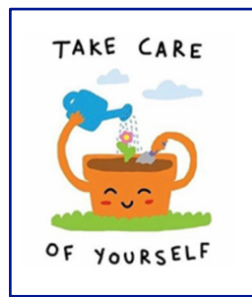


What Small Change Could You Make Today?



There are minor changes we can make to get through these difficult COVID times.

Behavioral theorists tell us to make small changes.

Begin by making one or two small changes to improve your mental, physical, and social wellbeing.

Look at the extensive list and **place a checkmark by the suggestions you already incorporate into your life.**

Later, you will be able to zero in on the one or two suggestions that are manageable for you. ⁽¹⁾

Layering one small change upon another small change will help to improve our overall wellbeing.

Behavioral psychologists suggest *layering* – once one small change becomes habitual, introduce another change.

General suggestions especially beneficial for retirees include:

Create and maintain a routine.

- Maintain a calendar of activities, appointments -- keep busy, but not overwhelmed.
- Create and maintain an evening routine to always get sufficient sleep.

Focus on maintaining mobility.

Movement, we're told, "prevents persistent decline in function and mental processes".⁽²⁾ Do at least one thing every day from under the "*physical movement umbrella*"⁽³⁾ -- walking, leisure, recreational, sports activities ... even household chores.

- Elevate your heart rate, always staying within your physical capabilities.
- Stretch and strengthen your body.
- Dress for changing weather conditions to enjoy nature and fresh.

Focus on the positives. A study "evaluated the link between optimism and overall health in 2,300 older adults. Over two years, people who had a positive outlook were much more likely to stay healthy and enjoy independent living than their less cheerful peers." ⁽⁴⁾

- Journalize at the end of the day; reflect on what has made it a "good" day, and perhaps include events you're anticipating.
- Focus on *regenerative feelings* -- recall joyful experiences, flip through photo albums, sift through memorabilia.

- Get at least one g😊😊d laugh every day -- watch funny pet videos, read funny stories ...
- Relax everyday -- meditate, pray, read inspirational or affirming messages ...
- Practice heart-focused breathing to reduce anxiety and improve wellbeing; it's especially helpful before bed. Use the following link to learn heart-focused breathing.
<https://www.heartmath.org/articles-of-the-heart/the-math-of-heartmath/heart-focused-breathing/>
- Listen to the sounds of happiness – music from your favorite playlist, children playing, pleasant sounds of nature...
- Focus on visual and/or sensory elements -- light a candle, add a pleasant colour to your environment, include blooms or twinkle lights.
- Enjoy a variety of flavours -- make special meals, try new recipes, and create a relaxing environment to enjoy your specialty.

Do something for yourself.

- Once a week, plan for and do one thing you'll be glad you did, perhaps something you've been putting off.
- Engage in activities that interest you - - a craft, hobby, writing, games ...
- Enjoy healthy habits -- drinking more water, eating your veggies ...
- Take special care of your body, perhaps being indulgent -- a long

steam shower, a fragrant bath, getting a massage ...

- Buy yourself a small gift or an occasional treat.
- Be kind, tolerant, even indulgent of yourself.

Do something for brain health;

continuing to be cognitively engaged allows us to maintain and improve learning skills and memory. Being informed enables us to be independent thinkers to critically consider current political or social issues.

- Keep your mind stimulated -- everyday view/read to remain informed, pursue interesting topics, take time to discuss these ideas with others.
- Search out opportunities to gain greater confidence with technology.

Taking care of ourselves is not a selfish act; it is not a reflection of a “me first” attitude or of being self-involved. It is maintaining a quality of life to enjoy those who are special to us and to positively contribute to their lives.

Focus on others; connecting with interesting and positive people is a powerful self-help strategy, especially important during COVID restrictions.

- Do or make something special for someone.
- Invite a friend to have patio coffee/tea or a driveway visit. Make it a masked and physically distanced gathering.
- Frequently make extensive use of FaceTime, Zoom, or other visual communications apps.
- Find occasions to create a sense of togetherness -- watch a movie or program with someone (don't forget the popcorn), play a game ...
- Enjoy -- play with children, enjoy the company of a furry buddy (it can certainly be someone else's furry buddy), care for plants/flowers ...



NWARTA's mission incorporates self-care by:

- maintaining social connections
- being physically active
- keeping connections with our community
- maintaining an engaged healthy lifestyle
- sustaining brain health
- being vibrant and venturesome

Check NWARTA's website --

<https://artabranches.net/nwarta/about-nwarta/our-mission/>

References:

- (1) These suggestions come from a collection of sources including Alberta Health Services, *Virtual Care in a Pandemic*, 2021.
- (2) School of Rehabilitation and Physical Activity at McMaster University, *The Canadian 24-Hour Guidelines*, 2021.
- (3) HabitsforWellbeing.com. *Ready to Reconnect with Movement*, 2021.
<https://www.habitsforwellbeing.com/ready-to-reconnect-to-the-joy-of-movement/>)
- (4) Harvard Medical School, *Optimism and Your Health*, May 2008.
<https://www.health.harvard.edu/heart-health/optimism-and-your-health>)