



Alberta Health
Services

SELF-MANAGEMENT FOR DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY



October 2016
Mental Health Promotion & Illness Prevention

About this booklet

This booklet offers self-management strategies for adults who have symptoms of depression and/or anxiety. When you're not well, information can be overwhelming when talking to your healthcare provider. This booklet can help you remember what you have talked about and to review what's important for your care with someone you trust.

Topics	Page
Depression	1
Anxiety	3
Substance use	5
Social support	7
Physical activity	9
Nutrition	11
Relaxation	13
Sleep	15
Bibliotherapy: learning about depression and anxiety	17

In Alberta, if you need more information or want to talk to someone privately, call:

- Health Link **811**
- Mental Health **1-877-303-2642**
- First Nations & Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line **1-855-242-3310**
- Addiction Services **1-866-332-2322**
- Family Violence **1-866-606-7233**
- Medication & Herbal Advice **1-800-332-1414**

If you're having suicidal thoughts, go to the nearest emergency department or call **911 right away.**

Alberta Health Services
Self-Management for Depression and Anxiety (Adult) Version 02.
Created: 2016-10
Revised: 2017-02
Next review: 2020-09
Reprint: 2019-02-08

Copyright 2019, Alberta Health Services.
This material is protected by Canadian and other international copyright laws. All rights reserved. These materials may not be copied, published, distributed or reproduced in any way in whole or in part without the express written permission of Alberta Health Services. These materials are intended for general information only and are provided on an "as is", "where is" basis. Although reasonable efforts were made to confirm the accuracy of the information, Alberta Health Services does not make any representation or warranty, express, implied or statutory, as to the accuracy, reliability, completeness, applicability or fitness for a particular purpose of such information. These materials are not a substitute for the advice of a qualified health professional. Alberta Health Services expressly disclaims all liability for the use of these materials, and for any claims, actions, demands or suits arising from such use.

DEPRESSION

There is a difference between being depressed and having a depressive disorder. Being depressed is when you feel sad, down, or depressed for only a few days and you can find healthy ways to cope with your feelings. A depressive mood disorder can make life challenging for you and your family. It can be mild to severe and can change how you think, feel, and act.

Depression is the most common type of mood disorder and people who are depressed often have anxiety.



When does depression become a disorder?

- the symptoms don't get better or they get worse
- the feelings stop you from doing things you normally do
- you have depressive symptoms every day for at least two weeks

What does depression feel like?

How depression feels is different for everyone. For some people it's an overwhelming feeling of emptiness that you can't explain. Some people feel invisible or alone even in the middle of a crowd. Some people feel as if all of their emotions and energy have been drained or there's a huge weight pushing down on them. For some people, depression can become unbearable, with feelings of guilt and thoughts of suicide.

Common Symptoms

Physical

- trouble sleeping (e.g., too much or too little)
- tired all the time, sluggish or inactive
- sick, run down, or no energy
- headaches or muscle pains
- upset stomach
- weight loss or decreased appetite
- not interested in sex

Feelings

- overwhelmed or hopeless
- irritable, restless, or agitated
- useless or inadequate
- unhappy or sad
- empty or numb
- frustrated
- miserable

Behaviour

- staying away from places, people, family, and friends
- having trouble making decisions or concentrating
- not finishing things (e.g., work, school, home)
- not coping with things that you used to
- using substances to make you feel better

Thoughts

- "People would be better off without me."
- "Nothing good ever happens to me."
- "Life's not worth living."
- "I'm a failure."
- "It's my fault."
- "I'm worthless."
- "I wish I were dead."

If you're thinking about suicide, hurting yourself, or hurting others **talk to your healthcare provider right away or call 911.**

What causes depression?

The exact cause of depression isn't known. Everyone is different and it's often life events and other factors that increase the risk for depression. The most important thing is to recognize the symptoms and know what factors may cause depression so you can get help.

This includes:

Life events (e.g., losing your job, work stress, having a friend or family member die, a relationship that is troubled or ends, pregnancy, becoming a parent, or any experiences related to trauma, loss, or abuse)

Family history (e.g., having a family member who has been diagnosed with depression may be a factor but it doesn't mean you'll have it too)

Health problems (e.g., having a serious illness, chronic pain, or a condition that needs to be managed long-term)

Drug and alcohol use (e.g., misusing prescription or over-the-counter medicine, illegal drugs, or alcohol)

What can I do?

Many self-care strategies listed in this series can help you manage your depression. Here are some other ways to manage your symptoms:

- Talk with your doctor or healthcare provider about your symptoms, they can:
 - › make sure a medical problem or medicine isn't causing your depression.
 - › give you a referral to a psychiatrist who can provide you with more information about depression, medication, and treatment options. Your doctor will continue to follow your care.
- If anti-depressant medicine is prescribed, take it as directed. Remember, it can take a while to work and to get the right dosage. Side effects may happen in the first two weeks or when the dose is increased.
- Try keeping a mood diary for two weeks. Write down what increases your depression (e.g., situations, demands, lack of sleep).
 - Counselling and learning ways to self-manage your symptoms is effective with mild to moderate depression. You might need to add medication to your treatment if your depression is severe.
 - Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), with a counsellor or online, is a practical approach to problem-solving that can help you change the way you think and act. This can help you change the way you feel.

ANXIETY

Anxiety is a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease that happens when you're unsure about what's going to happen. Everyone feels nervous or anxious at times like preparing for a job interview, thinking others are judging you, worrying about money, or making big life decisions.

When you feel anxious, you might notice changes in your mind and body (e.g., racing thoughts, heart pounding). These changes are only temporary. After a short time or when the situation has passed, the feelings of anxiety usually stop.

Many people who have anxiety disorders may also have depression. It's important to get help for both since, one can make the other worse.



When does anxiety become a disorder?

- it lasts weeks or months
- it's a constant sense of dread or starts to affect your everyday life
- the symptoms don't go away once the situation is over

What does an anxiety disorder feel like?

Anxiety affects people differently and symptoms often develop slowly over time. Some people have intense attacks that come with no warning, while others feel panicked at the thought of being in a crowd. Some people may fear driving or have terrible thoughts that don't stop, while others may worry about everything all the time.

People who have an anxiety disorder may think something is really wrong, they may be scared of losing control or worry that they may do something embarrassing or dangerous.

Common Symptoms

Thoughts

- can't concentrate, focus, or feel scattered
- thinking about the worst outcomes
- racing thoughts
- easily distracted
- memory problems

Physical

- painful or tight chest, feeling like your heart is pounding
- sweating, shaking, or dizziness
- upset stomach or nausea
- tense muscles or body aches

Feelings

- feeling woozy or detached from what's real
- things don't seem real or they feel strange
- tense, stressed, uptight, feeling on edge
- panicky, unsettled, or irritable
- impending doom

Behaviour

- using substances to make you feel better
- avoid certain people, situations or tasks
- start things and don't finish them
- pacing, fidgeting, or restless
- trouble sleeping

What causes an anxiety disorder?

The cause of anxiety disorders isn't known. Everyone's different, and it's often a combination of life events and other factors that increase the chance that you may develop an anxiety disorder. Know the symptoms and factors that **may increase** your risk so you can get help.

They include:

Life events (e.g., job stress, losing your job, having a friend or family member die, a relationship that is troubled or ends, pregnancy, becoming a parent, or any experiences related to trauma, loss, or abuse)

Family history (e.g., having a family member who has been diagnosed with anxiety may be a factor but it doesn't mean you'll have it too)

Health problems (e.g., having a serious illness, chronic pain, or a condition that needs to be managed long-term)

Drug and alcohol use (e.g., misusing prescription or over-the-counter medicine, illegal drugs, or alcohol)

What can I do?

The goal is to manage your anxiety not eliminate it completely. Many self-care strategies listed in this series can help you manage your anxiety. Here are some other ways to manage your symptoms:

- Talk with your doctor or healthcare provider about your symptoms, they can:
 - › make sure a medical problem or medicine isn't causing your anxiety.
 - › give you a referral to a psychiatrist who can provide you with more information about anxiety, medication, and treatment options. Your doctor will continue to follow your care.
- If anti-anxiety medicine is prescribed, take it as directed. Remember it can take a while to work and to get the right dosage. Side effects may occur in the first two weeks or if the dose is increased.
- Try keeping a mood diary for two weeks. Write down when you feel anxious, what increases your anxiety (e.g., situations, demands, lack of sleep), and how long the symptoms last.
- Counselling and learning ways to self-manage your symptoms are effective with mild to moderate anxiety. You might need to add medication to your treatment if your anxiety is severe.
 - Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), with a counsellor or online, is a practical approach to problem-solving that can help you change the way you think and act so that you can change the way you feel.

SUBSTANCE USE

Drugs or substances are anything that alters your mood, mind, or state. They include things like alcohol, prescription medicine, over-the-counter medicine, or illegal drugs.

How can substances make you feel?

Substance use affects your health and the way you feel, think, and act. Using substances may make you feel better in the short-term (e.g., to relax, celebrate, or simply forget your day at work) but continued use over time will make you feel worse.

The harmful effects of substance use happen slowly. They damage your body and change your brain's ability to deal with negative feeling making it likely that you'll have more negative feelings like anger, aggression, sadness, anxiety, and depression.

Can substance use lead to anxiety, depression and poor mental health?

Yes. Using substances can increase your chance of having poor mental health, anxiety, depression, memory loss, psychosis, thoughts of suicide, or a problem with alcohol and/or other drugs.

If you use substances as a way to cope or as a way to hide your anxiety or depression, you can make the problem worse and make it much harder to get better.

Substance use and tolerance over time.

The more substances you use, and the more often you use them, the higher the risk to your mental health. You'll also develop a tolerance for the substance you're using, which means that you'll need to use more of it to get the same effect.

Substance use is a problem if you:

- use substances to cope with feelings and situations (e.g., sadness, conflict)
- hide your use from family and friends
- have increased your use over time
- find it hard to give up or cut down
- have friends, family, or co-workers who say they're concerned about your use
- are having money or legal problems because of your use

And over time, you'll:

- make more emotional and impulsive decisions
- keep having trouble or fights with friends, family, or co-workers
- put yourself or others in risky situations (e.g., driving under the influence, fighting, getting hurt)



Substance use and medicine interaction.

If you're taking medicine for anxiety or depression, mixing it with alcohol and/or other drugs can be dangerous. Substance use may change how your medicine works or cause more side effects. Herbal or dietary supplements can interact with depression and anxiety medicine too. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist about any supplements you're taking.

What are my substance use habits?

It's important to know your substance use habits. Ask yourself these questions:

- When are you using?
- How much and how often are you using?
- What makes you feel like using?
- Who are you using with?

What can I do to get help?

If you have a substance use problem because of anxiety and/or depression or if you have anxiety and/or depression because of a substance use problem, there's help:

- Talk to your doctor or healthcare provider.
 - › Be honest about your substance use and symptoms.
 - › Discuss the first steps in your action plan and what you might need (e.g., referral, counselling, medicine, a note for work).
- Get support from family and friends—they may already know there's a problem.
- If you can, use your workplace Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for counselling support. It's confidential, free to the employee, and can give you referrals if needed.
- Find out what counselling services are in your area.

What are Canada's low-risk drinking guidelines?

Men

- 15 drinks a week, with no more than 3 drinks a day most days

Women

- 10 drinks a week, with no more than 2 drinks a day most days

Pregnant, thinking of getting pregnant, or breastfeeding

- the safest choice is no alcohol

(Source: Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse. (2013). Low-risk drinking guidelines.)

SOCIAL SUPPORT

What is social support?

It's the physical and/or emotional support that you get from family, friends, co-workers, and others. They're there to talk about problems with you, think about new options, or just listen.

What is a social support network?

It's the web of social connections you have with people, like your family and friends that help you give and get support. It includes:

Informal supports like neighbours, daycare or school staff, people at your workplace, or place of faith.

Formal supports like healthcare providers, peer support groups, or other professionals.

Why is social support good for your mental health?

- It decreases your stress (e.g., sharing with others, problem-solving, seeing different points of view)
- It increases your confidence (e.g., feeling valued, supported)
- It decreases the amount of time you spend alone (e.g., feeling less alone, lonely, bored)
- It increases your brain function (e.g., socializing helps your mind stay fit)

What types of support are there?

Emotional

Provides empathy, concern, trust, love, acceptance, encouragement, or caring.

Informational

Provides advice, guidance, ideas, opinions, or other information to help solve problems.

Practical

Provides help like looking after children, cooking, laundry, or offering other things like a place to stay or financial help.

Companionship

Provides a sense of social belonging, feeling connected, and people to do things with.

What does healthy support look like?

- Your relationship is built on safety and trust—there's no fear.
- You balance how much you give and take from others.
- You encourage and support one another.
- You understand and respect each other's opinions.
- You can disagree and know it's okay to talk about your differences.

Unhealthy relationships can harm your emotional and/or physical health (e.g., abuse, over-dependence, controlling, harmful comments). **Abuse is never OK.** Try to let go of relationships that are harmful or bring you down. If you can't get out of the relationship, try to spend less time with that person, limit your contact, and don't rely on that person for support.



Everyone needs someone they can depend on during good and bad times. Who do you go to for help, support, advice or to share what's happening in your life?

Social support from pets.

If you like animals, caring for a dog may help you be more active, feel like you have a companion, decrease anxiety, add structure to your day, and make you feel happy and optimistic.

However, having a dog takes a lot of time, responsibility, and money.

For some people, owning a cat doesn't take as much time and there are still lots of positive health benefits. Remember, if pets aren't for you, then you won't likely get any health benefits from having one.

Who and what do I need in my social support network?

One person can't give you all the support you need. Ask yourself these important questions:

- What type of support do I need?
- What would help the most right now?
- Who could help with that?
- What would help me the most—formal or informal support?

Tips to build your network.

- If your family or friends live far away, think about using face-to-face technology (e.g., Skype).
- Keep positive relationships and make them stronger.
- Helping others helps you. When you can, listen to others, be encouraging, and offer advice when asked.
- Spend less time alone. Do an activity that you enjoy or volunteer—whatever gets you out of the house.
- If you're married or have a partner—work to improve your communication skills, deal with issues, and make your relationship stronger with workshops or shared activities.
- Think about joining a peer support group. It can help you connect with others, get advice and encouragement.
- Be active. Go walk around your neighbourhood or take your dog to the park. It'll help you stay active and meet people in your community.

What about using technology for support?

On the Internet, you can learn more about anxiety and depression through credible websites, apps, chat rooms, blogs, or an online cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) course. You can also find doctors, therapists, activity groups, and volunteer positions.

**Remember,
face-to-face
communication
is best.
Balance online
support with
face-to-face
support.**

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

We often hear about the health benefits of being physically active but did you know it's also good for your mental health? Being active decreases symptoms of anxiety and depression, boosts mood, improves self-esteem, and helps you connect with others.

Help break the cycle.

It's hard to be active when you feel down, depressed, worried, or stressed. Being inactive for long periods can lead to low or poor mental health and creates a cycle that gets harder to break.



What are the benefits of being active?

Being active:

Supports physical health.

It lowers your risk of cancer, heart disease, stroke, and high blood pressure.

Supports mental health.

It boosts mood, can lead to better self-confidence, and can help improve anxiety and depression symptoms.

Distracts from negative thoughts.

It helps you focus on different, more positive things and leaves you with less time to think about stressors.

Increases energy.

Activity helps your heart and lungs work better and can increase your endurance and energy levels.

Promotes social connections.

Joining a class helps you get to know others. If you walk or run alone, even a small thing like smiling at someone as you pass by can help improve your mood.

Reduces stress.

Activity can put good strain on your body and teaches it to cope with stress.

Improves sleep.

Regular activity helps you fall asleep faster and stay asleep longer. Exercising too close to bedtime can make it harder to fall asleep.

I'd like to be more active, but...

Common problem	Ideas to try
"I don't feel motivated."	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remind yourself why being active is important to you.• Focus on the short-term benefits like better sleep and more energy.
"I have no time."	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Try 10-minute periods of activity, three times a day.• Be active as you do other things like walking to do errands or being active during your breaks at work.
"I'm tired and have no energy."	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be active when you have energy, like in the morning or at lunch.• Remind yourself that you'll have more energy after.
"I have no one to be active with."	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask a friend to be active with you.• Join an exercise class, group or club.

For some people, physical activity can work as well as taking antidepressants.

Research shows that just five minutes of physical activity can be enough to make you feel less anxious.

How active should I be?

Make it your goal to be active most days of the week, especially on the days you feel worried, down, or stressed.

According to the *Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines*, adults should be active for 150 minutes (2.5 hours) or more each week. If you like, you can do this in 10-minute sessions and still get health benefits.

The guidelines recommend moderate-to-vigorous aerobic activities like walking, running, or cycling. Moderate-to-vigorous intensity means you increase your heart rate, breathe deeper, and may sweat a little. You can also do activities to make your muscles and bones stronger at least two days a week like push-ups, lifting weights, and yard work.

If you haven't been active for a while, start slowly and build gradually. Choose an activity that you're comfortable with like swimming, walking, or climbing stairs. Once an activity gets easier, try making it harder or do it for longer (e.g., walk faster, increase how long you walk).

Make being active part of your daily routine.

What else can I do to be active?

Talk to your family and friends.

They can provide support and encouragement and even be active with you.

Take regular breaks at work.

Get up and move around, stretch or go for a walk outside at lunch.

Be active in nature.

Go for a walk around your block or run in the park.

Keep track of when you're active and how you feel.

This can help keep you motivated.

Set goals for yourself.

Pick an activity for each day of the week ahead of time.

Find ways to be active during your day.

Take your dog for a walk, bike or walk to work, do housework and/or yard work.

Try a group activity.

Walk with friends or join a class.

Websites

For information on how to be active anywhere go to:

www.abeforfitness.com

www.participaction.com

For information on the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines and exercise recommendations go to:

www.csep.ca/Guidelines

Talk to your healthcare provider about physical activity if you have a health problem. They can tell you what activities you can do.

NUTRITION

Nutrition Tips.

Choose foods in natural forms when you can.

Prepare meals and snacks from fresh, pre-packaged, or frozen foods with little or no added fat, sugar, salt, or additives. Processed foods have less of the nutrients your brain needs to stay alert and active.

Eat vegetables and fruit often during the day.

They're the best source of many of the nutrients your brain and body need to stay healthy. They also provide phytonutrients (natural plant chemicals), which help keep your body and brain healthy.

Enjoy two or more servings of fish each week for omega-3 fats.

Omega-3 fats help protect the heart, body and brain. Foods with omega-3 fats include salmon, rainbow trout, char, sardines, oysters, sole, and tuna. Vegetarian sources include tofu, soybeans, seaweed, walnuts, and flaxseeds.

Include different food groups for each meal and snack.

- Choose a variety of vegetables and fruits. Try to have at least one dark green vegetable (e.g., broccoli, spinach, romaine lettuce) and one orange vegetable (e.g., carrots, squash, sweet potato) every day.
- Choose whole grain products with at least 2 grams of fibre per serving (e.g., rolled oats, whole grain bread, brown rice, whole grain pasta).
- Drink milk or fortified soy drinks at meals or snacks. Other plant-based drinks (e.g., almond, hemp, rice drinks) are much lower in protein and important vitamins and minerals. If you have these types of drinks, make sure you get the missing nutrients by eating a variety of other foods.
- Choose a variety of beans, fish, lentils, seafood, lean meats, tofu, poultry, eggs, nuts and seeds.

What else can I do to improve my brain health?

Eat regularly for all-day energy.

Eating at regular times will give your body and brain a constant supply of the nutrients you need during the day. Skipping meals can cause dips in energy that can lower your mood and make you irritable.

If you're hungry between meals, healthy snacks give you energy and nutrients so you can stay focused.

Drink fluids during the day.

Dehydration affects your mood, memory and ability to focus. It can also cause headaches and make you tired. Adults need 2 to 3 litres (9 to 12 cups) of fluid each day from healthy sources (e.g., water, milk, vegetables, fruit). If you drink juice, choose 100% vegetable or fruit juice and limit the amount to no more than ½ cup (125ml) per day.

Many foods help your body make neurotransmitters (natural brain chemicals) that help you steady your mood, cope with stress and let you focus.



Plan ahead.

When you can, plan meals a few days ahead, to help you eat well and regularly. Make double batches of your favourite foods, so you have leftovers or freezer meals when your mood or energy is low.

Limit caffeine.

Caffeine can make you feel more alert, but it may also make you feel anxious, nervous, or restless. Common sources of caffeine are coffee, tea, pop, and energy drinks. Adults should limit caffeine to 300 to 400 mg daily—this is about 500 to 750 ml (2 to 3 cups) of coffee. If you feel jittery, have trouble sleeping, or take medicine, you may want to decrease your caffeine intake.

Avoid energy drinks.

Energy drinks are high in caffeine and sugar, which may make you feel more alert for a short time. However, they often cause side effects that may affect your mood (e.g., headaches, poor sleep, anxiety, feeling nervous).

What about supplements?

Healthy foods are the best source of vitamins, minerals, and omega-3 fats. More research is needed to tell if large amounts of some nutrients benefit or harm your brain. If you're not sure that you're getting all the nutrients you need from food, talk to a dietitian or healthcare provider before you take any vitamin, mineral, herbal, or natural health products. This is even more important if you take medicine—some types of supplements affect how your medicine works.

Where can I get more support to eat well?

To speak to a registered dietitian you can call Health Link at **811** or ask your healthcare provider to refer you to a dietitian.

Limit alcohol.

Alcohol can affect your sleep patterns, slow down your reaction time, lower your mood, or make you less alert. It's important not to drink alcohol if you take medicine that interacts with alcohol or if you have a mental health concern or health problem.

Try a food diary for at least one week.

Write down how you feel before you eat and record the foods you eat. Pay attention to how you feel until the next time you eat and write this down too. Look for common patterns or reactions to the food and drinks you choose.

Enjoy meals with others.

Food is a great way to connect with others. Invite someone to join you for a meal or coffee break at work. Make a date to prepare meals at home with friends or family. Try a cooking class to meet new people, discover new foods, and learn new recipes.

Websites

healthyeatingstartshere.ca myhealth.alberta.ca

For information about caffeine and alcohol, go to:
hc-sc.gc.ca (search 'drinking guidelines')

RELAXATION

It's easy to think you're relaxing when watching TV or busy with technology but these types of activities don't decrease the effects of ongoing stress. To do that, you need to make your body naturally relax (relaxation response) by practicing ways to reduce stress and improve your mood.

Why is the relaxation response important for your health?

Whenever you feel a sense of danger or threatened, your body's nervous system sends out chemicals that get you ready for fight or flight. This is called the stress response and it's a way to protect you. It lets you react fast in an emergency. However, if it's constantly on because of stressors in your life, it wears your body down and may cause health problems or make them worse. Ongoing stress is linked to many health problems like:

- asthma
- heart burn
- colds and flu
- diabetes
- high blood pressure
- irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)
- headaches
- sleep problems
- body aches and pain
- heart problems
- weight gain

You can't stay away from stress all together but you can decrease the effects by learning how to create the relaxation response. The relaxation response is the exact opposite of the stress response. It takes your mind off of whatever you're thinking about and brings your nervous system back into balance.

In the relaxation response your:

- heart rate slows down
- breathing gets slower and deeper
- blood pressure decreases
- muscles relax
- brain activity decreases
- body begins to heal

(Source: helpguide.org)

Relaxation techniques can help you manage stress and ease symptoms of anxiety and depression.
www.health.harvard.edu



Practicing activities that produce the relaxation response for 10 to 20 minutes a day can reduce the effects of stress.

Learning the relaxation response.

Deep breathing is one way to bring on the relaxation response and calm your nervous system. There are many different breathing techniques you can use. Find one that works for you and use it daily.

Here's an example of a deep breathing technique:

1. Choose a calming focus like listening to the sound of your breath.
2. Repeat or focus on this silently as you inhale and exhale deeper than you normally do.
3. Let go. Feel your shoulders and body relax. It's okay if your mind wanders—as you take your next deep breath, return to your calming focus.

When you're breathing in, your stomach should rise and when breathing out, it should fall. Your chest moves very little.

If it's hard to do while sitting or standing, teach yourself to do this while lying down. Once you're good at it, you can do it anytime, anywhere.

Relaxation techniques take time and practice.

There's no relaxation technique that works for everyone. You'll likely need to try different ones to find two or three that work best for you.

Here are some ideas:

- Calm breathing
- Guided meditation
- Mindfulness
- Yoga
- Tai chi
- Progressive muscle relaxation (PRM)

How can I fit relaxation practices into my life?

- Relaxation takes practice—set one or two times to practice relaxation every day.
 - Be gentle on yourself. If you miss a few days or weeks, start up again.
 - Find techniques you like and you'll be more likely to keep using them.
- If you exercise, add relaxation to it by being mindful. For example, if you're doing resistance training, focus on your breathing and coordinate your movements with your breath. You can also pay attention to how your body feels as you move.

SLEEP

Why is sleep important for your mental health?

Research shows that getting enough good sleep improves your memory, energy levels, endurance, and helps heal your body (e.g., repairs blood vessels, helps blood sugar control, boosts the immune system). It also helps you make decisions, solve problems, pay attention, learn new things, manage your feelings, cope with change, and be more creative.



What if I'm having trouble sleeping?

Everyone has trouble sleeping sometimes. There are nights when it may be hard to fall asleep, stay asleep, or you wake up so many times it feels like you haven't slept at all. This is normal. These types of sleep problems are often caused by stress and will usually get better after a night or two. If you have trouble sleeping for more than a few weeks, it can affect your mental health and well-being.

What is insomnia?

Insomnia is when you don't get the amount of sleep you need to wake up feeling rested and refreshed. The quality of your sleep and how you feel after sleeping is more important than how many hours you sleep or how fast you fall asleep. Some common symptoms of insomnia include:

- trouble falling asleep, even if you're really tired
- trouble concentrating
- waking up many times during the night or too early in the morning
- needing sleeping pills or alcohol to fall asleep
- feeling irritable, drowsy, or tired during the day
- anxiety and depression

Why can't I sleep?

Trouble sleeping may be caused by many things like:

- non-prescription medicine (e.g., cold and flu medicine, pain relievers, weight loss pills)
- prescription medicine (e.g., stimulants, blood pressure medicine, birth control)
- medical problems (e.g., asthma, acid reflux, chronic pain, thyroid disease, menopause)
- sleep disorders (e.g., snoring, sleep apnea, restless leg syndrome)
- mental illness (e.g., bi-polar disorder, anxiety)
- misusing alcohol or other drugs

Sedative medicine used during the day is the most common cause of changes to the sleep/wake cycle, which causes insomnia.

How much sleep do I need?

Research shows that adults need seven to nine hours of sleep each night—but everyone's different. The need for sleep changes with age and activity. If you're older and less active, you'll likely need less sleep. If you're younger, active or have stress, you'll likely need more sleep. It's important to know how much sleep you need to feel good.

What can I do?

If anxiety and/or depression, poor mental health, or another medical problem is making your sleep worse, take care of that problem first. But it's still important to get good sleep and take care of your health too.

To help you sleep better:

Have a regular bedtime routine.

Try a hot shower, caffeine-free tea, relaxing music, or reading as part of your sleep routine. It will help your mind prepare for sleep.

Learn relaxation techniques.

Practice relaxation techniques as part of your bedtime routine.

Keep your sleep space quiet, dark, and cool.

You want to think about your bed and connect it with sleeping. When you can't sleep, get out of bed and do something relaxing for 20 minutes and try again.

Get help managing stress.

Find ways to manage stress like asking for help when you need it or taking a stress management class.

Turn off screens and dim the lights in your home one hour before bedtime.

Darkness helps your body make a hormone called melatonin, which helps makes you sleepy. Light stops your body from doing this.

Be active during the day.

Avoid vigorous exercise/activity or anything too stressful (e.g., emotional talks or fights) two to four hours before bedtime.

Limit caffeine.

Don't have any caffeine (e.g., soft/energy drinks, coffee, tea) within eight hours of going to bed.

Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist about your medicine including non-prescription medicine to see when is the best time of day to take them.

BIBLIOTHERAPY

Learning about depression and anxiety can help you understand your feelings and thoughts, talk about your experiences, learn new ways to cope, and make your relationships better.

What is bibliotherapy?

Bibliotherapy is a type of treatment that uses guided, self-paced learning for people who have mild to moderate symptoms of depression and/or anxiety. It can be used on its own or with other treatments.



Bibliotherapy works best for people who are interested and willing to take part in this type of treatment. If it's not for you, that's OK. Find what works for you.

There are two main types of bibliotherapy.

1 Prescribed Treatment with a Healthcare Provider.

With support from your healthcare provider, you'll work through cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) based learning resources like books, online modules, or videos that will help you change thinking and behaviour that isn't helpful.

Tips for using bibliotherapy with your healthcare provider.

- Talk about what you want to learn and how you'll do it.
- Decide which learning resources you're going to use.
- Decide how many appointments you need based on how motivated you are, your progress, and if you're able to make changes.
- Agree on what homework needs to be done before the next appointment.
- Schedule a follow-up session.
- Talk about questions or concerns you have about the resources.
- Get any other supports or resources you may need.

2 Self-Learning.

This is learning about depression and anxiety on your own. Make sure to use the right types of learning resources like those listed below.

CBT based programs:

- Ecouch (ecouch.anu.edu.au)
An interactive, self-help program with modules for depression, general anxiety, worry, social anxiety, and relationship breakdown.
- MoodGym (moodgym.anu.edu.au)
An online training program that uses interpersonal therapy and CBT for depression.

Self-help materials and information:

- Anxiety BC (www.anxietybc.com)
Offers effective strategies to help you manage your anxiety on your own—at your own pace.
- Here to Help (www.heretohelp.bc.ca)
Offers tool kits, fact sheets and discussion forums.
- MoodFx (www.moodfx.ca)
An interactive website that helps you monitor symptoms and functioning.

Books:

- *Change your thinking: overcome stress, anxiety, and depression, and improve your life with CBT (3rd Edition)*. Sarah Edelman (2013)
- *Overcoming depression and low mood: A five areas approach (4th Edition)*. Chris Williams (2014)
- *Mind over mood: change how you feel by changing the way you think (2nd Edition)*. Dennis Greenberger and Christine Padesky (2015)
- *The antidepressant skills workbook*. Dan Bilsker, Randy Paterson, Simon Fraser University Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health & Addiction and BC Mental Health & Addiction Services (2009) (www.comh.ca/antidepressant-skills/adult/)

How do I know what depression and anxiety information is good to use?

Finding good information about depression and anxiety, medicine, treatments, tests, self-management tips, and other treatments can be hard. There are a lot of websites and knowing which ones have accurate information can be difficult. One website may say one thing, while another may say the opposite.

The Internet is not monitored and people can post almost anything, making it hard to know what you can trust.

What about personal experiences posted online?

Many people share their experiences with depression and/or anxiety through websites, blogs, web forums, or other social media. These experiences can be helpful in bringing hope and connecting you with others. It's important to remember that these blogs are someone else's opinions and experiences—your opinions and experiences may be very different. Not all treatments and therapies work for everyone.

Some Questions to Ask:

- Do they claim their experiences are scientific facts?
- Does the writer claim their ideas are right and everyone else is wrong?
- Do they give medical advice even though they're not a doctor or healthcare provider?
- Do they claim to have something no one else has (e.g., 'a miracle cure')?
- Are they using the site to sell or advertise their product?

If the answer to these questions is 'yes' the blog is probably not that helpful.

Things to Know about Media.

Advertisements, newspapers, magazine articles, TV, and radio will give you information on depression and anxiety but don't often explain the full story (due to limited space and cost). Remember, they're looking for exciting and entertaining stories that may not show all parts of a treatment. Also, the story may not apply to all cases or may lead you to believe that helpful or harmful things are happening when they're not.

Some Questions to Ask:

- Does it encourage you to think, ask questions, and make your own decisions?
- Does the article or story seem balanced between the possible ways this could help or hurt people?
- Does it show all the potential harms and benefits?
- Does it talk about other options?
- Does it respect others?

If the answer to these questions is 'no' the information is probably not that helpful.

What should I look for when evaluating depression and anxiety information on the Internet?

What type of website is it? The website should clearly show what organization, company, or person owns or sponsors the information. The health information on business sites may be accurate but it's a good idea to see if the information is the same on other sites.

Some Questions to Ask:

- Why are they providing this information?
- Are they trying to sell you something? Do the writers have anything to gain?
- Does it tell you who wrote the information and who reviewed the information?
 - Credible information on websites or articles is reviewed by medical experts or researchers should have a list of references.
 - Journal articles are usually the most reliable. News stories, magazine articles, and articles from other websites may not be as reliable.
- When was the information on the webpage written? If it's older than two years, find a more current source.
- Is the health information separated from advertisements? In less credible websites, the advertisements may look like part of the story/article.

The website address, called a *url*, can help you recognize websites quickly:

- .org** (not-for-profit organization)
- .gov** (government sponsored)
- .edu** (public or private school)
- .com** (business-sponsored)
- .ca** (in Canada—can be government, public or non-profit site)

References

- Alberta Centre for Active Living , Cheetham, S.J. (2011). *What Stops You From Being Physically Active?* Retrieved from: www.centre4activeliving.ca/media/filer_public/c5/2c/c52c4d03-b761-4f92-a521-fd03a20d7f41/d-barriers.pdf
- Alberta Children and Youth Services Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying. (2011). *Healthy Relationships Information Sheet*. Retrieved from: humanservices.alberta.ca/abuse-bullying/family-violence-information-sheets.html
- Alberta Health. (2016). *Physical activity—Active living*. Retrieved from: www.healthyalberta.com
- Alberta Health Services. (2016). *Healthy Eating Starts Here*. Retrieved from: www.albertahealthservices.ca/nutrition/Page12598.aspx
- Benson, H., & Casey, A. (2013). Harvard Medical School Special Health Report, Stress Management: Approaches for preventing and reducing stress (Rep.). Boston, MA: Harvard Health Publications. Retrieved from: http://westcoastmen.org/sites/default/files/harvard_med_school_-_stress_management.pdf
- BeyondBlue-Victoria, Australia. (2016). *Depression Signs and symptoms*. Retrieved from: www.beyondblue.org.au/theacts/depression/signs-symptoms
- BeyondBlue-Victoria, Australia. (2016). *What causes an anxiety disorder?* Retrieved from: www.beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/anxiety/what-causes-anxiety
- Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse. (2013). *Low-risk drinking guidelines*. Retrieved from: ccsa.ca/Eng/topics/alcohol/drinking-guidelines/Pages/default.aspx
- Canadian Mental Health Association (BC Division) BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information. (2013). *Anxiety Disorders—Learn about anxiety disorders: info sheets*. Retrieved from: www.heretohelp.bc.ca/factsheet/anxiety-disorders
- Canadian Mental Health Association (BC Division) BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information. (2013). *Social Support Anxiety BC Wellness Module 3*. Retrieved from: www.heretohelp.bc.ca/wellness-module/wellness-module-3-social-support
- Canadian Mental Health Association (BC Division) BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information. Visions: BC's Mental Health And Addictions Journal (2011). *Visions- Social Support*. Vol. 6. No. 4 2011 p. 7-10. Retrieved from: www.heretohelp.bc.ca/visions/social-support-vol6
- Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology. (2011). *Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines for Adults 18-64 years*. Retrieved from: www.csep.ca/Guidelines
- Department of Developmental Services (DDS). (2010). *Social Support Systems and Maintaining Mental Health*. Retrieved from www.ddssafety.net/sites/default/files/attachments/10-06-11/FASocialSupportSystem.pdf
- Katz, D., Esser, T., Esser, S., Vinante, V., Turn the Tide foundation, Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center. (2016). *Activity Bursts Everywhere for Fitness*. Retrieved from: abeforfitness.com/index.html
- ParticipAction Canada. (2016). *It's time for Canada to sit less and move more*. Retrieved from: www.participaction.com
- Robinson, L., Segal, R., Segal, J., Smith, M. (2016). *Relaxation Techniques for Stress Relief*. Retrieved from www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/relaxation-techniques-for-stress-relief.htm
- Robinson, L., Segal, J. (2016). *The Health Benefits of Dogs (and Cats)—How Caring for Pets can Help You Deal with Depression, Anxiety, and Stress*. Retrieved from www.helpguide.org/articles/emotional-health/the-health-benefits-of-pets.htm
- Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP). (2015). *Internet based or computerised CBT (iCBT or CCBT): depression and anxiety*. Retrieved from: www.racgp.org.au/download/Documents/HANDI/handicbt.pdf
- Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP). (2013). *Bibliotherapy for depression*. Volume 42, No.4, April 2013 Pages 199-200. Retrieved from: www.racgp.org.au/afp/2013/april/bibliotherapy-for-depression/

Your opinion matters. To tell us what you think of this resources go to:
<https://survey.albertahealthservices.ca/AdultSelfManagement>

Produced by
Mental Health Promotion & Illness Prevention,
Provincial Addiction & Mental Health
10101 Southport Road SW
Calgary, AB, T2W 3N2
email: hp dip.mh.earlyid@ahs.ca

To order copies of this resource go to:
<https://dol.datacm.com/>
Login ID: mentalhealthresources
Password: mh2016
Item#: SM001