

CATHOLIC TEACHERS'
MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS SERIES

**Strategies
to Promote
Mental Health
and Wellness**

It is important to self-reflect and take your own mental health needs seriously. There are various actions or habits you can incorporate into your daily routine that will help you better handle your responses to people, situations, and circumstances. By doing so, you can lessen the negative effects of stress on your life and enhance your overall health and well-being. To support Catholic teachers and help you reflect on your mental health and wellness, the Association developed the **Catholic Teachers' Mental Health and Wellness Series**. In this resource we share some strategies to promote health and wellness in your profession.

Find Your Retreat

Whether it is a cottage, a dedicated room in your home, a good book you can get lost in, or music you love to listen to, have a retreat from your thoughts, incidents, and anxieties and let them go.

Spend Time With Your Loved Ones

Quality time with the people who lift you up is vital to your mental health. This includes quality time with intimate partners, children, friends, and family (whether chosen or hereditary). It could also mean time in community, such as an affinity group, a spiritual home, a group exercise class, or any other context in which you feel you belong.

Connect to Your Breath

We can go without food or water for some time, but we cannot last without breathing. Breathing is our life force. Taking a few minutes to focus on breathing deeply can ground you, reduce blood pressure, and help you to focus. Deep, controlled breathing is an easy stress-relief technique that is fast, simple, free, and can be done anywhere at any time.

Prayer and Meditation

Prayer and/or meditation can help to relax the body, calm the mind, and promote a stronger mind-body-soul connection. There are various prayer and meditation techniques that can promote relaxation, increase mental alertness, strengthen focus, and improve your physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.



Being Mindful

Mindfulness is the moment-by-moment awareness of thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and your surrounding environment. It is about learning to pay attention to your thoughts and feelings and what is being sensed at each moment, without judgment or focus on the past or future. Being mindful can help with how you perceive situations and circumstances, in turn reducing the amount you stress over them.

Focus on the Positive

Focus on positive behaviours and thoughts that are in alignment with what you want for yourself, like happiness and good health. Avoid negative people and do not dwell on the negative. Foster a positive outlook and attract positive people and results into your life.

Get Enough Sleep

Adequate sleep is important for managing physical, mental, and emotional health and well-being. Seven to eight hours a night is recommended. The effects of lost sleep are cumulative and can result in, among other things, impaired reaction time and information processing, as well as short-term memory loss. Research shows that taking a 15- to 30-minute nap can increase alertness, improve cognitive functioning, and help reduce stress.



Laughter is the Best Medicine

Laughing reduces the level of stress hormones in the body. It also triggers the release of health-enhancing hormones like endorphins, which are the body's natural painkillers.

Give Your Brain a Break

Try not to overthink every detail of your day or your conversations. Do not over plan your day down to the last minute or overstimulate your brain with too much noise and distraction. Give your brain a moment to rest, take a break, and refocus. This is especially important prior to sleep.

Exercise and Diet

Exercising regularly is known to have positive impacts on not just your physical health, but your mental health as well. When you feel frustrated or anxious, engage in some form of physical activity, like a walk around the block. Even a short walk a few times a day can help reduce stress and relieve symptoms of depression. Eat a well-balanced meal to ensure that your body gets the energy, vitamins, and minerals it requires. Eat regularly throughout the day to ensure that blood sugar levels stay consistent. Take the time needed to mindfully eat your meal without rushing.

Take a Break from Your Electronic Devices

When you place your focus and attention on your electronic device, it is often at the expense of attention elsewhere. Also, screen focus generally means sedentary attention. Thus, taking a break can improve your health by freeing time for exercise, having fun playing or exploring with loved ones, making social connections, building community, and boosting your mood. (Adapted from [Mayo Clinic Health Systems May 21, 2021](#)).

Get Help When Needed

By recognizing and addressing problems early, you can usually prevent more serious issues from developing. Your school colleagues, local OECTA unit office, and the Counselling and Member Services staff at Provincial Office can assist and suggest strategies to help you deal with different problems you experience. Your local OECTA unit release officer can help you obtain support through your employee assistance program (EAP), and will be able to answer questions regarding access to sick leave, long-term disability (LTD), and/or workplace accommodations.

**Do not be afraid to ask for help.
Remember that you are not alone.**

OECTA Counselling and Member
Services **1-800-268-7230**



>> Additional Resources available at catholicteachers.ca

Catholic Teachers' Mental Health and Wellness Series

- [Distinguishing Mental Health from Mental Illness](#)
- [Strategies to Promote Mental Health](#)
- [Resource List - Mental Health and Wellness](#)
- [Understanding Anxiety and Depression](#)
- [Understanding Mental Illness](#)
- [Understanding Stress](#)

Catholic Teachers' Safer Spaces Series

- [Safer Spaces? Braver Spaces? - Our Collective Responsibility](#)
- [Understanding Trauma](#)
- [Being a Trauma-informed Release Officer](#)