

Healthy Body, Healthy Mind

FOR MEMBERS



Physical activity helps support healthy living and is a great form of self-care. But what makes physical activity so great for our mental health?

Getting active can help our body release all the feel-good chemicals – including dopamine, serotonin and endorphins – thus decreasing levels of the stress hormone cortisol circulating in our body. It can also help us all unwind, breathe better and happy better!

Happy Better

The feel-good chemicals play an important role in how we feel.¹ When we're active, our body releases these chemicals, thus impacting our mood.

Unwind Better

Finding some time to unwind after a tough day at school or a busy 4-H activity can be helpful. Getting into heart-pumping activities like biking or running may work by releasing your body's stress hormones and stimulating those feel-good chemicals.²

Breathe Better

Breathing is one of our body's most important functions. When we are stressed, we hold tension that can cause us to breathe rapidly, shallowly or erratically.³ By being active, we can work to increase the strength of our respiratory muscles, and do more with less breath. You can choose to use breathing techniques for everything; from public speaking, to remaining calm in the show-ring.



DID YOU KNOW?

ParticipACTION's Everything Gets Better campaign highlights 23 areas to work on to get closer to our health and fitness goals, including Happy Better, Unwind Better and Breathe Better. In their own words, "Being physically active is about more than weight loss. It's about living Better!"⁴

Here is a deep-breathing exercise you may want to try at your next 4-H meeting:⁵

- 1. Breathe in slowly and deeply, pushing your stomach out so that your diaphragm is put to maximum use.**
- 2. Hold your breath briefly (approximately 5 seconds).**
- 3. Exhale slowly, while relaxing every muscle in your body.**
- 4. Repeat the entire sequence five to 10 times, focusing only on your breath.**

Consider trying some of these activities:

Not sure where to start? Here are some activities to help you get active and release those feel-good chemicals:

- ✓ **Walking** - regardless of fitness ability and in almost any location.
- ✓ **Yoga** - it stretches muscles to help feel calm and relaxed.
- ✓ **Running** - a great way to incorporate a little cardio into your meeting.
- ✓ **Pilates** - simple movements help build strength and improve breathing.
- ✓ **Tai chi** - helps us feel calm and in control.
- ✓ **Swimming** - calm and relaxing as you splash around and move through the water.
- ✓ **Weight-lifting** - lifting light weights can help build muscle, feel strong and blow-off steam!

If you prefer getting physically active with a group, these activities can all be done in a team setting. Getting outside and enjoying nature can improve mental health.

Did you know physical activity is linked to happiness and having a positive mood? Those who are physically active are more satisfied with their lives as well.⁶ **What activities do you like to do that help you unwind or feel less stressed?**

It is recommended that young people between the ages of 6 and 17 get at least 60 minutes of heart-pumping physical activity per day.⁷

**For more information, check out the Happy Better, Unwind Better
and Breathe Better pages at
participACTION.com**



4-H Canada has partnered with ParticipACTION to develop this resource
participACTION.com



4-h-canada.ca/healthyliving