



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Champlain East
Mental health for all

Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale
Champlain Est
La santé mentale pour tous

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Celebrating Mental Health Week

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The late British philosopher [Alan Watts says](#) was convinced there are no wrong feelings. “If we view the ebb and flow of various emotions as natural and acceptable as changes in weather,” [he once wrote](#), “we could be more at peace with ourselves.”

Almost 50 years after his death, his words still resonate. Mental health experts agree that understanding your emotions is essential to your mental health. Yet this is a challenge for many people.

Emotions are an essential part being human. We're wired to experience a wide range of them, from anger and fear to sadness and excitement. These core emotions help us connect with ourselves and the world around us. They tell us when to flee from danger, for example, or to give someone a hug. The ability to experience emotions has played a pivotal role in our evolution and survival as a species.

Yet many of us are not savvy when it comes to understanding our own feelings. This problem is often rooted in our childhoods. It's possible that our emotions weren't validated or that we were taught that some emotions, such as anger and sadness, are unacceptable while others, such as happiness, aren't. Also, some of us grew up in homes in which feelings weren't discussed.

The inability to acknowledge your emotions can lead to problems. According to [some studies](#), suppressing emotions can make you agitated and aggressive. For example, if you suppress negative feelings toward a colleague during the day, you might snap at your kids that evening.



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Outbursts like these could make you feel less in control and lead to self-destructive behaviour such as substance abuse.

Experts provide counselling to those who need help regulating and experiencing emotions in a constructive way, but you can start the journey on your own.

Try pausing for a few moments during the day to take stock of your mental and physical state — to essentially ask yourself, “How are you feeling?” Taking a series of deep breaths can also help because that process activates the cranial nerve that helps regulate emotions and the nervous system. Above all else, experts say, it’s important for you to accept your emotions. This [self-compassion releases oxytocin, which creates a feeling of calmness](#).

“It’s important to recognize your emotions especially now given the mental challenges that comes with living through a pandemic,” says Angele D’Alessio from the Canadian Mental Health Association.

“We’re committed to doing that.”

This year’s Mental Health Week, to be held May 3-9, will aim to spread the message that naming, expressing and dealing with *all* our emotions is critical to our mental health.

“The message to Canadians this Mental Health Week is clear. To help us get in touch with our emotions, we need to name it, not numb it,” says Angele D’Alessio.

The information provided is not a substitute for professional advice. If you need advice, please consult a qualified health care professional. For further information or if you want to access our services at CMHA, please call 1-800-493-8271 or visit our web site at www.cmha-east.on.ca.