

# **What is emotional wellness? A psychotherapist shares what emotional wellness is, along with 7 tips to help you achieve it.**

By Kristen Mayne

Do you remember the last time you laughed out loud with a friend? How about that time you had a job interview and you felt incredibly nervous? Or that time you were frustrated and disappointed something didn't work out? These are just a few examples of the emotional ups and downs we experience throughout life.

Being able to recognize and understand our emotions as we move through our daily lives is an important part of living a happy and healthy life. "Our emotions are indicators. And we can use them as tools. They can help us work through expectations, solve problems and live happier lives," says Elena Mikhaylova. She has a PhD in Psychology and is a Registered Psychotherapist with Bayridge Counselling Centres. We sat down with Mikhaylova to learn about emotional wellness.

## What is emotional wellness?

“Emotional wellness is our ability to be aware of and understand our emotions so we can manage stress and difficulties in our life successfully,” Mikhaylova says.

She says being emotionally well isn’t about being positive all the time or controlling your emotions. “When we experience things like stress or loss, it’s important to process these emotions and not suppress them.”

Part of being a human being means having challenges. However, it’s how you deal with those issues that determines your emotional wellness, Mikhaylova says.

## How to improve emotional wellness

- Trust yourself. Mikhaylova says it’s important to trust yourself. “You need to not only trust your emotions but trust in your ability to feel and interpret your emotions.”
- Listen to your emotions. It’s important to listen to what your emotions are telling you, says Mikhaylova. And don’t shy away from big feelings, she warns. “We can’t neglect our emotions or skip them in an attempt to overcome them.”

- Reflect on your emotions. Journaling is a very helpful tool, says Mikhaylova. “This allows you to increase your awareness by reflecting and assessing your emotions as you navigate your day. For example, you felt good waking up, but your mood took a dive when you opened your email. Journaling can help you discover the trigger. And when you know the trigger, you can work to make improvements or make a change.”
- Explore what makes you happy and what doesn't. Mikhaylova says it's important to recognize what makes you happy in life. Likewise, it's important to take stock of what's making you unhappy. “When you identify what makes you unhappy you can work to address it.” This will help make you more emotionally content, contributing to your emotional wellness. Mikhaylova says it's helpful to have a list of things that make you happy. “When you're not feeling great, it's good to have a list of things that you know will make you feel better. Something like a cup of tea or exercise. Then use it to help lift your mood. You are the only person who's responsible for your mood.”
- Learn to express your emotions in an appropriate way. Mikhaylova says that if you're angry with someone, don't yell at them or say, 'You made me angry.’ “Start by saying ‘I feel angry’ and then name what's upset you,” Mikhaylova says. This invites

empathy from the other person. An accusation, however, puts people on the defensive, making it hard to have a productive conversation.

- Differentiate yourself from material objects. In our society, material objects are the goal for many people. A big house, a fancy car and nice clothes. “But objects don’t make us happy,” says Mikhaylova. Meaningful relationships, a sense of purpose and fulfilling activities — these are all things that can make us happy. “Acknowledge and reward yourself for being happy, not for what you buy,” says Mikhaylova.
- Connect with a mental health professional. Mikhaylova suggests working with a mental health professional to improve your emotional wellness. “This is especially important if your emotions are painful or hard for you to deal with. Working with a therapist can also be fruitful even if you’re feeling okay. Perhaps you just want to function better.”

Mikhaylova says that group therapy can also be beneficial. “Because of COVID-19, emotional well-being has decreased for a lot of people. Group therapy allows you to meet up with other people to share stories and experiences. It lets you see how other people are managing, which can be very beneficial.”

Mikhaylova emphasizes that emotions are important signs and to take notice of them. “This is how we speak to ourselves. We need to trust them and use them to develop a good emotional well-being.”

## Get the support you need

Being able to navigate and understand your emotions is important, but sometimes they can be hard to deal with on your own. Contact your physician if need some professional help.