

Chapter 7 Wellness and Writing



- ∞ Self-compassion
- ∞ Meditation

- ∞ Gratitude
- ∞ Journaling
- ∞ Writing

Let's Take Care of Ourselves!

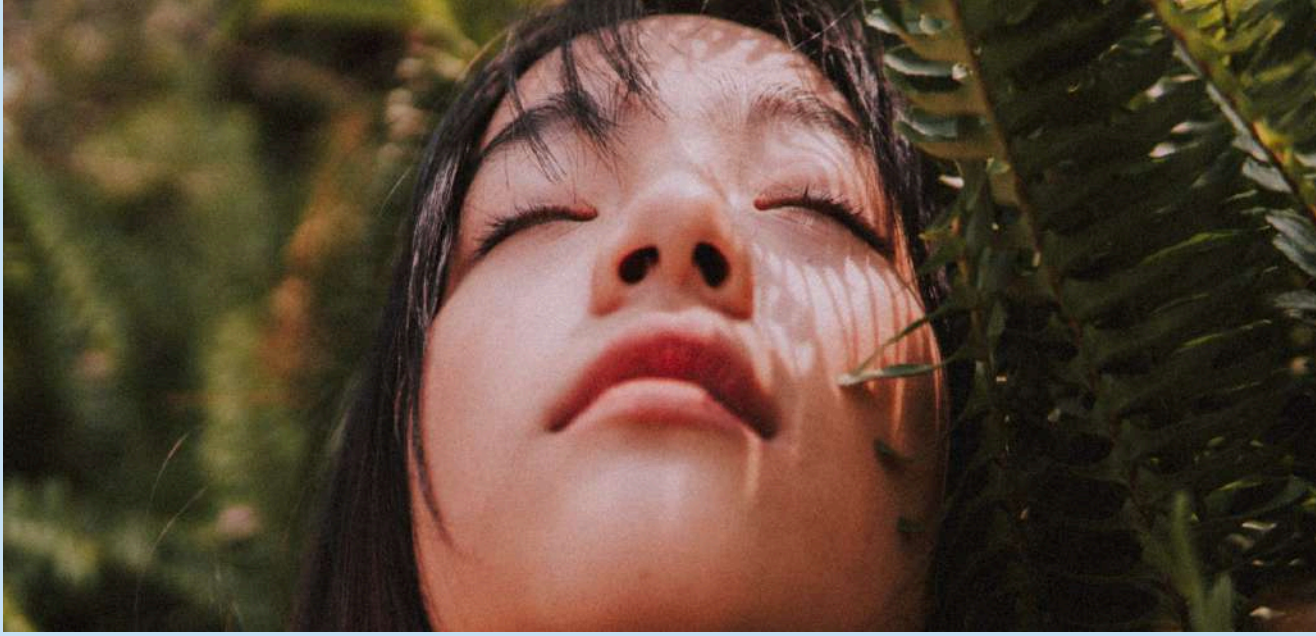
We worry about our physical health, but our mental health also needs attention.

By meditating, exercising our gratitude, and even writing down our emotions are tools that we can use to lift our spirits and release the stress of our routines.

Take a look at our tips of how to take care of your inner self.



Self-Compassion



“Self-compassion is a powerful way to cope with the curveballs life throws – like the COVID-19 pandemic” - Walters et al., 2021.

Self-compassion means showing yourself the same grace and compassion that one would expect of a friend.

Research has shown that practicing self-compassion and cultivating this attitude can improve your wellbeing in addition to reducing feelings of anxiety and depression. Ready to give it a try?

- [Self-Compassion Guided Meditations and Exercises](#)

Dr. Kristin Neff offers 8 exercises on this website. They have been shown to improve self-compassion in people who committ to doing them. You can also listen to different kinds of meditations. It is an occasion to take care of your inner self, be kind with yourself.



Laughter



There are many reasons why we say laughter is the best medicine.

Laughter lowers stress hormones, relaxes the whole body, decreases pain and is a great way to boost immune system.

Laughter adds joy and puts everyone in a good mood. It's one of the easiest and most convenient mood-boosters out there. Laughter triggers the release of endorphins - the happy chemicals in your brains. It is a

good way to stay mentally healthy. Laughter shifts perspective lighten distressing emotions: anger, conflict, etc.

Laughter with others is a great way to bond. Sharing a joke with a grandchild can help build a closer connection.

People who laugh more, on average, live longer! A positive mindset is key to longevity.

In other words, there are many physical and mental health benefits to including more humour in your life.



Ways to bring more laughter in your life

- Start by smiling more. Look at people and smile at them. The others will react positively to your smile.
- Stay positive. Someone upset is certainly less likely to laugh.
- Try to see the humour and positives in everyday situations. Practice and you will get better at it.
- Put things around you that will remind you to take life on the funny side (posters, pictures of people having fun, fun objects).
- You can add more laughter by actively seeking out humour-filled activities or material. Search for jokes to learn. Watch funny movies. Read fun stuff.
- If you use Facebook, search for facebook pages of good jokes. You will then start receiving jokes on a regular basis. Notice what's fun around you and write it down.
- Become friends with positive and funny people. If you hear laugh, get closer to it.
- Bring humour into conversations by asking others to talk about funny things. "What is the funniest things that happen to you lately?"



More examples

- Watch stand-up comics online. There are many available stand-up routines you can watch on streaming services such as Netflix, CBC Gem, HBO, or, for free, at YouTube.
- Find movies and TV series that are funny: Charlie Chaplin, Pink Panther with Steve Martin, Home Alone, Grace and Frankie. You could get inspired by the list of [100 movies](#) on the previous link.
- The comic strip section of your local newspaper has some good

laughs in there!. Save your favourites and mail them to friends so they can share the laugh!

- Many online or satellite radio stations (such as Sirius XM) have plenty of funny podcasts. A few channels you may want to check out if you have Sirius XM include: Comedy Central Radio (channel 95) and Comedy Greats (channel 94).

“Being funny wasn’t a career choice growing up, it was my way out of situations; a way to survive another day.” —Tracy Morgan

Meditation



Meditation is one of the easier ways to work on mental health. In simple terms, meditation is a way to calm the mind and body. It is associated with many psychological and physical benefits.

The best part of meditation is that it is available anywhere! It does not require specialized equipment or space, so you can practice at home, in nature—anywhere you feel comfortable.

Meditation can be performed alone or with a group. Taking meditation classes is a good choice if you are just starting. These classes provide a supportive community.

If you want to start meditating you can use the tips provided in this guide as a starting point. If you explore the links we provide you will notice that there are different types of meditation. Find one that suits you.



Benefits

- Promote better focus, concentration and improve cognitive function (including creativity)
- Reduces stress, help reduce depression and help controls anxiety
- Boost emotional wellbeing
- Improves sleep, helps control pain
- May decrease blood pressure and offset the age-related cognitive decline and delay onset of dementia

Are you still skeptical? Please check out this webpage: [141](#)

[Benefits of Meditation](#)

Meditation Tips

Meditation brings positivity to your day, so take advantage of the morning quiet by starting your day with a meditation session.

Set your alarm earlier than usual, and use that extra time for your meditation practice.

Meditation is about cultivating presence, awareness and non-judgment feelings. When you are mindful of your actions, you pay more attention to what you are doing.



Guided meditation

Meditation classes or guided meditations are widely available. Here you can find some webpages to start your journey in the meditation world. Let's give it a try!

- [Free Guided Meditations](#) This website provides recorded meditations as well as an app.
- [Mindful Meditation for Seniors: Techniques](#)

Here you will find free meditation videos.

- [Mindfulness: How to do it](#)
- [Free Mindfulness Apps Worthy of your Attention.](#)
- [Meditation for older adults](#)
- [Meditation Videos](#)



For many people, the practice of meditation daily does calm them, help them get a new perspective on things and improve their well-being.

Gratitude



Gratitude is an attitude of acknowledging and expressing appreciation for the good in our lives. Recognize good experiences and respond with appreciation to the kindnesses others have done for us.

Having this positive attitude lead to numerous benefits. It helps you feel satisfied and happy with what you have. It helps you find meaning in your life and increases empathy. It helps you deal with challenges, reduces stress and depressive

feelings. It also leads to experiencing other positive emotions and improves your relationships with others.

Ways to develop gratitude

- **Gratitude letters**

Write a gratitude letter to someone whom you want to express appreciation to. The letter can be to someone close to you or to people who have been kind to you - from healthcare professionals to clerks or neighbours.



- **Gratitude Diary**

Many people find that writing a diary, however brief, is helpful. We recommend focussing on the positive. If nothing else comes to mind, start by writing down 5 things you are grateful for each day. These can be quite simple.

Examples: “I am grateful for the fact that I have food on the table” or “I am grateful for the invention of the telephone; it allows me to communicate with others during these difficult times” or “I am grateful for that nice weather today.”

- **Count your blessings**

Think about or share with other people the things you are grateful for. Think about the good you have in your life. For example: “I am grateful for the fact that I am healthy now.”

- **Prayer**

For individuals who are religious or spiritual, prayer provides a good opportunity to express and experience gratitude. Express appreciation toward a higher being about the events in your life that are going well for you. For example: “God, I am grateful that my grandchildren called me today.”

Journaling



Did you ever have a diary as a child or a planner you always used? If so, journaling may be just the activity for you. A journal is like a diary, but can be more versatile. People choose what to put in. Some write down thoughts, events, or plans, while others even add artwork and crafts.

In times where we are unable to socialize with family and friends, it is important that we connect with our mental health.

Keeping a journal is a great way to do so!

The best part about this activity is you can do it anywhere at any time! Typically, you want to journal when you have a free moment in your day.

Benefits

- Reduces stress,
- Boosts your mood and can enhance your sense of well-being
- Calms and clears your mind; improves your working memory and keeps you creative.



- Helps to develop coping strategies
- Helps to identify negative thoughts and behaviours to track day-to-day changes so you can recognize triggers that change your behaviours
- Helps to guide your decisions, to prioritize problems, fears and concerns.



We would love to receive your feedback, your suggestions.

Please write an email to lira_well_being@laurentian.ca or call Josée Turcotte at 705 675-1151 ext. 4238. She speaks French too.

Journaling Types and Apps

There are different types of journals with different purposes. The journals described in this guide can be found in any craft store.

For those with regular access to tablets or computers, we suggest some popular apps on the next page. With one of these apps you will have everything you need at hand to journal where and when you wish.



- **Journal with blank pages**

These types of journals are great for artwork, as they provide a blank canvas for creativity.

App: Autodesk Sketchbook

- **Planner Journal**

These types of journals are great because they come premade with sections for you to plan events that will be happening during the month. They typically act as reminders for events or places you have to go. You can have an electronic version of it by downloading the following application.

App: ClickUp



- **Journal with Bullets**

This type of journal has pages that are covered in a light grid of dots. Using these dots, you can create your own planner. It combines all three types of journals and allows for the most creativity to plan how you wish.

Apps:

- Journey

Journaling Tips

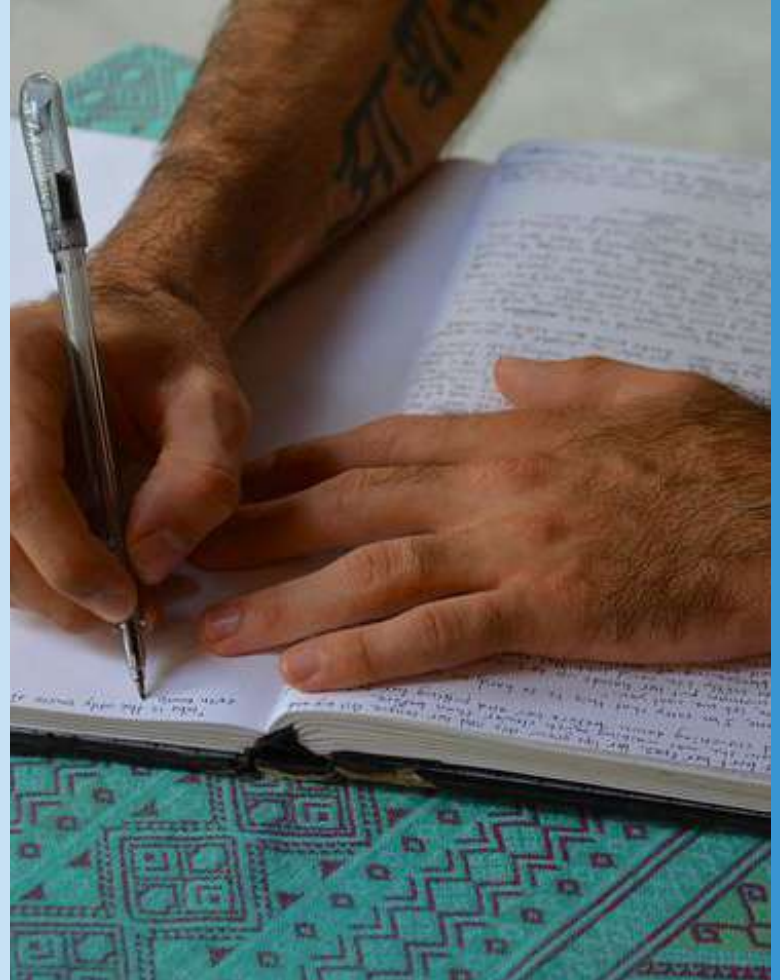
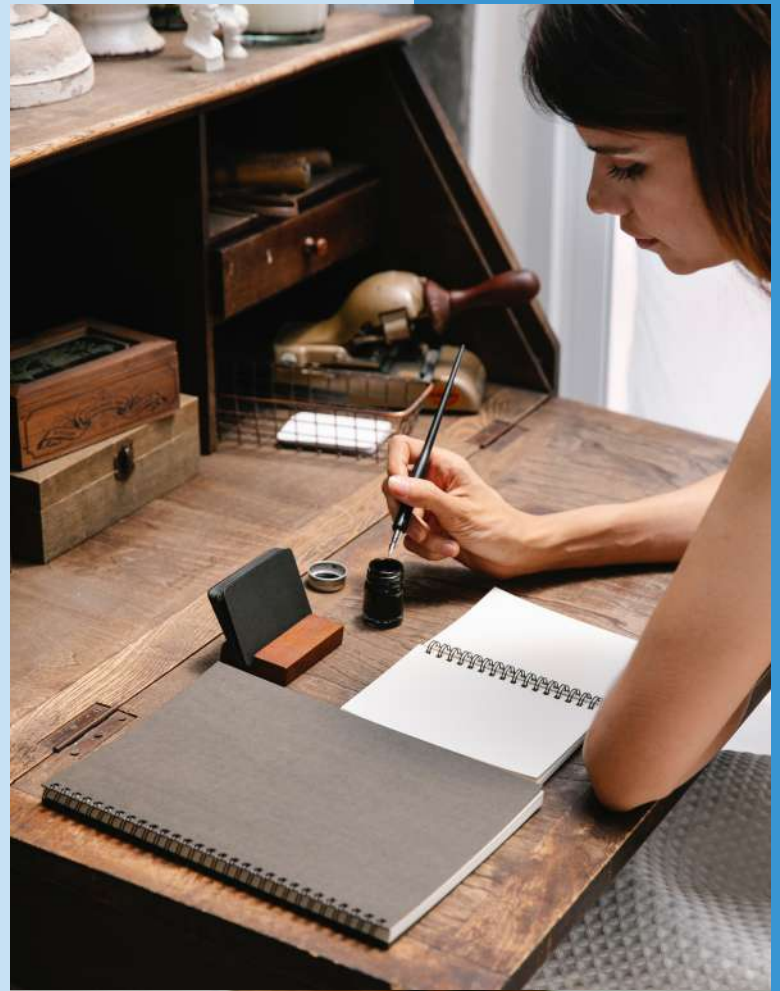
To help you write regularly in your journal, try to set aside a few minutes every day to write.

Make it easy. Keep a pen and paper handy at all times. Then when you want to write down your thoughts, you can. You can also keep a journal in a computer file.

Your journal doesn't need to follow any structure. It's your own private place to discuss whatever you want.

Let the words flow freely. Don't worry about spelling mistakes or what other people might think.

Use your journal as you see fit. You don't have to share your journal with anyone. If you do want to share some of your thoughts with trusted friends and loved ones, you could show them parts of your journal.



Writing



If you can write then you can write a book. There is nothing really stopping you.

Some people jump into writing their favourite sorts of books:

- Fiction, novel, comic
- Art, science, history

However, many seniors have discovered that stories from their lives are treasured by friends and family. Write about :

- your biography, your memoir
- jobs you have done


- things you were or are good at
- your genealogy tree
- knowledge you have
- funny things that happened to you or to people you know
- things that you had to do
- things that existed before (for instance the first laundry machines)
- songs that you know

Most people don't feel very special, but once they find that parts of their life make for an interesting story.



Some resources

- [What You Need to Write Your First Book After Age 50](#)
- [How to write your autobiography: a guide for seniors](#)
- [Four tips to help you start writing you memoirs today](#)

 Some people write short books about themselves to share memories with family and friends. It is good to share and they are wonderful to read.

- [Recording life stories: 5 ways to help seniors share special memories](#)


This last link is meant for someone that would like to help you share your memories. This person could record what you are saying about your life. On this website, they suggest several ways to help you share your memories.


N.B. This information was shared by Vita Life Story on an award winner Best Caregiver Website in 2020.

<https://dailycaring.com/>

It is worth looking at.



 Josée's grand-father, Jean-Paul, was excellent at making home made wines: with sour cherries, with clover or with dandelion. They were delicious! Unfortunately he didn't write down the instructions for us.

 Bruce's father wrote a book on his family history. It included places where he lived, signatures of ancestors, pictures and anecdotes from his life and that of his parents. It allowed his own children and grand-children to know him better. Now that he has passed, it is a treasure for his children and grand-children.