

MENTAL HYGIENE CHALLENGE



The Royal Mental Hygiene Challenge Toolkit

We're so glad you're interested in starting your own Mental Hygiene Challenge! Pledge to take 10 minutes daily for 30 days to engage in simple, research-based activities to boost your mental health. These 10 minutes can be done all at once, or broken up into shorter intervals - it's up to you!

Participating in this challenge means that you're taking steps to really focus on your mental health.

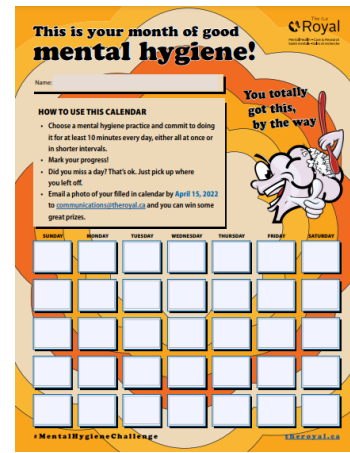
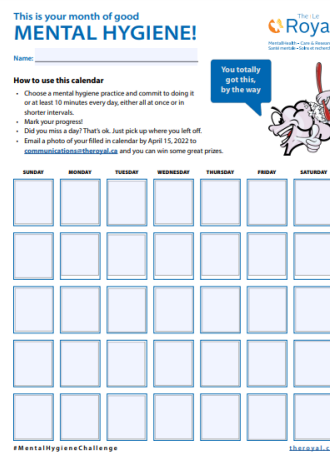
This toolkit contains everything you need for the challenge:

- Mental Hygiene Challenge Progress Tracking Calendars
- Expert-Approved Mental Hygiene Exercises & Demonstrations
- Mental Wellness Resources & Mobile Apps
- Mental Health Emergency & Crisis Lines
- Disclaimer
- Contact Information

Mental Hygiene Challenge Progress-Tracking Calendars

Choose one of our free tracking calendars to keep tabs on your progress. It's optional, but we highly recommend it. Simply add the date into each box and check off when you've completed your mental hygiene for the day! The calendar is a handy reminder, and it will help keep you accountable to yourself.

There are three calendar styles to choose from: [Rainbow Unicorn Power](#), [Super Minimalist](#), or [Positively Vintage](#). Choose one, print it out and post it where you can see it every day, or fill it out electronically.



If you prefer tracking your progress on your mobile device, [download this PNG file](#) and save it to your photos. To track your progress, edit the photo with a checkmark or your favourite emoji. (We recommend giving yourself gold stars, but you do you!)



Expert-Approved Mental Hygiene Exercises & Demonstrations

These are the mental hygiene practices recommended by experts at The Royal. (Remember, spend at least 10 minutes a day doing one or more exercises either all at once or in smaller intervals.) If you need more guidance, or tips on how to switch things up, click on the links associated with each practice for a short video.

Breathing stillness (20-60 seconds)

Sit up straight with your feet flat on the ground and hands resting on your stomach. Close your eyes and breathe in deeply through your nose, concentrating on the feeling of the air moving through your nostrils. Take two or three slow, deep breaths, focusing as you inhale and exhale, which can help pause mental chatter. Repeat this exercise once every hour during waking hours.

[Watch a demonstration video.](#)

Gratitude exercise (2-5 minutes)

Find a comfortable and quiet spot to sit and write down three things you appreciate about your life and for which you are grateful. When you're done, re-read them, slowly pausing between each one to truly feel gratitude and elicit a sense of appreciation. This can be done at any time of day that works for you.

[Watch a demonstration video.](#)

Chanting (Kirtan Kriya) (6-12 minutes)

This exercise combines sounds with finger movements which can help induce relaxation of the brain. Sit up straight in a comfortable position. Breathe in gently, and on the exhale say *Ta, Sa, Na, Ma*. Time the sound with finger motions: Ta – touch your thumb and index finger together lightly; Sa – thumb and middle finger; Na – thumb and ring finger; Ma – thumb and pinky. Repeat with a gentle voice. Try to visualize an energizing light – like the warm rays of the sun – gently enveloping you. Do your best! If you are not comfortable with visualization, simply focus on the sounds and finger motions.

[Watch a demonstration video.](#)

Journaling (5-10 minutes)

Find a comfortable and quiet spot to sit and spend five minutes writing down whatever is on your mind. Write your thoughts without judgment. Don't worry about style or grammar, just let the words flow freely from your mind. Consider wrapping up the writing session by highlighting positive attributes you appreciate about yourself and others.

[Watch a demonstration video.](#)

Nature exposure (10-90 minutes)

Go for a stroll in a forest, park, field, or any place with plant and/or animal life. Spending time around a few trees, a small garden, and even indoor plants can be beneficial too. Use your senses. As you walk, look up at the trees and watch the leaves rustling in the wind. Listen to the birds singing. Observe the squirrels moving from tree to tree. Notice the amazing detail and variations in your houseplants. Try and connect with the natural world around you. Each tree has trillions of cells, and each cell has trillions of atoms interacting in infinitely complex ways. Open yourself to the wonder of nature. Can you elicit a sense of awe?

[Watch a demonstration video.](#)

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Mindfulness meditation (5-20 minutes)

This practice helps you become aware of what you sense and feel in the moment, while purposely avoiding judging or interpreting these sensations. Sit comfortably with your eyes closed and focus on your breathing. Notice your belly and chest as the air moves in and out of your lungs, or in and out of your nostrils. As a general rule, gently push your belly out on inspiration, letting it contract on its own during expiration. Also, mindfulness can also be applied when engaging in various hobbies and activities (e.g. knitting, wood working, bread making). Spend some time focussing on the physical aspects of that hobby: Notice how the dough feels on your fingers, observe the details of the texture of the fabric, etc. During mindfulness practice, your mind will wander, but this is normal. When this happens, gently and kindly bring yourself back to your original focus.

[Watch a demonstration video.](#)

Thinking through vs. thinking about (5-10 minutes)

This technique helps 'think through' what is on your mind, rather than thinking about it. Sit comfortably and write down a problem or challenge that's on your mind and take some time to think *through* it. How can you approach this challenge? What are the possible solutions, the benefits, and negatives of each possible solution? How can you execute the solution and what are the near-term action items? Jot down the answers. Remember, don't just think about your challenges, really think *through* them.

[Watch a demonstration video.](#)

Pro-social prayer (2-5 minutes)

This exercise is about nurturing a kind-hearted attitude towards life and wellbeing, rather than prayer specific to any one belief system. Focus your thoughts on well wishes for others. For example: "I pray with sincerity and earnestness for the well-being of others including loved ones, friends, and those I may not have a positive connection with or might find challenging. I pray for courage and compassion to be of service to the greater good. I pray in thanks for the many blessings that have been bestowed upon me." Consider your own variations.

[Watch a demonstration video.](#)

Coordinated breathing and walking (1-3 minutes)

This practice can be done anywhere, even when walking short distances in parking lots and office hallways. Coordinate each breath with your steps. Inhale as you take three steps, exhale while taking four steps, repeating for as long as it feels comfortable. (Ideally, take one more step on the exhale.) Try to make the breathing smooth while matching it with your steps. This type of walking meditation can be done for any time interval and helps reduce the mental chatter in our minds.

[Watch a demonstration video.](#)

Positive psychology exercise (5-20 minutes)

This writing exercise involves deliberately contemplating positive aspects of yourself and writing them down. Focus on your positive attributes, you are a wonderful and unique expression of life! These phrases might help you get started: "I was really happy when..." / "Something that my friends like about me is..." / "I am very proud of..." / "My family was very happy with me when I..." / "At work (or in school), I am very good at..." / "Something that makes me really unique is..."

[Watch a demonstration video.](#)

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Guided meditation (10-20 minutes)

In this type of meditation, experts provide the focal point and gentle instruction. There are many types of guided meditations online, including ones that are free of charge. (Ask around and get a personal recommendation!) You can find guided meditations on YouTube. Find two or three that you enjoy and give yourself time to feel the calming effects. Meditation takes practice, so be kind and patient with yourself.

[Watch a demonstration video.](#)

Mental Wellness Resources & Mobile Apps

Need help right now? Check out some of the following resources and mobile apps.

General resources

- [AccessMHA](#) – Service to help navigate the mental health system
- [How to Cultivate Resilience](#) – Infographic
- [8 Great Self Help Books About Coping With Anxiety](#)
- [Stress Toolkit for Students](#)
- [Mental Health, Substance Use and COVID-19](#), from Ottawa Public Health
- [SMART Recovery](#) – Self-led online program
- [Virtual Addiction Counselling](#)
- [Wellness Together Canada](#) – Online resources funded by Health Canada
- [Psychology Tools](#) – Online therapy resources
- [Mental Health Online](#) – Online services and programs
- [Mind Beacon](#) – Digital CBT with a trained therapist
- [BounceBack Ontario](#) – Self-Guided CBT with trained coaches
- [Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Worksheets](#)

Mobile apps

- Healthy Minds, from The Royal – [Apple](#) | [Android](#)
- Managing your Stress and Anxiety, from CAMH – [Apple](#) | [Android](#)
- MindShift CBT, from Anxiety Canada – [Apple](#) | [Android](#)
- BeGameReady, from The Royal – [Apple](#) | [Android](#)
- Mindfulness Coach, from US Veterans Affairs – [Apple](#) | [Android](#)
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Insomnia, from US Veterans Affairs – [Apple](#) | [Android](#)
- Operational Stress Injury (OSI) Connect, from The Royal – [Apple](#) | [Android](#)
- PTSD Coach Canada, from the Government of Canada – [Apple](#) | [Android](#)

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Mental Health Emergency & Crisis Lines

If you are experiencing an emergency, please go to the emergency department of your nearest general hospital or call 911. If you are in distress and need someone to talk to, reach out to one of the distress centres listed below:

- Mental Health Crisis Line – 1+ (866) 996-0991
- Ottawa and the counties of Prescott Russell, Renfrew and Stormont Dundas and Glengarry – 1+ (613) 722-6914
- Leeds & Grenville district – 1+ (866) 281-2911
- Pembroke Regional Hospital Mobile Crisis Team – 1+ (613) 732-3675 ext. 8116 or 1+ (866) 996-0991
- Youth Services Bureau 24/7 Crisis Line – 1+ (613) 260-2360 or 1+ (877) 377-7775

Disclaimer

The content of this toolkit, such as text, graphics, videos, images, and other material, is for informational purposes and is not a substitute for professional advice, diagnosis, or treatment. If you need advice regarding your mental health or substance use, please consult a qualified professional.

Any action in response to the information provided in this website or related social media networks is at your own risk.

Contact Information

If you have any questions, concerns, or feedback, please contact Communications@theroyal.ca.