



**Homewood**  
Health | Santé

# CREATING A HEALTHIER WORKPLACE

A week-by-week guide  
to help you focus on  
health and wellness

# THE CONNECTION BETWEEN HEALTHY LIVES AND HEALTHY WORKPLACES



This month, we invite you to explore tools within four corresponding areas of focus. They will help you take action and create health so you feel well at work, at home, and in your community.

## Here are the themes for each week:

Almost everyone can think of few things that would make their lives just a bit easier. Most often these relate to simple things, like time, resources and energy.

Wouldn't it be fantastic to find time to finish that project at work, find time to laugh while cooking a good meal with your family, or find time to bury yourself in a good book?

What if money wasn't an issue, you could take that class you have interest in, and find a way to upcycle your old chair instead of buying a new one?

And how great would it feel to find the source of boundless energy, but also relax and restore to preserve it?

In our quest to help you keep moving forward and improve your life, Homewood Health delivers an array of ready to use, easy to access services that will help steady yourself and find a path in life that feels comfortable and safe.



**WEEK 1 | Healthy Lifestyles**



**WEEK 2 | Mental Health Awareness**



**WEEK 3 | Eat Well, Stay Well**



**WEEK 4 | Volunteerism and Corporate Social Responsibility**

## WEEK 1 HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

# GOOD MORNING, GET MOVING!

When we wake up each day we are confronted by an overwhelming number of messages, all competing for our attention. From the sound of the dog scratching on the door to get let outside, to the smell of coffee brewing, or the bustle of kids doing up zippers before heading out the door, all of these activities signal the start of a new day. It's sometimes hard to keep focused on one thing before the next comes along.

And that's before we add in voicemail, email, text messages, exercise, eating, television programs and radios shows, plus the comings and goings of friends in person or through various social media platforms. It's a lot. Everyone seems to be so busy all the time. And it's creating periods of stress that affect our outlook on whether today will be a good day, or a bad day and whether we feel happy or unfulfilled in our lives.

### **Sifting and sorting through demands**

If we succumbed to all of the demands for our attention, we would likely be so overwhelmed we would want to go back to bed. Instead, we sift, sort and determine what messages are worthy of our time. Often, we sacrifice happiness for the sake of trying to get everything done, but we don't have to.

People who make healthy lifestyle choices and establish boundaries often are more resilient and can manage stress more effectively by making a conscious choice to support themselves. When a person is healthy, happy and feeling well, they can be a source of inspiration and energy to people they encounter throughout the day.

### **Look at your relationship to technology**

With immediate and constant access to friends, family and co-workers, fewer and fewer people are using electronic communication tools to actually talk to each other. Instead, texting, emailing, posting, tweeting and instant messaging may actually be damaging our relationships. The ability to tell how others are feeling by their facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, posture, and tone of voice is a powerful tool in helping connect with others, express what we really mean, navigate challenging personal situations, and build trust.

Try practicing the lost art of conversation – both verbal and non-verbal! Turn off your cell phone and focus on conversations. Listen. Make eye contact. Experience life and live events through your own eyes, not through a screen trying to capture the moment. Become immersed in the moment and you'll appreciate it more. Technology and social media are meant to complement our relationships, not be a substitute for them. Spending too much time connecting with people electronically can leave you feeling more isolated.

For more ideas and resources to help you establish or maintain a healthy lifestyle, visit [homeweb.ca](http://homeweb.ca).



## WEEK 2 MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

# RECOGNIZING HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH

Many people condition themselves to operate under severe stress and high ideals, working too hard, too much and for too long. Years of long hours and extreme workloads combined with emotional demands and pressures to excel can take their toll on physical and emotional health. Eventually, this affects a person's sense of wellness and their relationships.

Feelings of worry, self-doubt, failure, guilt, helplessness, defeat and detachment may be some of the earliest indications that your body is trying to encourage you to slow down and take time for self-care. It's important not to ignore these or other signals such as feeling tired, getting sick repeatedly, experiencing headaches, pain or changes in appetite or sleep habits.

***"Caring for yourself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation"*** ~ Audre Lorde

Remember that everyone wants to see you succeed. And everyone cares. Recognizing that you are trying to do too much is a courageous first step. From there, you can talk about how you are feeling with someone you trust. These small actions demonstrate great strength and self-awareness and are elements of good mental health and resilience.

After reaching out you may feel more motivated, positive and rejuvenated. It's important to keep moving forward with healthy eating, taking vacation, getting enough sleep, making quiet time for self-reflection and staying connected with important people in your life.



### Sticking to a plan: exercise helps

One of the best ways to reduce or eliminate stress is through regular exercise. It also strengthens the heart and lungs, improves energy levels, helps you maintain and achieve a healthy body weight, reduces the risk of some cancers, increases longevity, and helps to improve your overall outlook on life.

It's important to be mentally aware and avoid putting too much pressure on yourself. Being physically active doesn't mean that you have to run a marathon, spend hours at a gym or swim across a huge body of water to reap the benefits. Do something you enjoy. Every day. Because everyone has different levels of physical fitness, you can choose sports, exercise equipment, walking, running, aerobics, weight lifting, dancing, yoga, and much more.

Start small. Take a walk for just 15 minutes a day, then add more time until you are up to 30 minutes. Just remember it doesn't have to be all at once. Park in the farthest corner of the parking lot if you have to so you can incorporate physical activity into your day more easily. According to a Gallup poll, people who fit exercise into their existing schedules, rather than getting up early or altering their work routine, are more successful in the long-term. And don't forget that you need to be able to balance exercise with family, work, and social activities.

For more ideas and resources to help you improve and maintain healthy mental health awareness, visit [homeweb.ca](http://homeweb.ca).

You may want to explore some of the self-care services available through [Plan Smart](#):

- New Parent Support
- Elder and Family Care



**WEEK 3**  
**EAT WELL**  
**STAY WELL**

# NOURISHING & NURTURING

Being aware of the quality, volume and availability of food is important, but often something that many people struggle with. Food gives us the fuel we need to keep our bodies in operating order. Our modern lifestyle has a significant effect on our view of this most primal of needs and looking at our relationship with food can help us determine where we are in relation to having healthy ideas of self-care.

Many people are becoming more aware of the need to ensure the foods we choose are nourishing. Avoiding packaged foods and seeking locally grown produce and protein sources is a great start in becoming more self-aware and examining how you spend your food dollars. Learning how to read and interpret nutrition labels on foods from the grocery store will help you make better decisions too. You may find that trying new recipes to make things you would have bought as packaged convenience foods before is fun, surprisingly easy to do with simple ingredients and may save you money.

Food can also be a catalyst for social interactions because it is a key part of many celebrations and gatherings with family and friends. With the change in seasons and people's thoughts turning to special occasions that help us get through fall and winter, there are going to be endless opportunities to indulge. Why not explore those traditional recipes and look for ways to substitute ingredients that will not sacrifice taste, but extend healthier choices? You will feel better and enjoy more energy.

When eating out, keep the 80/20 rule in mind: allow yourself a few special treats occasionally. Don't choose to miss a meal in order to save up calories for later – it will backfire and result in eating more and your body will treat the food differently.

By not eating, you can fool your body into thinking that food is unavailable and it reacts instinctively by using foods to nourish your brain first and then storing the rest. This can put you out of balance. Remember, you don't need to overeat either, you can politely refuse.

Consuming food is also a nurturing experience. Remember to pace yourself, taking time to enjoy your meal by savouring each mouthful. Relax and sip some water between bites, keeping in mind it takes a few minutes for your brain to realize your stomach is getting full. There are so many benefits to healthy eating and having a healthy relationship with food and once you understand this, you're well on your way to living healthier.

## Nutrition and learning

One of the best ways for you to learn how the kinds of food you consume can help you stay healthy is to meet with a professional nutrition counsellor or registered dietitian. During your conversation they will help you review the kinds of food you have been eating, as well as the frequency and quantities. They will help you understand the science behind food, it's nutrient composition and how those interact with your body as part of the digestion process. You will learn how different preparation technique can alter how quickly a food is absorbed, and how consuming different combinations of food provide you with sustained energy and can improve mental alertness and focus. The link between food and your brain is fascinating. Why not have a conversation about food on a different level? It could change your entire outlook and answer questions that you may have had your whole life.

For more ideas and resources to help you eat well and stay well, visit [homeweb.ca](http://homeweb.ca).



**WEEK 4  
VOLUNTEERISM &  
CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY**

# CREATE HAPPINESS

We all possess the capacity to determine our own levels of happiness and make it a priority. There are some simple things you can do to begin improving your lasting happiness and influence your sense of well-being. To start, try expressing gratitude, practicing optimism and being kind. Maintaining connections with others, nurturing those relationships. Let go of past hurt so you can heal, develop hope and find optimism in the future. Recognize positive experiences you have in your life and reflect on them.

You'll benefit from positive emotions associated with your memories of those experiences and be ready to experience more. One of the best ways to encourage feelings of belonging and self-fulfillment is by volunteering to work with other groups and members of your community.

## Connecting with the community

People need people — we are social by nature. While it's fine to be alone sometimes, there are many health benefits to socializing in some way every day. Being around others helps us build self-esteem, reduce stress and develop a companion of self-esteem: self-worth. Remember you aren't just helping yourself, you are also helping others. Social interactions affect psychological well-being, can promote physical health, as those with a good social network may take better care of themselves by adopting a healthy lifestyle. There is also evidence that being social may help you live a longer life.

One great way to be social and interact with others is to volunteer in your community. Don't be afraid to ask if an organization needs help. Often they will be more than welcoming to you. Volunteering is a great way to meet new people, especially if you are new to an area. It strengthens your ties to the community, and broadens your support network. Getting involved in the community also exposes you to people with common interests, and fun activities. It keeps you in regular contact with others and helps you develop a solid support system, which in turn protects you from stress and depression when you're going through challenging times.

## Practicing social skills is acting responsibly

While some people are naturally outgoing, others are shy and may find it difficult to meet new people. Volunteering makes it easy to practice and develop your social skills, since you are meeting regularly with a group of people with common interests. Once you are doing this consistently, it's easier to branch out and make more friends and contacts. As you exchange information about yourself, you are also influencing their perceptions of your network and even your employer! You also have the ability to introduce people to you and work on increasing self-confidence. You are doing something for others, and realizing a sense of accomplishment. The better you feel about yourself, the more likely you are to have a positive view of your life.

## There are also amazing emotional and physical health benefits

Volunteering is good for your health at any age, but it's especially beneficial for older adults. Studies have found that those who volunteer live longer, even when considering factors like the health of the participants! Volunteering has also been shown to lessen symptoms of chronic pain or heart disease.

Doing volunteer work you find meaningful and interesting can be a relaxing or energizing escape from your day-to-day routine of work, school, or family commitments. It can provide you with avenues to explore your creativity that you don't get to do regularly in your personal and professional life.

We all need to feel loved and supported — especially as we grow older. Connecting with community is important, whether that's just being around other people, or volunteering. Conversation, sharing, helping, and being in touch with others can increase your sense of purpose. Sharing with friends is important, and each connection we make contributes to our well-being.

For more ideas and resources to help you explore volunteering visit [homeweb.ca](http://homeweb.ca).

You may want to explore some of these **Plan Smart Services**:

- Elder and Family Care
- Career Counselling
- Shift Worker Support

