on our mental health, how has your answer to the question "how are things" changed?

No matter your answer, we hope you now have all the tools necessary to determine what supports or harms your mental health and wellbeing.



The challenges you've accepted

Among the challenges you've taken on, which have done you the most good? Which would you like to perform on a regular basis?

Taking time every day to practice self-care, be it mental or physical, is essential to making wellbeing your top priority.



The knowledge you've acquired

You've been provided with a variety of statistics, facts and tips. Did you learn something new? Did any of the tips help you think differently about your lifestyle?

Widening the scope of our knowledge of different aspects of mental health gives us the tools for understanding and putting words to our emotions and reactions toward certain situations. This also allows us to support and listen to others more effectively as they work through challenges.



The resources that you've discovered

Have you consulted the resources to learn more about certain themes? Are you more of a book or podcast person?

Whether it's out of curiosity, interest or for the sake of better understanding an issue that you're working through, having a repertoire of resources and possible solutions on hand can provide a sense of reassurance.



TAKE UP THE CHALLENGE

Have a guilt-free slow down!

Practice the art of doing nothing by giving yourself a break, a **real** one. By "break" we mean a moment that makes you happy, with the least possible distractions. For example, have a coffee while gazing out the window; take a long bath in the evening; bask in the sun in your yard or a park.



In conclusion

Taking a break, learning, demystifying the myths and accessing resources are essential elements in taking care of ourselves and others.

Together, let's contribute to put an end to isolation, open up dialogue and be more sensitive to our society's mental health challenges.

Mental Health Week sources

How are things?

[How to recognize signs of distress at home and at work](#)
dialogue.co

[Fast Facts about Mental Health and Mental Illness](#)
cmha.ca

[2022 Benefits Canada Healthcare Survey](#)
Group Benefits and Retirement Solutions
iA Financial Group

Stress management

[How Can I Deal most Effectively with Stress?](#)
canada.ca

[Understanding and Coping with Anxiety](#)
dialoguecorp.com

[Canadians equally stressed at work as they are in their personal lives](#)
lifeworks.com

[Stress](#)
dialoguecorp.com

Life-work balance

[Life-work balance](#)
cchst.ca

[Encouraging life-work balance](#)
homewoodhealth.com

[Tipping Scales: Life-work balance Outweighs Salary as Top Perk for Canadian Workers](#)
newswire.ca

[Les bons réflexes de la conciliation travail-famille-vie personnelle](#) (french only)
boutique.desaison.ca

[10 Ways to Achieve a Life-work balance](#)
medaviebc.ca

Lifestyle

[Improving your health through physical activity](#)
quebec.ca

[5 ways to build healthy eating habits in times of stress](#)
dialogue.co

[L'alimentation pour s'attaquer aux troubles de santé mentale](#) (french only)
ici.radio-canada.ca

[Sleep](#)
canada.ca

[4 ways to embrace exercise and healthy movement](#)
dialogue.co

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