

Emotional Wellness Toolkit

How you feel can affect your ability to carry out everyday activities, your relationships, and your overall physical and mental health. How you react to your experiences and feelings can change over time. Emotional wellness is the ability to successfully handle life's stresses and adapt to change and difficult times. Below are some tips for protecting and improving emotional health.

LOOK FOR THE POSITIVE

People who are emotionally well have fewer negative emotions and can bounce back from difficulties faster. Another sign of emotional wellness is being able to hold onto positive emotions longer and appreciate good times.

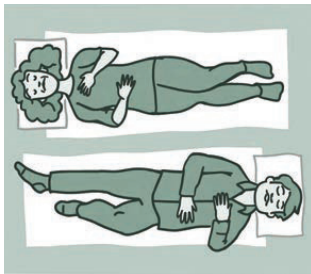


To develop a more positive mindset:

- Remember your good deeds.
- Forgive yourself.
- Practice gratitude. Being thankful stirs up positive emotions.
- Spend time with your friends.
- Explore your beliefs about the meaning and purpose of life.
- Develop healthy physical habits.

MANAGE STRESS

Living with dystonia can be stressful, even under the best of circumstances. Stress can give you a rush of energy when it is needed most. But if stress lasts a long time - a condition known as chronic stress - staying on high alert can become harmful rather than helpful. Learning healthy ways to cope with stress can also boost resilience.



To help manage your stress:

- Get enough sleep.
- Build a social support network.
- Show compassion for yourself.
- Ask for help.
- Exercise regularly.
- Set priorities.
- Try relaxation methods.

GET QUALITY SLEEP

Dystonia can make it difficult to sleep. Sometimes, to fit everything we need to do in a day, we often sacrifice sleep. But sleep affects both mental and physical health. It is vital to your well-being. Sleep helps you think more clearly, have quicker reflexes, and improves focus. Take steps to make sure you regularly get a good night's sleep.



To get better quality sleep:

- Go to bed and get up each day at the same time.
- Sleep in a dark, quiet place.
- Exercise daily.
- Limit the use of electronics before bed.
- Relax before bedtime.
- Avoid alcohol before bedtime and stimulants like caffeine or nicotine.
- Talk to your doctor if you have ongoing sleep problems.

BE MINDFUL

The concept of mindfulness is simple. This practice is about being aware of what is happening in the present moment - noticing all that is going on inside and all that is happening around you. It means not living your life on autopilot. Becoming a more mindful person takes time and practice. Here are some tips to help you get started.



To be more mindful:

- Take moments throughout the day to pause and notice the sights and sounds around you.
- Take deep breaths in through your nose to a slow count of 4, hold for 1 second, and then exhale through the mouth to a slow count of 5. Repeat often.
- Practice mindful eating. Be aware of each bite and feel when you are full.
- Be aware of your body. Do a mental scan from the top of your head to the bottom of your toes, bringing your attention to how each body part feels.
- Seek out mindfulness resources to help improve your practice.

COPE WITH LOSS

Loss can include a death, divorce, or any circumstance in which your world changes - including the lifestyle and ability changes often caused by dystonia. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. Although loss can feel overwhelming, it is possible to move through the grieving process. Learn healthy ways to help you through difficult times.



To help cope with loss:

- Take care of yourself.
- Share your feelings with a caring friend or family member.
- Try not to make any major changes right away after a painful loss.
- Join a DMRF Canada Support Group.
- Consider professional mental health support.
- Talk to your doctor if you are having trouble with everyday activities.
- Be patient. Grief takes time.

STRENGTHEN SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Social connections help protect health and lengthen life. Scientists are finding that our links to other people can have powerful effects on our health—both emotionally and physically. Whether with romantic partners, family, friends, neighbors, or others, social connections can influence our biology and well-being.



To build a healthy support system:

- Share good habits with family and friends, such as exercise or wellness activities.
- Ask for help from others—especially if you are also coping with dystonia.
- Join a group focused on a favorite hobby, such as reading, hiking, or painting.
- Take a class to learn something new.
- Experience different places and meet new people.
- Join a DMRF Canada support group.
- Volunteer for things you care about in your community, including a community group, school, library, or place of worship.

Living your best life with dystonia requires a commitment to taking care of yourself. DMRF Canada is here to support you in your journey. Visit: www.dystoniacanada.org/resources for additional tips and tools for living well with dystonia.

**Reprinted with permission from DMRF Dystonia Dialogue, Spring 2022 Vol 45, No.1. Adapted from Your Healthiest Self: Emotional Wellness Toolkit. Source: www.nih.gov/wellnesstoolkits. NIH is a part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the medical research agency in the United States. For more details visit: www.nih.gov*