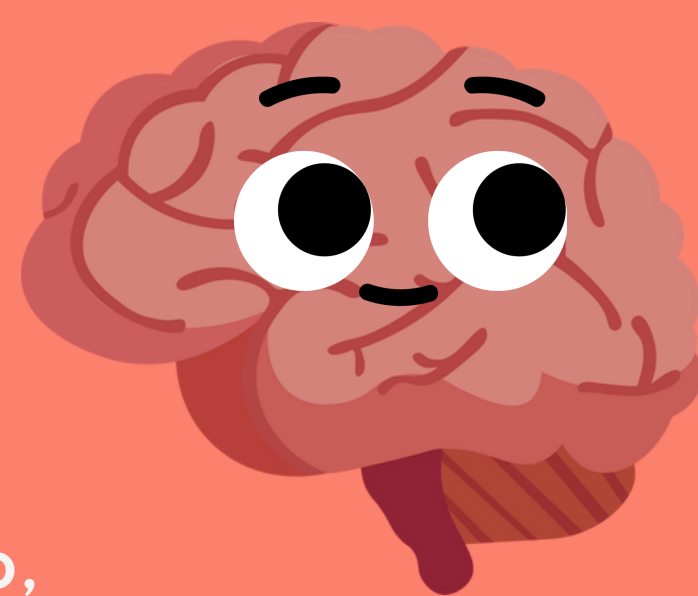


# MENTAL HEALTH AND NUTRITION

FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS  
A COMPILATION OF  
PROMPTS, TIPS, AND  
RESOURCES

RESOURCE DEVELOPED BY  
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APRIL 2023



# MENTAL HEALTH & NUTRITION

## AN INTRODUCTION

### Mental Health can Impact...

- Appetite
- Energy levels
- Food choices
- Motivation



### A Well Balanced Diet can Reduce the Risk of ...

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Other mood disorders



### A quick check in...

Check off the statements that are true for you to see where you are at right now.

- Thinking of what to eat for my next meal stresses me out.
- I wish I had more resources and skill to making cooking easier.
- I stress about whether or not my meals are healthy.
- I enjoy eating vegetable and fruits.

# NAVIGATING THIS TOOL

You can use the following questions to help guide you through this tool on mental health and nutrition.



Do you find it difficult to prepare balanced meals?

→ See "Nutrition & Mental Health" (pages 5-7)

Do you struggle with having energy or time for preparing meals during periods of stress?

→ See "Let's Build a Better Meal" and "Strategies for Self-Help" Pages 7-8

Do you find change to be difficult or overwhelming?

→ See "Strategies for Self-Help" Pages 8-9

Do you find that your emotions drive your eating habits?

→ See "Let's Make a Plan" Page 10



To help you put these ideas into action, remember to fill in the activities at the end of each section!



# NUTRITION & MENTAL HEALTH

## What is a Balanced Meal?

### Canada's Food Guide

Have plenty of  
vegetables and fruits



Eat protein foods



Make water  
your drink  
of choice



Choose  
whole grain  
foods

### But Don't Forget About:

- ✓ Joy & Comfort
- ✓ Cultural Foods
- ✓ Emotional Satiety
- ✓ Easy to make
- ✓ Financial Accessibility
- ✓ Yummy-ness!

A good start!

## WHY SHOULD I CARE ABOUT NUTRITION?

Nutrition alone **cannot** directly improve your mental health, but proper nutrition and hydration will ensure that your body is receiving the adequate level of nutrients required to maintain proper function, and in turn, will **support you** with your mental health goals and status.



## WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

Deficiency in some nutrients can impact your mental health; however, these nutrients should ideally be **consumed through food** and in a **balanced** way.

There is proven research on **vitamin D** and its impact on reducing many negative symptoms (*read more about this on our [blog - scan here](#)*) however, it is always best to consult with a **medical professional**.





# SUPERCHARGE YOUR PLATE

## EASY ADD-ONS TO HAVE:

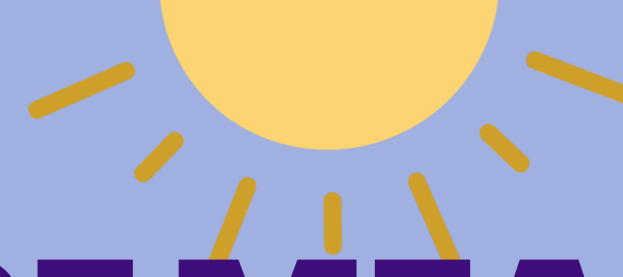
- Frozen veggies (ex: kale, spinach, edamame, carrots)
- Frozen fruit
- Trail mix
- Lentils
- Canned chickpeas & beans
- Dried fruit
- Pre-make rice and freeze it
- Nut butters
- Seeds (ex: sesame, chia, hemp hearts, flax)
- Instant oats
- Pre-made curry sauces
- Kimchi
- Milk and/or fortified milk alternatives
- Fortified orange juice



Sometimes making food is hard or impossible & that's ok. When you aren't able to think about what to eat, having these on hand to eat alone or to add onto what you're already eating, is a great way easily add nutrients.

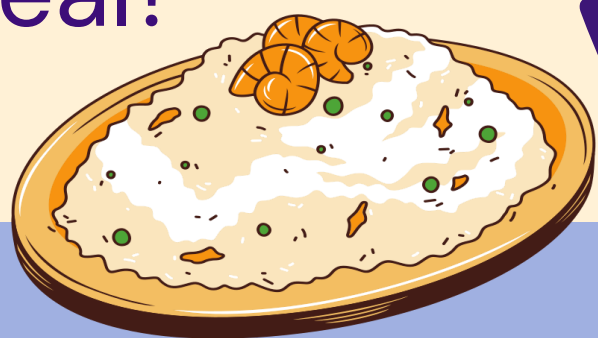
## WHAT OTHER FOODS CAN YOU ADD?

A series of ten horizontal dashed lines for writing.



# LET'S DIVERSIFY THESE MEALS!

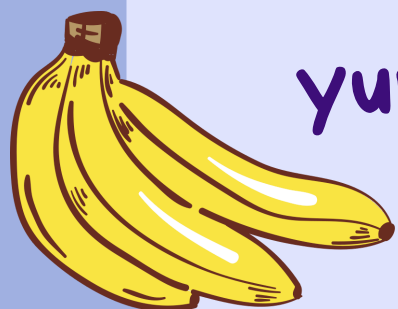
If you're tired and want a quick dinner with some rice and eggs with soy sauce, what's an easy way you can add more nutrients to this meal?



You can try to add some frozen veggies and spinach to make fried rice!

Veggies add nutrients & fibre!

You can try to mash half a banana into peanut butter for a yummy and protein-packed spread



Nut Butters add protein & fat!

You're about to have a banana and some toast for breakfast before going to school. How can we make this meal more complete?

Say you're making a smoothie with water, frozen berries, and spinach. What else can you add to this smoothie?



Try replacing water with your favourite milk/milk alternative and add chia seeds/hemp hearts for a boost of nutrients.

A filling smoothie has protein & fats!

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR ME?

How you feel can greatly impact what you eat, and vice-versa. As you continue to fuel your body with food, you'll begin to feel better in different ways. Proper nutrition can support you as you work through your mental health journey. However, working with other healthcare providers is essential for improving your mental health status.



# Strategies for Self-Help

*There are many challenges that can arise to make meaningful change in your life and attitude towards foods. Here are some strategies you can use the next time you want to address certain feelings and think about things you can do. The last boxes are empty for your own ideas and strategies.*

## When we feel...

## We can try to...

**afraid to make changes**



Remember that there is no such thing as “winning” your health. Change doesn’t have to be all or nothing. Try to do something small, like buying a different bread this week – you’d be surprised how one change can lead to another

**there's not enough time**



Maybe today there isn’t enough time. Not every meal has to have a purpose. If there’s not enough time right now, then eating anything is good enough. There might be more time tomorrow, or on the weekend. It’s okay. Grab some nuts or a fruit for a snack – no prep work needed!

**we don't like or want healthy foods**



Think about what you do like! What could you add to that using some balanced meals concepts? Changing your diet completely isn’t the answer, it’s about how to modify and add foods that will support you and your mental health.

**it all costs too much**



Cost is a very challenging part of eating in general. There are cost saving measures that could help. Try to buy fruits & vegetables that are in season, or use frozen options. Legumes can be a cheaper protein option than meat.

**I'll be made fun of**



Prioritizing your health, no matter what that looks like, will always be worth it. Maybe those that would make fun of you don’t have your best interests at heart. Maybe they are facing barriers to healthy eating too.

# Strategies for Self-Help: Pt 2



## When we feel...

## We can try to...

not good at changing



Try not to think of it as changes – it's adding or modifying to help you in the long run. Also, you change things every day, from what shows you watch to what clothes you wear – you're better at it than you think!

not motivated to make anything new



It can be easy to make the same things every day because they are convenient; however, they do get uninspiring easily. Find inspiration from food TikToks, Reels, or websites to find something new to make, and help you feel excited about your food!

ADD YOUR OWN!





# LET'S MAKE A PLAN



It's not fun to feel stuck or helpless, here are some ideas to help you take charge and gain control over your eating habits



## THE NEXT TIME I FEEL

Here are some emotions related to food choices that might relate to your current mood



Extra Materials on the blog!



## UNWELL

STUCK

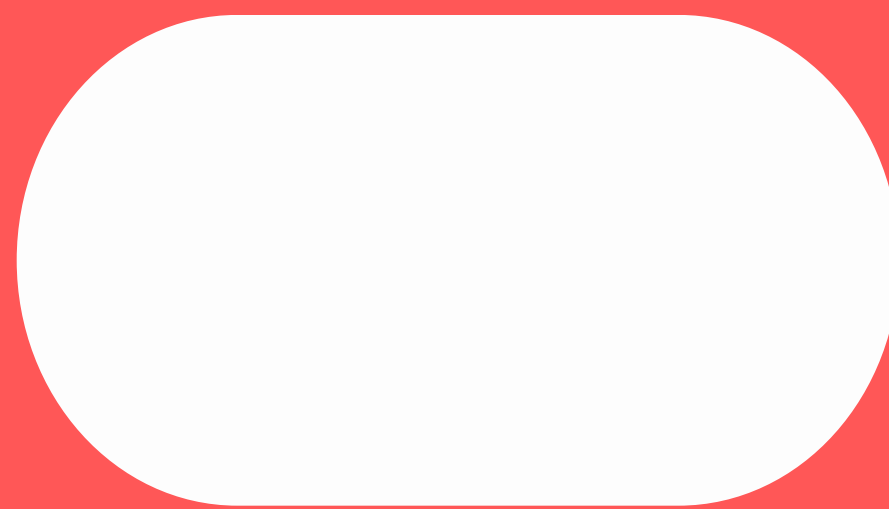
STRESSED

INSECURE

VULNERABLE

NOT LIVING UP TO MY POTENTIAL

PRESSED FOR TIME



## AFFIRM OUR FOOD CHOICES



There is no right or wrong way to enjoy food, you can use the space below to jot down reasons you nourish your body

Examples

Because I want to

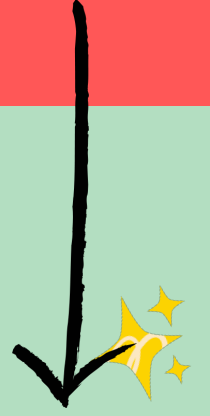
I get hungry...

I love food. The way it tantalizes the senses, it provides comfort!!



## I CAN TRY TO...

Based on the identified emotion, here are some prompts you can choose to follow



GIVE THIS BOOKLET A TRY

HYDRATE WITH SOME WATER

ENJOY MY FAVOURITE SNACK

SUPERCHARGE MY PLATE

## SET 3 NEW GOALS FOR FUTURE YOU

Let's brainstorm a variety of ideas in our back pocket (toolkit) to draw upon for next time



A NEW FOOD I WANT TO TRY THIS WEEK TO FUEL MY BODY IS...

A 4 INGREDIENT RECIPE I WANT TO BROWSE & ADD TO MY ROUTINE IS...

## ADD YOUR OWN!

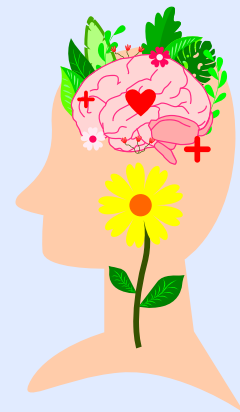
although not an exhaustive list, here are some resources you can use depending on your needs :)

# MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

## Free & Low-cost mental health services



BounceBack Online Program



Kelty's Key Online Program

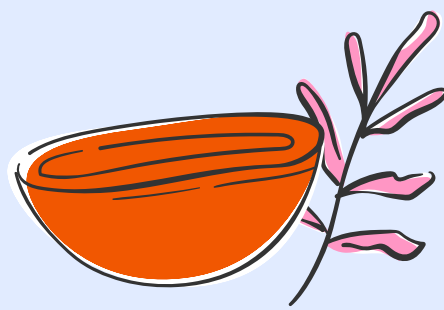


No Fear Counselling Program

## General services:



Crisis Centre BC



Wellness Together Canada

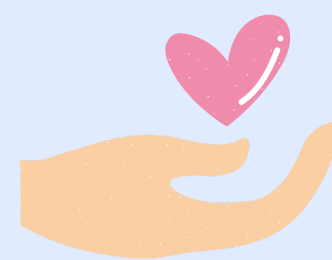


Contact your GP

## University services



UBC Counselling Services



UBC Student Assistance Program



Wellness Center Canvas Page

# FOOD RESOURCES



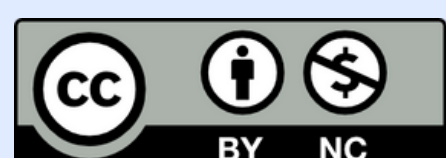
Dial 8-1-1 to contact a dietitian



Canada's Food Guide for nutrition information



Register for the Greater Vancouver Food Bank



Want to learn more?  
Read our blog here!

