



INSPIRED *and* WELL

A TOOLKIT FOR SENIORS



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THE WELLNESS MOVEMENT FOR SENIORS IS GROWING IN NEW BRUNSWICK

New Brunswickers of all ages all across the province are becoming actively involved in maintaining or improving wellness for themselves and others. Wellness is more than the absence of disease or illness. It is about feeling good, living well, being healthy and having a good quality of life. Wellness influences your choices about how you live, work and play; how you build your life; how you relate to your families and communities; and how you connect with others.

Healthy aging is an adventurous journey. It is about taking steps that are important to you and using opportunities that can help you maintain a positive sense of well-being and a belief in your own self-worth. It helps keep you resilient as you come to understand and deal with the challenges you face each day. Mental fitness is a central piece of healthy aging.

Mental fitness means having a positive sense of how you feel, think, and act. It can improve your ability to enjoy life and how you approach each day. It can make a difference in how satisfied you feel in your daily life.

This toolkit offers tips and ideas on how you can maintain a positive sense of well-being and enhance your mental fitness. It can be used individually or with groups who want to have discussions on the topic of mental fitness and healthy aging.

Adopting new, healthy behaviours or breaking an old habit can be hard to do alone. So team up with a friend or join an activity group! Being part of a group of people who are motivated to live healthier and getting involved will help you to stay socially connected. It is never too late to live a healthy and mentally fit lifestyle. Start today and be a part of *The Wellness Movement* for seniors in New Brunswick!



“
every great
journey begins
with that first
small step
”

Become part of *The Wellness Movement* for seniors and be motivated to live healthier; get involved in enhancing or improving your wellness; have fun; and inspire others by telling them about your story. If you have access to a computer, visit wellnessnb.ca

SHARING STORIES

Seniors have a lifetime of knowledge, experiences, and skills. In this toolkit you will find stories and words of wisdom that New Brunswick seniors have shared. You will learn how they rely on the wisdom and skills they have gathered throughout their life to cope with challenges and make healthy choices.

Charlotte's Story

For Charlotte¹, wellness is a way of life. It encompasses exercise, nutrition, social interaction, leisure time, and involvement in her community. Charlotte is intentional about incorporating physical activity and healthy eating into her daily routine. She understands how important this is to her wellness. "Regular walking and golfing are great for lifting my spirits. When I found out I was going to retire early, I decided I should take up a sport, one that would challenge my mind and body. At my age, tennis seemed too hard on the knees and ankles, so I chose golf. Little did I know that within 4 years of starting to play, I would achieve what some people who play all their lives never realize: **2 holes in one!** This proves that it is never too late to start something new," Charlotte says.

In addition to exercise, Charlotte takes time for herself by reading, watching TV, meditating, praying, and being with her children. Charlotte has a positive attitude when she's interacting with people and spending time with friends or acquaintances. She inspires, helps, and nurtures others. Charlotte feels fulfilled when she is able to share her talents by volunteering for an organization, helping a friend, or playing a sport.

Charlotte's story is an example of how staying socially active, learning something new, and maintaining a positive attitude can help a person maintain good physical and emotional health.

¹Some names in the stories have been changed to protect the confidentiality of those seniors who helped in the development of this toolkit.

“
age doesn't
place a limit on
new goals and
new dreams
”

A POSITIVE APPROACH TO HEALTHY LIVING: UNDERSTANDING YOUR BASIC PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS

You are a unique individual who has value for your strengths and characteristics. Embracing your wellness is a way for you to impact the way you live and feel. Each individual will approach wellness differently. This toolkit offers an approach which may work for you and is one which has been adopted by *The Wellness Movement*.

Feeling healthy and well can improve many aspects of life. There are some basic psychological needs common to all humans that help people feel good about themselves. These include the need to feel:

- **(C) competent**
- **(A) autonomous**
- **(R) related or connected with others.**

When these basic needs are met, people are more likely to have a positive sense of well-being.

Your own life experiences may have already taught you how to manage your well-being and fulfill these basic needs. However, you may also want to learn more about how to become aware of your wellness and adopt a mental fitness approach that takes your basic needs into account. As you read through this toolkit, you may want to explore how you can use opportunities that will impact your well-being and help you continue to adapt to life's challenges.

**"My skills and experience transitioned
with me into retirement."**

Part of being well involves an understanding that all human beings have basic needs. Fulfilling these needs is part of the journey to wellness. Furthermore, when family, friends, and those in your community recognize these needs, they are better able to support your wellness.

When you use your strengths and talents to meet your own personal goals, help your family, and encourage others in your community, you may feel a sense of value, accomplishment, and fulfillment. As you continue to develop and master your skills, you will discover how effective you can be at dealing with the things that are important to you (competence).

Furthermore, part of being well includes having a voice and choices in trying to achieve your personal goals. For example, expressing your wishes and opinions when deciding where you will live or choosing activities that best fit your lifestyle are decisions that give you the freedom to be the person you want to be. With the support of your family, friends, and your healthcare providers, you can make choices that will positively impact you and many aspects of your life (autonomy).

“My focus on staying well is part of my wellness.”

“
**use past
accomplishments
as the stepping
stones for your
future**
”

Knowing that you have satisfying and supportive relationships with the people around you (family or friends) and feeling connected to your community is important. Having people around you to celebrate the good things in your life, and who are there when you face challenges, can give you a sense of belonging. It helps you feel that you matter. When you feel supported and encouraged in what you do, you are more likely to encourage others in spirit and action (relatedness).

When you are mentally fit, you are more resilient (able to cope with challenges) and able to make healthier choices. Adopting a mental fitness approach takes some practice, and you may need to plan to make some changes in your life. Choosing to stay interested in life and involved in your community is important.

TIPS

- **Participate in family and social activities.**
- **Do something you love.**
- **Intentionally use the skills you have to help you maintain your health.**
- **Stay connected.**

MENTAL FITNESS IS APPARENT IN A PERSON'S:

Positive THOUGHTS:

- "I CAN DO THIS!"
- "I CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN MY COMMUNITY."

Positive ACTIONS:

- "I CAN HELP OTHERS AND BE GOOD TO MYSELF!"

Positive FEELINGS:

- "I AM HOPEFUL."
- "I AM GRATEFUL."
- "I AM AT EASE."
- "I AM CONTENT."

THESE ARE ELEMENTS THAT INFLUENCE MENTAL FITNESS:



Mental fitness plays a role in adopting a healthy lifestyle.

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New Brunswick
Brunswick

"I realize I have choices: I can do nothing, or I can make life better by contributing and doing what I can."

THE WELLNESS JOURNEY

On the road to building or maintaining your mental fitness, satisfying the 3 basic psychological needs is important. While working towards satisfying these needs in your own unique way, it is important to understand that they are all essential and no one is any more important than any other. As your feelings of competence, autonomy, and relatedness are strengthened, so too is your mental fitness.

COMPETENCE

Ways to recognize and build on my feelings of competence:

- I am able to use my skills and talents on a daily basis;
- I have a sense of accomplishment for things I have done;
- I get involved in various activities that leave me feeling efficient and capable;
- I am motivated and interested to learn new things;
- I feel valued.

Add your thoughts about how you recognize, use and share your strengths, skills and talents.

AUTONOMY

Ways to recognize and build on my feelings of autonomy:

- I have the freedom to make decisions about how I live;
- I make choices about things that are important to me;
- I can find solutions to certain problems;
- I recognize and express my emotions and feelings;
- I can discuss important decisions with my family or friends then take a course of action that I can feel good about.

Add your thoughts about what it looks like when you feel heard and respected for your choices and opinions.

RELATEDNESS

Ways to recognize and build on my feelings of relatedness:

- My interactions with the people in my life are enjoyable;
- I feel encouraged and supported by people around me;
- I respect others;
- I am able to help others and there are people to help me when I need it;
- I encourage others in spirit and action.

Add your thoughts about what it looks like to feel supported and connected to those around you.

“Autonomy is about confidence and self-esteem. When I can do things for myself, I feel a sense of purpose, and I feel like I am achieving my goals.”

NEW BRUNSWICK SENIORS TELL THEIR STORIES ABOUT MENTAL FITNESS AND HEALTHY AGING

This section highlights a few more stories from New Brunswick seniors. Hopefully these stories are thought provoking, inspiring and help you to understand mental fitness and the three basic needs.

Steve's Story

Steve's story begins with his struggle to adjust to retirement and his need for fulfillment and purpose. In finding his way, he learned that he needed to be recognized for his talents and skills and build on opportunities that would use his strengths to accomplish his goals. Fulfilling this need provided him with a sense of achievement and accomplishment.

Retirement: A New Beginning

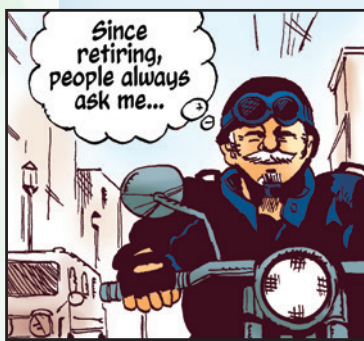
Steve is well known to many seniors as a dedicated volunteer who enjoys sharing stories, laughter and experiences with others. But, when Steve began his retirement, he felt a sense of loss about who he was and struggled to feel connected. He wanted to feel useful as a person.

Steve thought about what he had accomplished before his retirement and wondered if he had truly left his mark in life. He felt that it was important for him to make a difference for himself and for others going forward. After talking with his friends and family about this concern, he realized that he had lots of talents and skills and that there were people in the community who may appreciate and benefit from these assets. So Steve began volunteering and working with seniors. He developed and implemented programming at the multicultural centre and adult learning programs at the university. Before long, Steve was successful in creating a new routine, which involved him using his strengths and skills on a daily basis.

Retirement: A New Beginning cont'd

His days now include time he can give to his community as well as time for his personal life. He has adapted to retirement, and his new routine is familiar to him. He is able to enjoy a renewed sense of purpose.

Like others, Steve acknowledges that while he has experienced some challenges with aging, he does not let these challenges define him as a person. He said, "Retirement does not have to be an end. It is actually a golden opportunity to put the finishing touches on defining my life."



"I enjoy discussing senior issues. My thoughts and ideas are respected and appreciated by my friends, my family, or a seniors' group."

"My feelings of confidence and my sense of competence are what keep me going and give me inner strength."

If you have access to a computer, you can visit the website wellnessnb.ca and go to the Start Your Story page to be inspired by more New Brunswick wellness stories. This page will also give you an option to share your individual or group story.

Mary's Story

After experiencing challenges with her health, Mary¹ needed to regain a sense of control to feel good about herself and useful to others. Through her recovery efforts, she regained a feeling of accomplishment and confidence, which has motivated her to relate and connect with others as she contributes to her community in the way she chooses.

Creating a Meaningful Life through Choices

At the age of 63, Mary feels that the quality of her life is strongly related to her personal choices, the support she has received from family and friends, and acceptance of her life experiences.

In the spring of 2013, Mary had a stroke. Throughout her journey to recovery, Mary chose to turn a stressful situation into one where she saw opportunities to experience change. As she struggled to regain her strength and physical abilities during rehabilitation, Mary took control of her situation. She became an active participant in her care and had a voice in making decisions that were important for her. With the help and support of her family and friends, she started on the road to recovery. But Mary did not stop there. As one of her personal goals, she wanted to become more engaged in her community. She wanted to create a social network that would help and empower others to focus on their health and well-being.

Mary began by joining a committee to organize a wellness fair in her community. Now, she is involved in an intergenerational project, which involves working with elementary school children and teaching them about healthy food choices and how to cook!

As a result of her personal choices, courage, and hard work, Mary has made some positive changes in her life. With the support of her family, friends and health professionals, she now feels empowered to do what she wants to do with her life. Taking on a leadership role and choosing how to best make use of her talents has allowed Mary to be more active than ever!



¹Some names in the stories have been changed to protect the confidentiality of those seniors who helped in the development of this toolkit.

Linda's Story

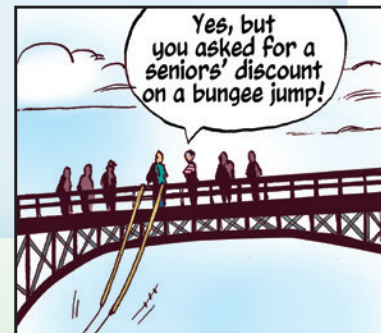
Like many seniors, Linda¹ is faced with the reality of what it is like to stay home and provide care to her partner. Her commitment to being a caregiver is hard for her at times. She sometimes feels alone and isolated. The need to belong and feel connected is important for Linda. Her story is about how she meets this need by interacting with people around her and being an active volunteer in her community.

The Benefits of Interaction

Linda's secret to aging well is to keep busy and stay active. At the age of 78, she describes herself as a person who does not stay idle. Even after retirement, she has made an effort to stay connected with others while also making time for herself. This has been difficult at times as she has taken on an active role in caring for her husband and attending to his health and wellness needs. Nevertheless, she has learned to ask for help when needed and continues to pursue her own interests. She has a close relationship with her children and grandchildren, and they are a good source of support for her.

However, her connections go beyond her immediate family and spread into the community. Linda coordinates activities for a bake and craft sale that takes place each fall, and she prepares gift bags throughout the year for people in community shelters. She is also involved with her local YMCA and does charitable work to help the homeless in her town. Above and beyond looking after the needs of others, she looks after herself by arranging one afternoon per week to visit friends, go shopping, or just take time for herself.

Linda feels at her best when she is with other people and is involved in activities that are meaningful to her.



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POSITIVE THINKING AND WELL-BEING

Keeping a positive outlook on life is easier when things are going well. When you feel strong, capable of influencing your environment or your life situation, and when you have supportive relationships, positive thinking may be easier than when you're facing challenges. It is possible to intentionally redirect your focus on positive thinking even in challenging situations, but it takes practice. The following will provide you with some tips on where to start.

FEELINGS

Listen to your body and acknowledge your feelings. Then, take a moment to think about how you might express them in a healthy way.

ACCEPTANCE

Accept who you are as a person, as a friend, and as a community member.

GRATITUDE

Appreciate the things in your life that make you grateful. Take the time to recognize the gifts and talents you have and to discover them in others.

ACHIEVEMENT

Create action plans which include specific steps that will help you reach your goals. Consult the resources in this toolkit for assistance.

POSITIVE THINKING AND WELL-BEING

ENJOYMENT

Participate in activities that make you happy and savour the moment. Motivate other people to get involved in such activities.

KNOWLEDGE

Inspire others with the accomplishments you have achieved in your life and the ways you learned how to overcome difficulties. Share your experience with your grandchildren, at a local school, at church or with other groups in your community.

GENEROSITY

Think about how you can enhance the quality of life for the people around you. Join a social group or create your own group. You can inspire, help, and empower others on a regular basis.

Taking an optimistic view of life can strengthen your relationships, improve your self-esteem and lead to better decision-making. It can have a long lasting effect on your well-being and your mental fitness.

“
every wrinkle
is a record
of a thousand
smiles
”

When you choose to think positively, your positive thoughts and attitude will influence how you feel, and how you respond to your family, friends, and community.

WELLNESS TOOLKIT

As you've read through this toolkit, information has been shared about three basic needs and how these are connected to healthy aging, well-being and feeling good about yourself.

The next step is to think about how the tips and ideas presented in this document apply to your life and how you can use them in your wellness planning. To help you do this, have a look at the worksheets found in Appendix A, B, C, and D. These worksheets will help you identify your assets, explore challenges, and set some personal goals.

Start with the worksheet in Appendix A entitled *This Is How I Feel When I Am Happy and Well*. When completing this exercise, express yourself in the way that will best represent your thoughts and feelings. You may want to reflect on what you have put on this worksheet when you are working on setting goals in Appendix B.

Appendix B contains a *Goal Setting Table*. While working on this worksheet, focus on setting attainable goals that are fun and that make you feel good just by doing them. Set goals that are important or meaningful to you.

Assets are defined as the personal and social abilities you have that will help you build on your capacity to make positive change. The *Asset Table* found in Appendix C will help you become more aware of what works best for you and will help you be successful in your journey to make healthy choices.

“
dare to live a
life beyond your
own wildest
expectations
”

As you move to the *Overcoming Challenges Table* in Appendix D, be kind towards yourself. It is important to understand your challenges and how they impact you so you can be proactive in overcoming them. Don't be afraid to ask the people in your support network for help when you need it. Part of being resilient is recognizing when you need help and where you can get it.

There are no wrong answers in these worksheets. They are about you, your experiences, and what you want for yourself. You can include things that you've always wanted to do, and/or things that you've been doing for a long time and really enjoy!

You've been provided with different formats you can use to express your assets, the challenges you face, and the goals you wish to explore. Everyone will have different ways of expressing the things that are unique to them. Don't feel restricted by these formats. Treat these exercises as an ongoing process, and revisit your work regularly. You may find that some of your goals, assets, or challenges are no longer relevant, and you may want to take them off your list or add new ones. None of these situations indicate failure, but simply a change in your life.

Taking an active role in goal setting, building on your assets, and overcoming your challenges—these are all linked to feeling good. Planning to respond to life's challenges and having the ability to restore and sustain a state of balance in your life is part of being resilient.

Healthy aging is about believing in yourself and trusting your wisdom. Completing this toolkit will help you learn how to be more resilient. Using your skills and strengths will help you remain healthy and well.

"As I get older, I can devote more time to committees in my area which interest me. I can also connect to other seniors by facilitating seniors' groups."

"I am connected. I am not alone in my journey. My relationships give me energy and keep me going. I am part of something bigger when I am involved in my community."

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APPENDIX A

This is how I feel when I am happy and well:

Feel free to doodle or use whatever style best demonstrates this for you (i.e. writing, drawing, a piece of music, a diagram, etc.)



APPENDIX B

Goal Setting Table

Everyone has their own wellness story. They also have goals and approaches that are unique to them. Aging well involves taking an active role in your health and well-being.

Think about what you would like your wellness story to look like as you age. What goals would you like to set for yourself in order to maintain or improve your mental fitness? Be courageous and include things you have always wanted to try. Keep this table handy, refer to it often, and revise it as needed.

	How can I make use of or enhance my strengths, skills, and talents?	How can I go about making sure that I'm involved in decisions that matter to me and/or voice my opinion on things that matter to me?	How will I work to develop, maintain, and/or improve my relationships?	Achieved	Carry-Over
DAILY				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
WEEKLY				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MONTHLY				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ANNUALLY				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

APPENDIX C

Asset Table

Assets are defined as the personal and social abilities you have that will help you build on your capacity to make positive change.

Wanting to create a positive change in your life does not mean you are currently without strengths, skills, and knowledge. On the contrary, knowing what assets you have can help build the capacity for positive change. Being aware of these things will help you know what works for you and how you might apply them in different parts of your life.

Identify the strengths and abilities that you have. How could others help you build on these strengths?

Assets	Myself	Family	Friends	Community	Healthcare Provider	Other

APPENDIX D

Overcoming Challenges Table

Challenges are inevitable with aging. How those challenges are met and the supports you have are key to how your wellness story will unfold. Taking a proactive approach to facing your challenges and seeking appropriate assistance when necessary can help you navigate them more successfully.

In this exercise, identify the challenges you may be facing and how you might overcome them. Also, think about the people and support systems in your life and identify what you may need from them in order to overcome these challenges.

Who are the people or support systems in my life and what do I need from them to overcome my challenges?

Challenges	Myself	Family	Friends	Community	Healthcare Provider	Other

