

GOOD HEALTH NEWS: Focus on Being Real and Mental Health Week May 4th to 10th

During the Canadian Mental Health Association's week, let's #Get Real about how we really feel! Learn more at <http://mentalhealthweek.ca#TogetherApart>. We say we're fine, when asked---the truth may be that we're sad, exhausted or just freaking out. Loneliness and social isolation, even before the pandemic were serious concerns. Now, more than ever, because of physical distancing, it's very important to make our social ties stronger and to connect with family and friends, especially those living alone.



Every time we just go through the motions, we miss out on the chance to connect for real. In times of crisis, like the Covid-19 challenge, we need each other more than ever. If you're feeling great, that's WONDERFUL to hear too---we just need to share our real feelings with others.

Stay connected on social media, using the hashtags #Get Real and Mental Health Week.

ZOOM Chats, Calls are GOOD for you!

We can all stay in touch, even though we are physically apart, by phone calls, texts, playing online games and holding online movie nights, coffee dates and birthday parties virtually (remember we've got Mother's Day coming up next weekend). Connecting doesn't just feel good in the moment---it's good for our mental health!



Studies show that video calls, like ZOOM can be good for your emotions. They can reduce depressive symptoms by nearly 50%, compared to audio, email connections. The researchers also found that while in-person conversations provided the biggest feeling of bonding, video chats were close behind, they can also reduce anxiety. "When you are on your own, anxieties and worries can seem much bigger, than when we can share them with a friend. Having a chat, laugh or sharing worries with people can make us feel less anxious" (Journal of Psychosocial Research). So, if you're invited to participate in ZOOM, say/respond YES and get ready for the mental health benefits!

SEVEN AMAZING, SCIENCE-BACKED WAYS WALKING CHANGES YOUR BRAIN FOR THE BETTER

Even 7 minutes a day of walking helps---get up to 20 to 30 minutes and you're a CHAMPION!

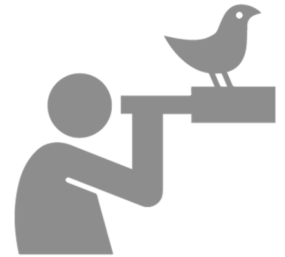
1. It lowers your risk of developing depression. Exercising, for just 20 Minutes a day can cut your risk of developing depression by a third (Review led by King's College, London)
2. It improves your overall brain functioning. Just 20 to 30 minutes improves overall cognitive function: you perform better on tests and have a quicker, more accurate reaction time (Harvard Health 2016).
3. Walking releases endorphins. Just 10 minutes of walking can give you a boost, by decreasing how sensitive you are to stress and pain (UK, 2028 report)
4. It helps with Mental and Physical fatigue. A 2008 study (University of Georgia) found that just 20 minutes of walking, 3 times a week can reduce tiredness levels by 65 per cent.



5. Walking, even for short periods can improve your memory and forgetfulness. A report (NPR) stated that walking can increase the size of your hippocampus---the region of your brain that plays a critical role in forming and storing memories.
6. It improves creativity. After 20 minutes, you become more creative and think more sharply. A Stanford study, 2014, reported that walking increased a person's "creative output", by an average of 60 percent---helps to unblock "writer's block" or find an answer to a problem!
7. Walking increases blood flow in your brain. Blood flow helps to bring "nutrients to your cells and takes away toxins" (website, Brain MD Health).

Staying at Home and Helping Birds:

Bird Watching, even from your balcony or high rise window can give you a great hobby or help you enjoy nature outdoors!



1. Provide a birdbath, or hanging water source for birds to drink and clean themselves. Make your garden or yard "a one-stop-shop" for happy birds.
2. Feed birds in your yard or on your balcony. Putting up birdfeeders, such as the ones Matt, Tim and Karen Poste made for sale (all proceeds were donated to REACH), or even scattering birdseed on the ground, greatly helps the birds that are living near you, year-round. If snow covers the ground, put up a suet feeder, or make a peanut butter pinecone (simply spread natural peanut butter on a pinecone and roll it in unsalted sunflower seeds or peanuts).
3. Remove last year's nests from birdhouses and nesting boxes, before new bird tenants return to take up residence.
4. Keep cats indoors. Pet cats do not have to go outside to hunt in order to have a good life. Some people think that putting a small bell around a cat's neck, if it is outdoors, helps to warn and protect birds, but of course, this does not work as well as simply keeping your cat indoors.
5. Prevent picture window collisions. Sometimes, a big pane of glass can reflect the outdoors, like a mirror. Birds can't tell that its glass and they crash right into it. Break up the reflections by coving the outside, or inside with decals, or hang suncatchers, crystals, etc.
6. Safely discard plastic bags and bottle holders. Before you recycle them, take a pair of scissors and snip open every loop. Tie knots in plastic bags before you discard/recycle them, so that birds don't get trapped in them. Birds who scavenge in landfills and dumps, especially seagulls, can be injured by getting their heads caught in the plastic loops that hold soda cans/bottles together.
7. Avoid chemical pesticides as much as possible. Don't use chemical insect foggers in your yard---switch to natural, nontoxic methods of pest control for garden plants and flowers. Support farmers who are committed to growing food without using toxic chemicals, by eating sustainably grown food as much as possible.