



Bell Let's Talk Day 2026 Toolkit

Youth Edition

Taking a moment for mental health

This toolkit is here to help you take small steps for your mental health. Share these ideas, talk about them with friends, and remember—it's okay to take a moment for yourself.

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1. What is Mental Health

Mental health is about how you think, feel, and connect with others every day. It's just as important as physical health—and everyone has it.

Mental health is a range of thoughts, feelings and experiences that make up your overall mental, emotional and spiritual well-being. Your mental health can be impacted by a number of different things that are unique to you, so no one person's experience is the same.

Some factors that can influence your mental health include:

- your physical health
- school/work
- your community/social supports
- your family, friends and other relationships
- spirituality
- experiences of prejudice/discrimination (e.g. colonialism, racism, ableism, sexism, homophobia, etc.)
- past trauma/ongoing traumatic experiences
- gender
- age
- race
- abilities
- ethnicity
- access to services and support (e.g. income, food insecurity, housing, job security, etc.)
- tools you've learned for coping with tough emotions
- stigma/barriers that impact your ability to get support
- and more



What are mental health challenges?

Because so many things can impact your mental health, it's common to experience challenges from time to time. Things in your life such as school, family/community, work and physical health may all seem separate, but are actually all connected. When one thing changes, it can affect other areas of your life and as a result, impact your mental health. For example, if you're not feeling well and can't visit your friends or participate in activities you enjoy, you may feel sad, lonely, stressed, worried, etc. No matter how you're feeling, your experience is valid and you can connect for support when you need it.

What are mental disorders?

Sometimes, when people experience mental health challenges, they can develop a mental disorder. Mental disorders are common. According to the Mental Health Commission of Canada, in any given year, one in five people in Canada will experience mental health challenges or a mental disorder.

Mental disorders can affect anyone. You may experience them personally or know someone who experiences them such as a family/community member, friend or classmate. A mental disorder is a clinical diagnosis (e.g. depression, anxiety, eating disorders, etc.) that can only be made by a doctor, psychologist or psychiatrist.

Try to remember that it's not your fault if you develop or experience a mental disorder. They're usually caused by a combination of things happening in your body as well as in your environment (i.e. in your own life and in the world around you).

It's possible to live with a mental disorder and be mentally healthy. For example, you may have a diagnosis of depression, and with the management options (e.g. counselling, medication, etc.) and/or coping strategies that work for you, you can attend school/work, maintain relationships and live an enjoyable and fulfilling life. Even if two people have the same mental disorder, it may be and feel different because everyone's options and coping strategies are different.

Mental health is a spectrum

Experiencing moments where you feel mentally unhealthy doesn't automatically mean you have a mental disorder. It may be a signal to you to practise more self-care, learn new ways to manage challenges and/or connect for help from others. It may be helpful to take a minute right now to think about the support and tools available to you and reflect on what helps you to feel better when you're going through difficult times. If you or someone you know is struggling with mental health challenges, there are options available for support. Wherever you fall on the spectrum of mental health, you're not alone.

Resources to support your well-being

When you start to experience mental health challenges and difficult feelings, it can be helpful to try activities you enjoy, practise self-care and/or use coping strategies that work for you. Your coping strategies might include breathing exercises, practising mindfulness, communicating with a safe adult or friend, connecting with your community, journaling, being creative, communicating with a counsellor, etc.

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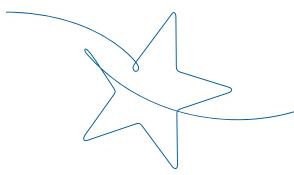
Take a Moment:

- ✓ Learn what mental health really means and why it matters for you.
- ✓ Share what you've learned with a friend or on social media.

2. Practicing Self-Care

Self-care is about being a champion for your own mental and emotional well-being. Here are some ways you can practice self-care every day.

Taking care of your mental, emotional and physical health (known as self-care) is key to your overall well-being. Practicing good self-care can help you take life's challenges in your stride, boost your self-esteem and work on your self-acceptance. If you're looking for ways to balance your mind and body, here are some things you can do to practice self-care in your daily life:



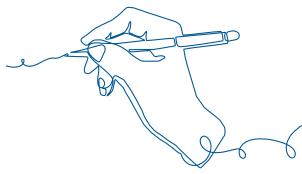
Make self-care a priority: remember to put your well-being first. Set a goal to make self-care a part of your daily routine. This will help you stay centred and strong to support yourself (and others if you need to).



Be kind to yourself: it's important to show yourself love, kindness and compassion. You can do this by giving yourself an encouraging word or doing something you enjoy. Take a break to watch TV, go for a walk, play a game, read a book or do anything else that makes you feel good.



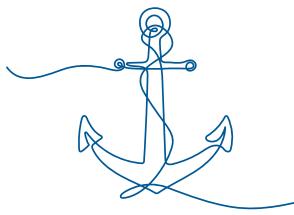
Avoid self-critical thoughts: try not to get carried away with self-critical thoughts about your mind or body. Everyone has good days and bad days, so don't be too hard on yourself. For every negative thought, try to think of something positive.



Think ahead: plan for how you'll cope with things that cause you to feel sad, stressed or down. Doing things to soothe yourself like journaling, meditating, etc. can help you stay calm and collected.



Get involved: participating in things you enjoy (e.g. sports, music, volunteering, dance, art, etc.) can help you have fun and focus your attention on a passion. Try to concentrate on your strengths while accepting that you have room to grow.



Ground yourself: practicing deep breathing and doing tension/release exercises can help you process and connect your mind and body to your environment. Try to be present in the moment.



Focus on the positive: looking for the good in a situation can help you work through and learn from it. Try to focus on what you can control (your reaction, how you'll cope, etc.) and less on what's out of your hands.



Remember your body: your physical health plays an important role in your overall well-being. Don't forget to get enough sleep, eat well and exercise to take care of your mind and body at the same time.



Stay connected: surround yourself with individuals you trust who love and appreciate you (e.g. friends, relatives, peers, etc.). The people you choose to spend time with should help you feel good about yourself.



Get support: if you're struggling or feeling burnt out, it's important to ask for help. You can try talking to a friend, family member, teacher, therapist or anyone else you trust. Kids Help Phone's counsellors are always available to talk at 1 800 668-6868.

When you practice self-care in your daily life, you build resilience to be better prepared to cope with life's challenges as you go. It's important to find what works best for you to harness your inner strength and courage.

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Take a Moment:

- ✓ Pick one self-care activity and make time for it today
- ✓ Ask a friend what their favourite self-care habit is and try it out.

3. Digital Detox: Unplug and Recharge

Being online all the time can be exhausting. Taking breaks from screens helps you feel more present and less stressed.

Taking a break from technology can be a good thing from time to time and can be good for your physical and mental health. Here are some ways you can unplug from your devices (and still stay connected).

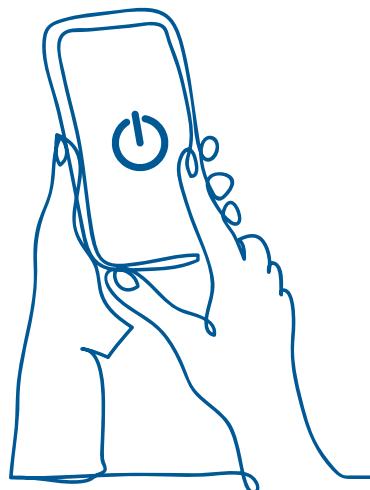
What is a digital detox?

A digital detox is when you stop using your phone, computer, TV, gaming console and other technology devices for a set amount of time.

Why detox?

Switching off from your screens has many physical and mental health benefits:

- improved relationships with friends and family
- better sleep habits
- better eating habits
- increased focus at school or work
- boosted self-esteem
- heightened independence
- reduced stress and anxiety

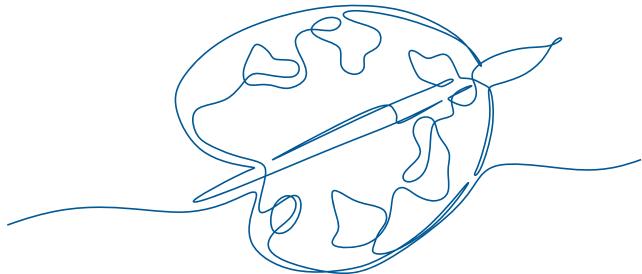


How to detox:

When you disconnect from technology, you'll be able to focus more on the things you may not have the time or energy to do otherwise. Here are a few tips for making your digital detox work:

- Pick a time: decide on how long you'll be away from your devices. You could try a day or week at a time.
- Give notice: let your friends, family and followers know you'll be taking a break from your devices. It may be a good idea to provide them with a way to reach you in case of emergency.

- Plan ahead: it's a good idea to think ahead to how you'll keep yourself busy during your digital detox. Here are some ideas:
 - spend quality time with family
 - hang out with friends
 - read a book
 - enjoy nature
 - pick up a new hobby or sport
 - catch up on schoolwork
 - write in a journal
 - try something creative like singing, dancing or painting
 - volunteer your time
 - take a nap
 - experiment with a new workout routine
- Shut down: when you're ready to start your digital detox, turn off your devices and put them in a safe place where they'll be out of sight, out of mind.
- Stick with it: the fear of missing out can be strong, but it's important to stick to your goal. You'll still be able to catch up with family and friends (and build more personal connections along the way).
- Get support: it may be helpful to try a digital detox with a friend or relative so you have someone to go through the experience with. (You can help keep each other on track, too.)



Remember:

If you can't completely log off your devices, there are other things you can do to reduce your reliance on technology. You can limit the amount of time per day you spend looking at the screen, turn off email/push notifications or reserve your devices for weekend/emergency use only.

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Take a Moment:

- ✓ Try a 30-minute tech-free break today.
- ✓ Challenge a friend to join you for a screen-free activity.

4. Coping When You Feel Overwhelmed

Feeling overwhelmed happens to everyone. There are ways to calm your mind and feel better.

Feeling overwhelmed can make it hard to think clearly, be present and enjoy your daily life. The experience often comes with other intense stuff, like feeling anxious, out of control, hopeless and confused. But there are tips you can try, changes you can make and other things you can do to work through your emotions and start to feel better.

10 ways to cope with feeling overwhelmed

Mindfulness can be practiced in many different ways, from formal groups or classes to a short check-in with yourself on the way home from work. There is no right or wrong, and what you experience is what you experience. Here are some quick mindfulness techniques you can practice anywhere:

People can offer many different kinds of support:

Tip #1: Identify your community of support (and reach out!)



When we experience intense emotions like feeling overwhelmed, talking to someone can help us express ourselves and think things through more clearly. You can think of this as getting the [overwhelming thoughts](#) (video from YMCA) out of your head and into the open, where they may seem more manageable. You can use [Kids Help Phone's templates](#) to map out your community of support at any time. (Hint: Filling in these sheets can also help distract you and take a step toward regaining some control when things feel chaotic.)

Tip #2: Try a grounding exercise to connect to the here and now



Grounding techniques can help you anchor your mind and body to the present moment, especially when you're feeling overwhelmed. It's about feeling more attached and in tune with your current environment (as opposed to the flurry of thoughts and feelings you may be experiencing). To ground yourself, try to focus on relaxing your muscles using [Kids Help Phone's tension release exercise](#). You can use it anywhere, any time.

Tip #3: Try colouring to relax and take your mind off things



Taking a break from what's causing us to feel overwhelmed can be helpful in gaining more perspective. [Mindfulness exercises](#) (tips from Anxiety Canada) like drawing or colouring are self-care activities known to reduce stress and help you focus on the present moment in a creative, positive way. Take a break and relax with [Kids Help Phone's mindfulness colouring book](#) — you get to fill in an inspiring phrase and fun background!

Tip #4: Start journaling when you're feeling overwhelmed



When we mention journaling, we're talking about tracking what's going on in your life (and in your head!), and making time to reflect in a purposeful way. Check out [Kids Help Phone's interactive journaling tool](#) to find out what we mean! It can give you space and a structure to record how you're feeling, set goals and/or a way to think about things differently.

Tip #5: Reflect on your feelings with a short questionnaire



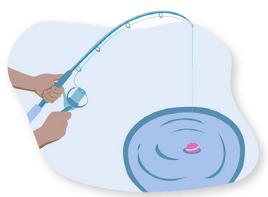
Feeling overwhelmed can sometimes make things feel like they're spiraling out of control. As we're spiraling, we may also experience feelings of anxiety, worry, fear and more. Understanding how big an issue these feelings are for you and finding ways to get the best supports for them is important. You can take [Kids Help Phone's anxiety questionnaire](#) to help you reflect on your feelings in the moment, figure out your boundaries and discover the right help/next steps for you.

Tip #6: Feeling overwhelmed right now? Try an instant stress buster.



When it seems like a lot of things are colliding, it can make us feel stressed, weighed down and totally exhausted. If this is what's going on for you, it's important to remember that you're not alone. Whatever your situation is, it's comforting to know that there are things you can do to help yourself calm down. You can use [Kids Help Phone's stress busters](#) to help release the pressure and tension you may be experiencing whenever you're feeling overwhelmed.

Tip #7: Build your own self-care checklist



Prioritizing your own mental, emotional, spiritual and physical health (also known as self-care) is a key to your overall well-being. Practising a [self-care routine](#) (video from CBC Kids News) can help you work through life's challenges (like feeling overwhelmed) on your own/with a supportive community. If you're looking for ways to balance your mind and body, [Kids Help Phone's self-care checklist](#) includes some strategies you can use to take better care of yourself when things get tough.

Tip #8: Take a minute to let it all out



Do you feel like you need a moment to just let it all out? When we're feeling overwhelmed, it can make us feel angry and irritable (among other things). Instead of taking it out on yourself or someone else (if that's what happens for you), you can try self-soothing using the outlets that make the most sense for you. Yell into a pillow. Go for a run. Play with a fidget device. Doodle. [Kids Help Phone's Vent it: Music game](#) gives you a chance to bang out your frustrations on a guitar or a set of drums. Give it a try whenever you'd like!

Tip #9: Breathe in, breathe out



Breathing in specific ways can make a surprisingly big impact on how you feel. Taking some deep, slow breaths when we need to can help us calm down when we're feeling swamped. A breathing exercise can allow your mind to focus on just one thing — breathing — while letting other thoughts and feelings slow for a few minutes (and not boil over). You may be surprised at how well this works when your mind is running away with you! Practise your breathing now with [Kids Help Phone's Breathing Balloon activity](#).



Tip #10: Write your worries down, and then put them away

Experiencing worry is common when people are feeling overwhelmed. Worry about the unknown, what to do, who to turn to, etc.... Creating space away from what's bugging you can help you release distress and manage being overwhelmed now (and if/when it happens again). [Kids Help Phone's Worry Rockets game](#) is a way to get concerns off your mind so you can focus on feeling better after being overwhelmed. If you write your worries down somewhere, you can always return to them later when you're feeling more grounded!

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Take a Moment:

- ✓ Try one coping strategy when things feel too heavy.
- ✓ Share these tips with someone who might need support.



5. Building Your Community of Support

You're not alone. Having people you trust makes a big difference for your mental health.

Community plays a big role in improving your mental, emotional and spiritual health. A community is a network of people and places where you can feel cared about, get support when you're struggling and check in with about how you're feeling. Here, Kids Help Phone provides tips and ideas for identifying who and where your community is so you can get support when you need it.

What is a healthy community of support?

A supportive person is someone who cares about you and your well-being. They may listen actively (e.g. ask for clarification or reflect back what you've said), make validating comments (e.g. "that sounds hard", "it makes sense that you feel...") and ask questions about how you're feeling and how they can help. A supportive person is someone you trust and feel empowered around, like a close friend or safe adult.

Supportive communities are rooted in mutual trust and acceptance. Building a community is an intentional process that often comes from nurturing relationships with others. Your community of support is unique to you, and it's common (and encouraged!) to find support in more than one place. You may also find that your different communities offer you different kinds of support. Your community doesn't need to be big to provide you with a sense of belonging. It's most important that you feel safe, loved and accepted for your true self.

Some examples of where you can find community:

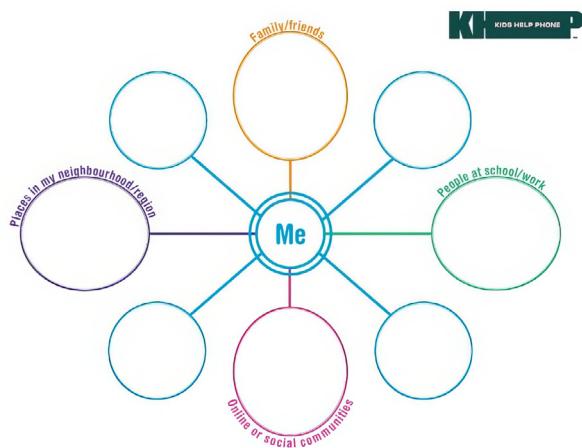
- community centres, neighbourhood groups, teams and extra-curricular activities
- friends, family or pets
- school (e.g. peers, counsellors, teachers, etc.)
- online (e.g. peer-to-peer platforms, support groups, chat rooms, etc.)
- people who share your culture, identity or values
- the natural world (e.g. bodies of water, forests, etc.)
- places of worship and spirituality
- and more

Mapping out your community of support

You can identify your community of support using the activities on this page, or simply by making a list — whichever you prefer. Once you choose the template(s) that works best for you, it may be helpful to ask yourself the following questions:

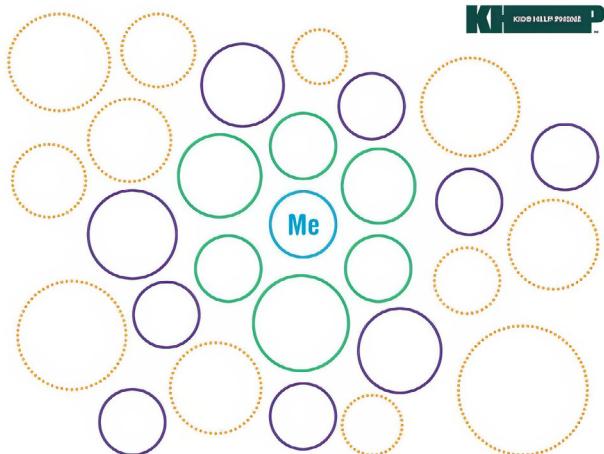
- How can I connect with community I already have?
- What communities do I want to engage with more?
- What support is available to me virtually or online?
- Who can I reach out to when I'm having a bad day or feeling lonely?
- Who can I reach out to when I have good news or something to celebrate?
- Who can I reach out to when I need advice or help solving a problem?
- Who can I reach out to when I need more immediate support?
- What support is available in my neighbourhood or close by? What support is available at a driving distance or at a safe physical distance through public transit?

Try these templates

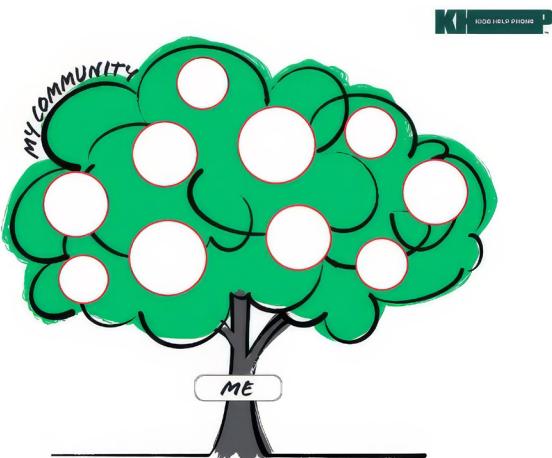


Click on any of the images to download a PDF. Depending on the technology you have access to, you can either fill it out on a device or print it. Then, you may want to reflect on what next steps you can take to build or strengthen your community of support. It can also help to refer to it when you notice you need a reminder. In the four larger circles, note family/friends, people at school/work, in your neighbourhood and online/social

communities that support you. Use the additional circles to note the other people and places that support you and/or provide you with a sense of community.



In the circles surrounding you, note the names of people who represent your closest, primary community of support (or your “pod”). In the additional circles, note the networks, organizations or groups that you can connect with. The dotted lines represent people or communities who could be in your “pod” but may need a little more work or relationship building. Adapted from the Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective (BATJC)’s Pod Mapping Worksheet.



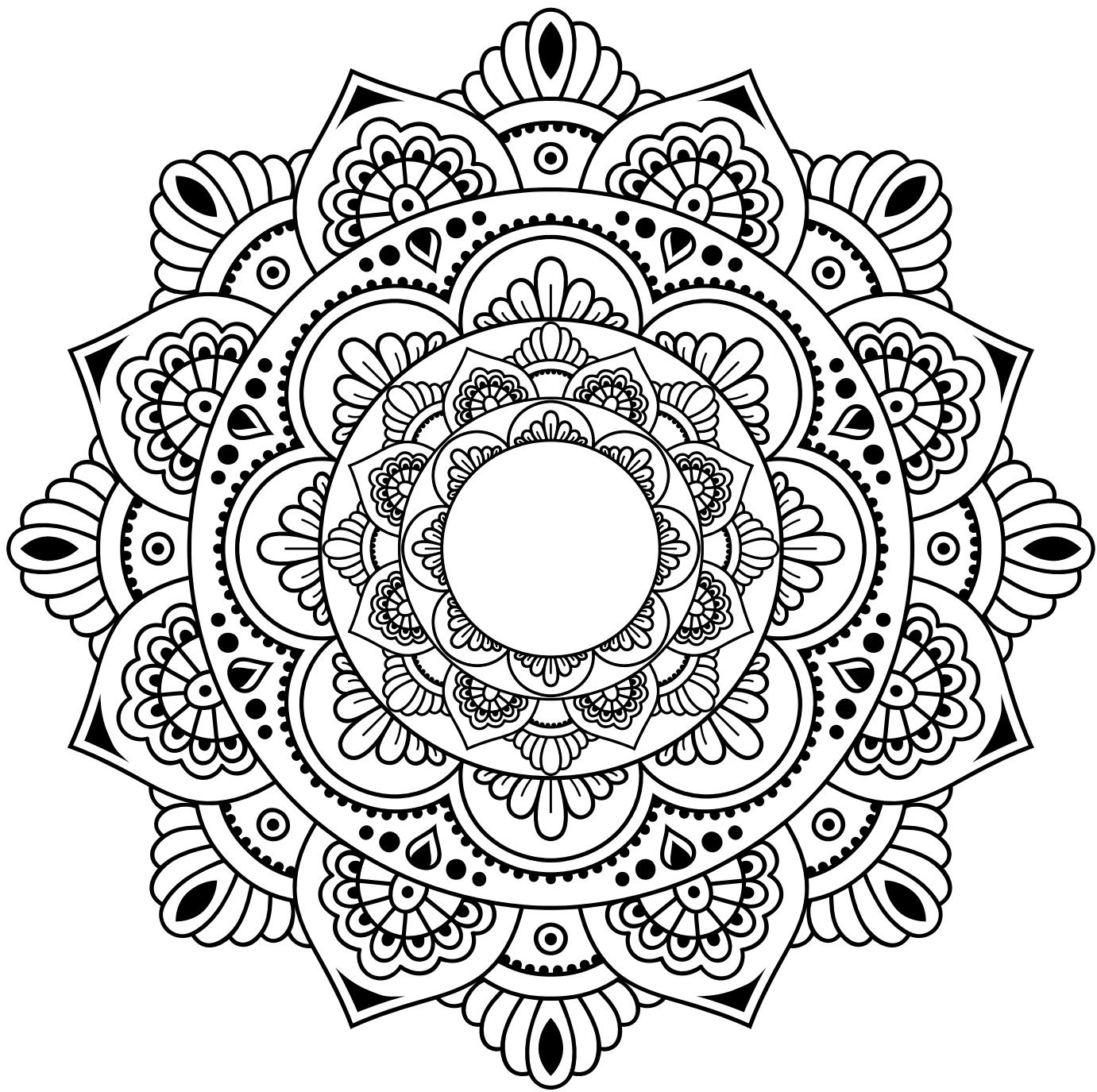
Use the circles in the tree to note family, friends, people at school/work, in your neighbourhood and online/social communities that support you. The tree can be a helpful reminder that these people and places can support you and your personal growth.

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Take a Moment:

- ✓ Write down three people you can reach out to when you need support.
- ✓ Send a quick message to someone you care about today.





Practice mindfulness with the Bell Let's Talk mandala

Bell Let's Talk has designed a mandala that you can print out and colour in. Many mental health professionals recommend colouring as an effective way to practice mindfulness.

Mandala, meaning "sacred circle" in Sanskrit, is a circular art form often containing geometric and repeating designs. Similar to meditation, it focuses your attention on the present moment and away from worries and stress.

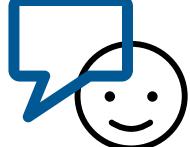
Share your creation on social media using [#BellLetsTalk](#)



Self-Care Activity

Practicing self-care means taking the time to participate in activities that bring you enjoyment or a sense of calm and peacefulness. Activities can include things you do on a day-to-day basis or new activities. Self-care can promote positive mental health and well-being, keep us grounded and reduce the effects of stress in our lives.

Challenge yourself to complete as many self-care activities as you can. For each activity completed, fill in the talk bubble in that square.

Cook a healthy meal	Head out on a nature walk or hike	Write a letter/email to an old friend	Head to bed early	Practice mindfulness
				
Enjoy a quiet moment over a cup of tea or coffee	Write a positive affirmation and recite it in the mirror	Connect with your community	Discover a new author or musician	Stretch or practice yoga
				
Discover a new podcast	Talk to a loved one about your feelings		Put on your dancing shoes	Make a vision or mood board
				
Paint or draw	Set a goal	Have a good laugh	Write in a journal	Create a gratitude list
				
Do a crossword or jigsaw puzzle	Take a warm bath or shower	Practice deep breathing	Make a to-do list	Cuddle a pet or look at a cute photo of one online
				

For additional mental health resources
visit bell.ca/letstalk

