



Children's Mental Health Week: Caregiver Information

Promoting Good Mental Health

The love and support that is provided through a strong relationship with your child/teen can have a positive impact on their mental health. It can even reduce the chances of your child experiencing mental health problems as they move towards adulthood.

Here are some ways that caregivers can assist in promoting their child/teen's mental health and wellbeing:

- Encourage them to **talk about feelings** with you. It's important for your child to feel they don't have to go through things on their own, and that you can work together to find solutions to problems.
- Deal with problems **as they arise**, rather than letting them build up.
- Show that you're **interested** in what's happening in your child's life.
- Praise their **efforts** (not only the end results) and value their **ideas**.
- **Talk** to trusted family members, friends, or other parents/caregivers if you have any concerns. If you feel you need more help, speak to your doctor or another health professional.
- **Physical health** is a big part of mental health. To help your child stay emotionally and physically healthy, encourage your child to keep active, develop and maintain healthy eating habits, and get lots of regular sleep.

Encouraging Children/Teens to Use Positive Strategies

As a parent/caregiver, how you react to your child/teen when they show a certain behaviour can either reinforce or discourage that behaviour. If you notice your child/teen using a positive skill or strategy to cope with difficult situations, we would want to reinforce and encourage the practice so they continue to master these new skills. Here are some ways parents/guardians can reinforce their child/teen and let them know that you see they are working hard:

- **Praise** your child for using their new skills and strategies and label what exactly you liked.
Examples: "I like how you stayed calm when your sister was getting on your nerves."
"Thank you for joining us for game night even though you were feeling nervous."
- Use **nonverbal cues** to communicate to your child that you like what they are doing. This can include looking at your child/teen and smiling or nodding, being aware of your facial expressions, and using affirming body language.
- Make time for you and your child to **do a special activity alone together**. Having a parent's/guardian's full, undivided attention can be very reinforcing!
- Give your child/teen a **small reward** when they do something that you know was really difficult for them. These small rewards can be choosing a favourite meal for dinner, picking which movie to watch together, or having extra screen time.
- **Hugs** and **high fives** can go a long way!
- **Practice** [everyday mental health practices](#) at home.

Additional Resources

If you believe your child might be experiencing some mood-related behaviours and symptoms, we recommend taking a look at the following resources. If you feel you need more help, you can also speak to your child's doctor or another health professional.

Anxiety & Stress:

- <https://www.anxietycanada.com/>
- <https://cmha.ca/documents/stress>
- [Self-Care 101 for Students](#)
- [Simple visualization exercise for students](#)

Parenting Support:

- <https://www.triplep-parenting.ca/ont-en/about-triple-p/positive-parenting-program>

COVID-19 Mental Health Resources:

- [Personal Resiliency Tips During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- <https://jack.org/Resources/COVID-19-Youth-Mental-Health-Resource-Hub?lang=en-ca>
- [Parents and Families - COVID-19](#)

Apps that you and your child can use:



Mindshift



Breathe2Relax



Calm



Stop, Breathe & Think

Mental Health Support/Crisis Lines (available 24/7, free, anonymous, confidential):

*If your child is in crisis or requires immediate support, please call **911**, contact your local crisis line, or go to your nearest hospital.*

Kids Help Phone

Tel: 1-800-668-6868

Text: CONNECT to 686868

Website: <https://kidshelpphone.ca/>

310-Cope York Support Services Network

Tel: 1-855-310-COPE (2673)

Text: 1-855-310-2673

Website: <https://www.yssn.ca/310-COPE>

Mental Health Support at the YCDSB:

There are free brief mental health supports available at your school. Speak to your chaplain, teacher, guidance counsellor or Vice Principal about options for in-school mental health support and referrals.

Mental Health and Well-Being Website: <https://www.ycdsb.ca/mental-health/>

YCDSB Mental Health Twitter: [@YCDSB_MH](#)

YCDSB Instagram: [MH_YCDSB](#)

Community Mental Health Support:

<p>York Hills Centre for Children, Youth & Families Offers a range of free mental health services to children up to age 18 and their families.</p> <p>The Here to Help Phone Line is a free service available to children, youth (0-18) and their parents, caregiver or adult supporters. This service is available Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 9:30 AM to 4:00 PM. Call if you have concerns that could benefit from quick access to phone counselling (905) 503-9561 https://www.yorkhills.ca/</p>	<p>Family Services of York Region Mental health services provided to children, youth, families and adults. Cost of counselling services is based on a sliding scale. http://www.fsyrc.ca/</p> <p>To access virtual services, please call 905-895-2371 or toll-free 1-888-223-3999:</p> <p>Mondays to Thursdays from 8:30am to 6pm</p> <p>Fridays from 8:30am to 3pm</p>
<p>Kinark Children and Youth Offers a range of free mental health services to children up to age 18 and their families.</p> <p>To access any Mental Health Services, first phone Central Intake at: 1-888-454-6275 https://www.kinark.on.ca/</p> <p>Central intake remains open during Covid - Kinark is providing both virtual and select in-person services</p>	<p>Catholic Community Services of York Region Free, confidential mental health services provided to children, youth, families and adults regardless of religious affiliation.</p> <p>Offering phone and Online Video Counselling Call 905-770-7040 Ext. 241 to book an appointment https://www.ccsyr.org/</p> <p>Services available in Farsi, Polish, Chinese and English</p>

Link to Additional Community Supports:

Additional resources for students and parents including articles and mental wellness tips, specified services for a variety of populations, and telephone and/or virtual counselling available in the community.

[Mental Health Resource List](#)

Additional Handouts:

Labeling our emotions helps us describe what we're going through, which helps us get help from others. When your child is struggling to label their emotions, you can refer them to this sheet. Together, help your child identify how they are feeling and what they need in that moment.

 <p>JOY</p> <p>JOYFUL INTERESTED PLAYFUL CONFIDENT LOVING SENSITIVE COURAGEOUS HOPEFUL</p>	<p>SADNESS</p> <p>SAD BORED SLEEPY UNHAPPY IGNORED GUILTY LONELY ALONE</p> 
<p>SURPRISED</p>  <p>STARTLED CONFUSED AMAZED EXCITED SHOCKED ASTONISHED EAGER DISMAYED</p>	<p>ANGER</p> <p>MAD JEALOUS EMBARRASSED FURIOUS IRRITATED WITHDRAWN FRUSTRATED SKEPTICAL</p> 
 <p>DISGUST</p> <p>AWFUL DISAPPOINTED HESITANT REVOLTED LOATHING JUDGEMENTAL</p>	<p>FEAR</p> <p>HUMILIATED REJECTED WORTHLESS INSECURE ANXIOUS SCARED</p> 

Credit: practicalaac.org

Breathing exercises are a useful way to help your child regulate their emotions. Review the different breathing exercises below and practice with your child regularly. Help your child discover their favourite technique and encourage them to practice while feeling calm. This ensures they are better able to use the technique when emotionally dysregulated.



BREATHING

MINDFUL BREATHING:


Think of something that you love or that is a blessing in your life. Use your 5 senses to think about it more deeply. Does it have a smell, a taste, or a feeling? Can you hear or see it? Think of those things for a moment. Now, take in a deep breathe while repeating the name of this blessing. Breathe out slowly while imagining this thing that brings you joy. Repeat this each day with a new blessing

IN - HOLD - OUT BREATHING

Inhale through your nose while counting to 5
Hold it while counting to 6
Exhale through your mouth while counting to 7


SQUEEZE AND BREATHE

1. Find a stress ball, play doh, or other soft object to squeeze.
2. Take in a deep breath as you squeeze.
3. Breathe out slowly as you let go.

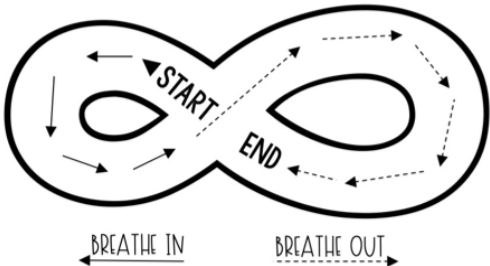


STARFISH BREATHING:

Breathe in as you trace up the star. Hold at the tip. Breathe out as you trace down. Go slowly.




Trace your finger around the race track. Breathe in while tracing the left side and out slowly while tracing the right side. (repeat daily)



BELLY BREATHING:

Switch the focus of your breathing from your chest to your belly. Place one hand on your chest and one on your belly. Take a deep breathe. Notice your belly rise. Breathe out. Notice your belly fall.





BREATHE THE RAINBOW

Imagine the color of the rainbow.
Take a deep breath while imagining you are breathing in each color.

Red: Breathe deeply through your nose, the warming calm of the color red. Hold it and feel the warmth in your chest. Blow that warmth back into the room, slowly with your mouth.

Orange: Breathe in the zesty excitement of the color orange in through your nose. Hold it and feel the tingling joy in your heart. Blow that joy slowly back into the room with your mouth.

Yellow: Breathe deeply through your nose, the glowing rays of the color yellow. Hold it like sunshine beaming down on your face. Blow those rays back into the room, slowly with your mouth.

Green: Breathe in the morning dew of the color green through your nose. Hold it and feel the feeling of a new morning in my arms. Blow the freshness of a new start back into the room with your mouth.

Blue: Breathe in the calming waves of the color blue. Hold it like you are floating on the top of that wave. Let that wave crash as you blow its calmness back into the room with your mouth.

Purple: Breathe in the loving embrace of the color purple. Hold it like a tight hug for a moment. Blow the love of that hug slowly out of your mouth, back into the room.

Credit: Brandy The Counselling Teacher