

Empowering Patients: Emotional Wellness

What is Emotional Wellness?

A deep sense of meaning and purpose, an abiding sense of peace, the ability to manage the stress and transitions of life, awareness of your thoughts and feelings and the ability to manage them.

Why emotional health matters

1. Emotions influence our behaviour, our relationships and our thinking.
2. Anxiety holds us back from doing what we need to do, from moving forward, from reaching out, and from giving our best to the world.
3. Depression is a major cause of disability and absenteeism from work or school.

Anxiety Disorders

When your anxiety has a significant impact on your function at work, school or home or in your social life.

1. **Generalized Anxiety:** excessive worry about many things
2. **Panic Disorder:** recurrent panic attacks (symptoms may include chest pain, a racing heart, sweats, shortness of breath and dizziness)
3. **Obsessive Compulsive Disorder:** repetitive intrusive thoughts or recurrent compulsions to perform an act (e.g. checking, handwashing, rituals)
4. **Social Anxiety:** excessive anxiety in specific social situations e.g. large groups, interviews, shopping
5. **Phobias:** extreme specific fears e.g. spiders, heights, flying

Mood Disorders

1. **The Symptoms of Depression:** fatigue, change in sleep, change in appetite, impaired concentration, forgetfulness, thoughts of death or suicide, self-blame and guilt, feeling sad, hopelessness, lack of enjoyment or pleasure, loss of motivation.
2. **Bipolar Disorder:** episodes of depression and mania/hypomania (heightened mood and energy, overconfidence, decreased need for sleep, impaired judgment, decreased need for sleep, delusions of grandeur)
3. **Psychotic Symptoms:** impaired reality testing, delusions (fixed false beliefs), hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not real), disorganized behaviour e.g. schizophrenia

Key Emotional Health Skills

- A Meditative Practice to calm your mind, centre your thoughts and reflect.

Recommended Reading on Mindfulness:

Joseph Goldstein, Thich Nhat-Hahn, Jon Kabat-Zinn.

Cognitive Therapy

- Reflect on the thoughts that trigger your emotions. Is there another way to look at the situation?
- Question the underlying beliefs behind unhealthy thinking.
 - Identify your cognitive distortions
 - all or nothing thinking – seeing all the bad in another person or situation; catastrophizing – imagining the worst;
 - excessive self-blame

Recommended Reading: Mind Over Mood by Padesky and Greenberger; Authentic Happiness by Martin Seligman.

Visualizing Your Goals

- Turn your problems into goals.
- Instead of replaying the past or ruminating on the negative, think about what you want.
- When you are most relaxed, visualize yourself having achieved your goal.
- How do you feel? What do you see? What do you hear? Make it real!

Managing Stress

- **Burnout:** when the demands of work or life exceed our ability to manage them.

Seizing the Locus of Control

- Identify your sources of stress.
- Are you reacting in proportion to the stress?
- Recognize what you can change or control.
- Accept what you cannot change; assume responsibility for what you can.
- Recognize your choices.

The 80/20 Rule: 20% of our reaction to a situation is related to the facts; 80% arises from what we bring from our past and how we conceptualize the present.

The Daily Management of Stress

Be a good parent to yourself:

1. **Go out and play.** Have an exercise routine.
2. **Don't skip meals.** Schedule regular healthy meals.
3. **Go to bed.** Get enough sleep and take regular breaks.
4. **Go to the doctor.** See your own family doctor appropriately.

Express your emotions with those close to you with a group of confidantes. Form or join a support group.

Live in accord with your values.

Attend to your relationships.

1. **Foster emotional intimacy.** Agree on a habit of checking in with one another each day. How are you feeling? How was your day?
2. **Show your affection.** Express your positive feelings.
3. **Schedule regular dates.** Commit your time to what matters most. Don't wait 'til there's time; make time!
4. **Communicate in a healthy way.** Take a breath and let anger cool before you react. Acknowledge the other's feelings and point of view. Express how you feel without blame.
5. **When things get stale, have an affair . . .** with your partner.

Where to Find Help

Canadian Mental Health Association

cmha.bc.ca

Courses, resources, cognitive therapy and support.

Vancouver Coastal Health – Sunshine Coast Mental Health

vch.ca (604) 885-6101

Assessment, treatment, counselling and crisis intervention.

Ministry of Children and Family Development

Counselling for children and families.

www.mcf.gov.bc.ca

Gibsons:

Suite 206-938 Gibsons Way

(604) 886-5525

Sechelt:

5498 Wharf Ave.

(604) 740-8900

AnxietyBC

anxietybc.com

Education, cognitive therapy courses.

Mood Disorders Association of BC

mdabc.net

Support groups, cognitive therapy and wellness programs.

SAFER (604) 675-3985

Education, support and counselling for those who have suicidal thoughts, have attempted suicide.

Support for family members.

The Four Foundations of Self-Care

- **What you eat** (what you put into your body).
- **What you do** (physical activity and rest).
- **How you feel** (emotional wellbeing).
- **How you connect** (healthy relationships).

More articles on Empowering Patients can be found at [FETCH](http://sc.fetchbc.ca) (For Everything That's Community Health) sc.fetchbc.ca

Note: This article was written by Dr. Davidicus Wong and does not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Sunshine Coast Division of Family Practice

Please share this information with your family, friends and anyone else who may find it helpful.

Together we'll create a healthier community and a healthier future.