



# Rest and Sleep

According to Statistics Canada, roughly one-third of Canadians are getting less than 7 hours of sleep per night, and that sleep is not good quality, with 43% of men and 55% of women reporting trouble going to sleep or staying asleep “sometimes/most of the time/all of the time”. Meanwhile, Canadians are also not resting as much as they could be, with more than one-third of Canadian employees reporting taking less than the minimum amount of federally mandated paid vacation time in 2010, including 19.3% who reported taking no paid vacation days at all. These findings illustrate the poor state of rest and sleep in Canada. This infosheet aims to arm you with information on the benefits of different kinds of rest, to help you access better rest and sleep, based on our [Campus Mental Health Works training](#).

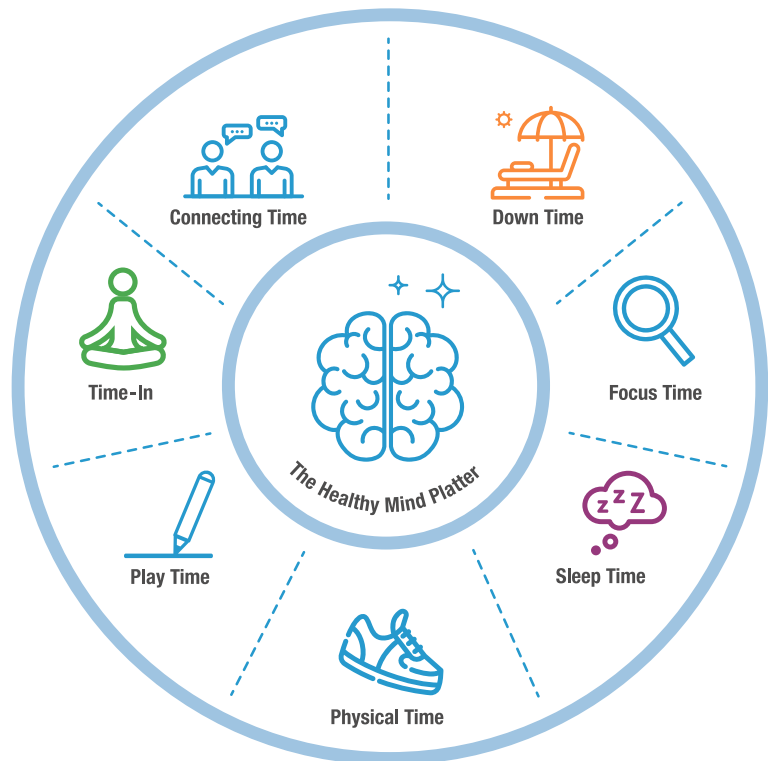
## Dan Siegel’s Healthy Mind Platter

The Healthy Mind Platter works similarly to the Canada Food Guide, except instead of food, it provides guidance on the kinds of activities to include in your day for a healthy mind. You’ll notice there are three different kinds of rest pictured here, out of the recommended 7 activities, which gives an indication of how important rest is for a healthy brain.

Time-in refers to time spent in quiet internal reflection, this includes all forms of meditation and prayer.

Down time refers to time spent letting your mind wander without any kind of specific goal.

Sleep time is of course time spent asleep, whether you’re napping or getting your nightly slumber.



**Meditation:** A formalized type of mindfulness



**Mindfulness:** Paying attention to the present moment, without judgement

# Time-In

## Benefits of Meditation:

- It can improve your brain's plasticity, meaning your brain will be more physically able to adapt to change, making it easier to pick up new habits and shift patterns of thinking
- It can make the brain areas responsible for stress and anxiety physically smaller
- It has an impact not just on the brain but on the whole body, reducing markers of stress long-term, like cortisol, blood pressure and heart rate, among others
- It can make you more mindful, compassionate, and can give you a heightened sense of psychological well-being

**Open Monitoring Meditation:** This refers to any kind of meditation in which one monitors incoming sensations, whether they be sound, sights, smells, one's posture, or internal thoughts and feelings, and allows those sensations to pass by without

attachment or judgement. One way to do this is to imagine thoughts and sensations as clouds passing by one's field of vision, where one can acknowledge those passing thoughts and sensations without attaching to them or following them.

**Focused Attention Meditation:** This refers to meditation in which one maintains non-judgemental attention on a particular object, thought, or sensation, such as the breath, a mantra, or a part of the body, and allows any other thoughts and sensations to pass by without attachment. It is normal to get distracted by other thoughts and feelings during the meditation, but the important thing is to gently bring one's attention back to the anchor object, thought or sensation.

**Movement Meditation:** This refers to meditation that is done while moving intentionally, and can include walking, yoga, and tai chi. In this kind of meditation, the focus is on the sensations both in and outside the body.



Check out our webinar on  
**Mindfulness and Meditation Techniques**

# Down Time

When our minds wander, we activate a set of areas across the brain called the Default Mode Network (DMN). Evidence suggests we spend about 30-50% of our days on mind wandering, activating our DMN.

Daydreaming is adaptive in a few different ways:

- It lets us plan for the future by organizing our goals and bringing them to mind as we do our daily activities. Our daydreams are typically future, self, and goal-focused, and one part of our DMN is the area of the brain responsible for future planning.
- It allows us to be more creative. One study in particular found that specifically among people who had a high degree of identification with their profession, daydreaming led to increased creativity in their work. Another reason daydreaming supports our creativity is it also supports our problem solving, which is one of the critical elements of creativity.

- It involves a process called attentional cycling, which is what allows us to rotate through the different information streams we're being exposed to at any given moment, in order to collect the most important pieces of information for use in achieving our goals.
- It dishabituates us to whatever it is we're learning, meaning that it gives us short breaks in-between our tasks, which makes it easier to learn because we are getting distributed smaller chunks of learning, rather than one big mass of learning.



# Sleep Time

Sleep is helpful for a number of brain processes:

- Insight formation, which is our ability to develop novel ideas based on our understanding of the information around us.
- Visual discrimination, which is our ability to differentiate between different objects, shapes, and symbols.
- Motor skills, which are the ways we use our body to achieve our goals.
- Memory, the way we save the information we intake into our system.



On the other hand, there are some very serious consequences to not getting enough sleep. Some of these consequences include:

- Poor concentration
- Higher sensitivity to pain
- Poor memorization
- Unclear speech
- Visual disturbances
- Impaired driving
- Emotional disturbances
- Micro-episodes of sleep
- Slower reactions

Research has shown that the impairment in performance after **20–25 hours of sleeplessness** is comparable to the performance of someone with a **0.10% blood alcohol concentration**

## Sleep Hygiene Tips

☾ Keep a consistent routine, whether it's the weekend or a weeknight you should be going to bed and waking up at approximately the same time.

☾ Give yourself about 30 minutes to wind down from your day, do things that encourage relaxation in those 30 minutes like light stretching or reading.

☾ Keep your lights low during your bedtime routine, the light we take in has a huge effect on our sleep and wake cycles.

☾ Try not to look at your electronics right before bed, or just as you wake up.

☾ If you are having trouble falling asleep, don't stay in bed, after 20 minutes get up and do something else that is relaxing, like reading a book on the couch.

☾ Make sure you get access to sunlight at some point in the day. If that's hard to do, there are lamps specifically designed to trick your eyes into thinking they've received sunlight.

☾ Regular exercise is proven to help us fall asleep at night.

☾ While alcohol might make it easier to fall asleep it can disrupt our sleep later in the night. Best to reduce alcohol intake, and to avoid alcohol just before bed.

☾ Caffeine is a stimulant, meaning it can keep us awake even when we want to start winding down, especially if we are taking it in the later afternoon or evening.

☾ Heavy meals late at night can mean you're still digesting by bedtime. Keep any meals before bedtime as light as possible.

☾ Working from your bed is a big no-no. The goal is to link being in bed with sleeping, so try to avoid doing other things in bed.

☾ Make sure you have a pillow that suits your sleeping style, to ensure a pain-free sleeping experience.

☾ Set the temperature to one that feels comfortable to you, but try to keep it on the cooler side, as we tend to sleep better in a cooler room.

☾ Make sure that incoming light, like from streetlights, is blocked out by using heavy curtains or an eye mask.

☾ Earplugs can be useful in preventing noise from waking you, though if you find those uncomfortable you could also try using a white-noise machine or even a loud fan.

**Can't sleep because of racing thoughts?** Try keeping a journal next to your bed to write down any and all worries that are preventing you from sleeping.



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