

10 HABITS THAT CAN SUPPORT YOUR MOOD

Feeling a bit down or grumpy? Dragging yourself through the school day? Making a few small changes in your life can improve mood, reduce stress and provide an extra boost of energy.

Here are 10 habits that can help you improve and maintain your mental health:

- 1. Stay connected** – We are social animals. Relationships and social connections are vital for our well-being. Set aside regular time to connect with friends and loved ones, in person when possible. Though you may feel alone sometimes, there are people who care about you – this could be a relative, a friend’s parent, a teacher, a coach, or another adult at school.
- 2. Protect your energy** – Connecting with others is important, but be aware of people who consistently drain your energy, or make you feel off-balance and doubt yourself. Spend time around people you can be yourself with.
- 3. Focus on what is in your control** – Scary or stressful things sometimes happen in the world and we can’t control them. When this upsets you, try focusing your energy on what you can do. What do you want to learn about or get better at? What can you do to support or stand up for others?
- 4. Move your body** – Regular exercise has been proven to lift mood, giving us some of those feel-good endorphins. So blast music and dance alone in your room. Find an app or YouTube channel to guide you through some gentle stretches. Ride your bike or take a walk outdoors, spending time in nature. Need motivation? Go with a friend or borrow your neighbour’s dog!
- 5. Find at least one way to manage stress** – Yoga, meditation, exercise, baking, making art, doing crafts, and journalling are all great ways to reduce stress. Check out how to build a [self-care toolkit](#) (GritX.org).
- 6. Take social media breaks** – Every day, give yourself permission to take some time off social media. You don’t have to be accessible to others or on-call 24/7.
- 7. Make sleep a priority** – Did you know that sleep helps you “download” and retain all the information you have been studying? Another good reason to catch those zzz’s is that a consistent lack of sleep can make us more vulnerable to anxiety. Find out more: [How Can Sleep Affect a Teenagers Education?](#) (Matthew Walker, YouTube video, 1:14) and [Healthy Sleeping](#) (Mental Health Literacy, fact sheet).
- 8. Fuel your body** – When you’re busy and stressed, healthy eating habits often go out the window. Too much caffeine or sugar can make you feel jittery and light-headed. Think of your body and brain like a car that needs high-quality fuel to run properly. Eating a snack with protein every few hours and drinking water throughout the day can help keep your energy up and your mood steady.
- 9. Do something good for others** – We feel good when we help others and give our energy to a purpose bigger than ourselves. This includes doing things like giving up your seat on the bus, helping someone figure out a tricky math problem, picking up garbage on the beach, walking your neighbour’s dog, or volunteering. Contributing to something you care about and making others happy feels empowering and helps make your community a better place.
- 10. Focus on the good** – We all have days when it’s especially hard to get out of a bad mood. But focusing on the good things in life, however small, can soften strong emotions like resentment, envy and frustration. Each night before bed, try writing down three things you are grateful for. Make this a nightly habit to improve your overall well-being and help you sleep better. Find out more: [The Science of Gratitude](#) (Tremendousness, YouTube video, 2:07).

