

Over one in four Canadian workers report their day-to-day lives to be highly stressful. With overwork cited as a major contributor, are Canadians bad at taking a break?

**What is a "real" break?**

"What rest means to one person is not the same for another," says Constance Lynn Hummel, a Vancouver-based registered clinical counsellor, and founder of The Business of Helping.

One commonality for rest, however, is being present in a moment. We can only truly do one thing at a time," explains Hummel. "So if we actually intentionally do one thing at a time, we're not going to feel pulled in so many different directions."

**Add rest to your routine**

"If we don't carve out the time for breaks, we generally don't get them," says Hummel, who tells her clients to schedule time not only for rest, but also time to think about the things they can't address in the present moment.

"If we don't create a space in which we can actually focus on solving whatever the problem is, it becomes the thing that buzzes around with us forever," she tells *Wellness Matters*.

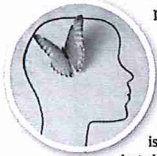
"There are always going to be a hundred things taking up your space in your life," says Hummel. The goal is to make taking a break a routine part of life, rather than waiting until illness or burnout force you to rest.

# Take a Break



## Mental Health Week

According to a Nanos research poll released by the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) in June 2015, 94 per cent of Canadians said mental health conditions should receive the same or higher funding priority compared to physical health conditions."



The astounding number reveals that Canadians are interested not only in increasing awareness of mental health issues across the country, but also in exacting government policy and funding changes. As we approach this year's Mental Health Week, May 1-7, here are some of the ways you can get involved to end stigma and spread the life-changing work of the CMHA across Canada.

**Ride Don't Hide**

This bike ride hosted by the CMHA in over 32 communities across Canada aims to increase awareness and help break the stigma surrounding mental health, while raising essential funds to support mental health programs. [ridedonthide.com](http://ridedonthide.com)

**Bounce Back®**

This free program available in B.C., Manitoba and Ontario teaches effective skills to help adults overcome early symptoms of depression and improve their mental health. [bouncebackbc.com](http://bouncebackbc.com)

**Living Life to the Full**

An eight-part interactive course aimed at helping Canadians understand their feelings, thoughts and behaviours, and learn how to use that information to reduce stress and improve mood. [livinglifetothefull.ca](http://livinglifetothefull.ca)

**My Life, It's Cool to Talk about It**

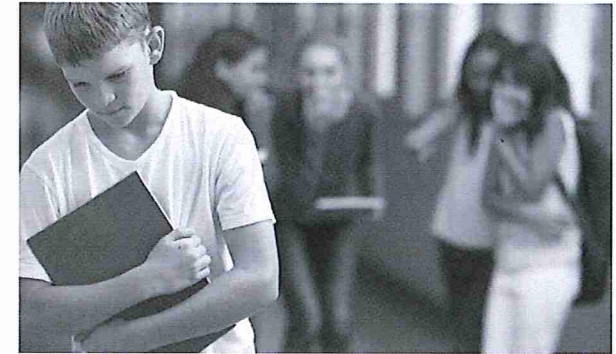
Aimed at high school teachers and mental health providers working with youth, this guide offers activities, information and teaching tools to promote the development of personal and social skills, including self-esteem, stress management and problem solving. [mavbecstcool.ca](http://mavbecstcool.ca)

**National Council of Persons with Lived Experience (NCPLE)**

Persons with first-hand, lived experience of mental health issues and/or the mental health system are encouraged to participate. Together with the CMHA, the NCPLE advises, collaborates and engages with the wider mental health community. [cmha.ca](http://cmha.ca)

For resources and to learn more, visit [cmha.ca](http://cmha.ca).

"Not until we are lost do we begin to understand ourselves."  
— Henry David Thoreau, philosopher



According to a 2015 Angus Reid poll, 75 per cent of Canadians are bullied at school. Unfortunately, these experiences don't just impact us when we're young.

Donna Marshall, a leading expert on workplace bullying and harassment, and CEO of BizLife Solutions in Toronto, says childhood bullying — whether at home or school — can also bleed into adult lives and relationships.

"It has a very profound psychological and emotional impact on people," says Marshall, who explains that bullying often causes victims to dissociate from and normalize past

## The Effects of Childhood Bullying on Adults

trauma, feel victimized and powerless, or become a bully themselves.

In adulthood, this may materialize in myriad ways. Victims of childhood bullying

may choose partners who are bullies, try to change a "bad" partner by being nicer to them, demonstrate symptoms of PTSD or disrespect others.

Because childhood traumas alter the way we think, Marshall recommends counselling as the most effective way to help us process the painful bullying experiences of our past and change our current behaviours in relationships. She also suggests reaching out to a support group through your family doctor or local hospital, or using other doctor-approved resources.



## Healing From Divorce

By 2038, it's estimated that 41 per cent of Canadian couples will split by their 30th year of marriage. And this stressful event can take a toll on your health.

According to Red Deer, Alberta-based Charla Astels, a certified grief recovery specialist, symptoms like depression, anxiety and lethargy often stem from grief.

"My approach is to treat divorce as the death of a relationship, so we experience it as we would death," says Astels.

To facilitate the grieving process, Astels

suggests beginning with acknowledgement and awareness of what you're experiencing and feeling. Don't isolate or bury yourself in other activities to escape your feelings; instead, share your experience with a friend, colleague or professional to help you validate your emotions.

Mindful meditation can also soothe symptoms of anxiety and depression.

"[Meditation] keeps you completely present to what's happening now and provides you with the clarity of what to do next," explains Astel.

**Helping Children Cope**

Astels offers this advice for helping kids through a parent's divorce:

- "Put on your own oxygen mask first," recommends Astels. "The best way to make sure you're taking proper care of the children is to take proper care of yourself."
- Listen to your children and let them know you are hearing them.
- Maintain routines to keep change to a minimum.



"I like nonsense, it wakes up the brain cells. Fantasy is a necessary ingredient in living, it's a way of looking at life through the wrong end of a telescope." — Dr. Seuss, writer