

Ministry of Education

**Conversation with School Board Leads &
Parent Involvement Committee Chairs**



February 22/23, 2023

**Inclusive Education, Priorities
and Engagement Branch**

Introduction

On February 23 and 24, 2023, the Ministry of Education (EDU) held the Winter sessions of the 2022-23 series of virtual meetings with Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) chairs, co-chairs and school board parent engagement leads. After each session, a summary is shared with participants.

Throughout the virtual engagement series, now in its third year, participants have shared their local challenges, successes, and promising practices to support parent engagement in their children's school and in their learning. In many sessions there have been presentations about Government of Ontario priorities or programs and participants have been invited to provide feedback.

What We Heard

Part 1: Updates from the Ministry

The meeting began with a brief recap of Parents Reaching Out (PRO) funding discussed in the November engagement. This year, for the first time, PRO grant funding for boards to work in consultation with parents has been included in the Grants for Student Needs (GSN). With the move of PRO funding to the GSN there are some differences, but much remains the same.

The intent of PRO grants remains - this funding is intended to support initiatives that identify and address local parent needs and/or remove barriers that prevent parents from participating and engaging fully in their children's learning and educational progress.

School boards receive a total of \$1,500 + (\$500 per school) – it is the total that is to be allocated. Boards are to administer funding in consultation with their Parent Involvement Committees (PICs) to identify and align with local, equitable and inclusive funding priorities. Further, boards are encouraged to identify the diversity of parent needs through broad consultation with additional parent organizations, for example: Indigenous Education Council, Special Education Advisory Committee, as well as Ontario Association for Parents in Catholic Education, Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations, Parents partenaires en éducation, and representative organizations such as the board's equity and access body, school councils, and community organizations.

One of the more notable changes with the move of PRO to GSN is that there is no longer a final report to submit to the ministry. Boards are required to report for the PRO component as they do for all lines in the GSN (instructions are provided to boards by Finance for reporting through the Education Finance Information System). Boards may establish their own means for internal accountability, including for example a report-back form that gathers the data they need. The ministry has provided a sample report-back template, but it is up to school boards how they wish to handle internal accountability.

Part 2: School Mental Health Ontario (SMH-ON)

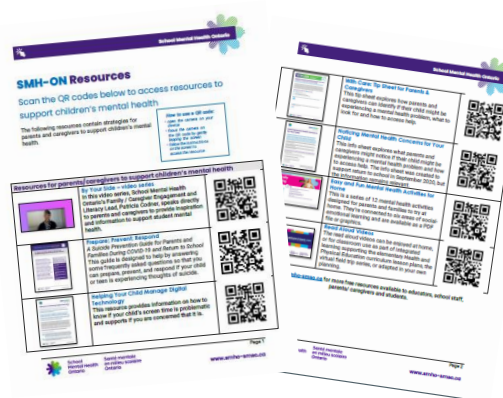
In response to suggestions made by participants in earlier sessions, this engagement focused on children's mental health - information for parents about how to support their children's mental health at home, as well as how schools and school boards are supported.

The plenary was led by School Mental Health Ontario (SMH-ON). SMH-ON is a provincial implementation support team that helps school districts enhance student mental health through evidence-based strategies and services. Since 2011, SMH-ON has worked alongside the Ministry of Education, English and French school districts and school authorities, and provincial education and health organizations to develop a systematic and comprehensive approach to school mental health. SMH-ON aims to enhance the quality and consistency of mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention programming in Ontario schools through:

- leadership and guidance about best practices in school mental health
- implementation coaching
- tailored, co-created resources
- mental health literacy for educators and school/system leaders
- training for school mental health professionals
- mental health awareness for parents/families
- a platform for student voice and leadership in school mental health

In their presentation, SMH-ON discussed mental health, mental illness, and provided an overview of promotion and prevention. The team provided an overview of supports and the action plan for this school year. The presentation deck is attached.

SMH-ON produces resources for educators, students, and parents and caregivers. A one-page resource summary with QR codes is attached to this email. Please feel free to share it broadly.



Part 3: Learning and Listening: Promoting Positive Mental Health

Discussion: *Perceptions of parents about children's mental health.*

Confidence

Participants indicated that although they feel confident about initiatives that are underway, mental health is an over-arching concern for parents, school councils and PICs.

Participants expressed appreciation of the SMH-ON resources, suggesting that school board mental health teams will be able to promote them, and put them to good use.

Challenges

Although there is positive progress on rebuilding now that schools are once again open, mental health challenges have been exacerbated by the pandemic and inequities remain.

- participants expressed concern for the mental health and well-being of children and staff, noting increased anxiety, depression, trauma, and suicidal ideation among children – at younger and younger ages, even kindergarten
- parents suggested students are stressed trying to catch up; staff noted a greater involvement of grandparents – perhaps an indication of stress, food insecurity, mental health issues among parents; for some families, finding balance among work, studies and family in the “new normal” causes stress; the high cost of post-secondary education was noted and the stress of finding a career path, especially for newcomers
- pandemic isolation has exacerbated what was noted for all ages – children are having difficulty with self-regulation, co-regulation, relationships; social skills are learned, and many children have not had the opportunity to develop them due to isolation; substance-abuse and addiction has risen among teens
- parents are concerned about an increase in behaviour issues disrupting the school day, and bullying; attributed to lack of social skills; although it was acknowledged school boards have been supportive, perceptions of school safety vary among parents – many expressed concerns about safe environments and violence in schools
- parents noted the absence of special celebrations and events, such as Valentine’s Day, Christmas parties, and Hallowe’en; although they recognize the reasoning, they are looking for consistency across school boards and schools, and return of traditional celebrations, or at least happy “back-to-normal” celebrations in support of children’s mental health
- need to bring members of the school community together, rebuild sense of belonging; some school administrators and schools have returned to pre-pandemic levels of school events, functions and special activities, supportive of community, belonging and positive mental health; need equity across schools so all parents have opportunity to meet, interact, build relationships and feel sense of belonging; need connection among PIC, the school board and the community – feeling a disconnect from the school councils of the board, need co-operation of school board to build connections
- staff shortages are affecting student mental health, e.g., children are being asked to stay home if support staff (i.e., educational assistant) is not available

Discussion: *Dissemination of information in support of positive mental health to parents/caregivers*

Participants acknowledged the importance of supporting positive mental health, and that parents are asking for this above all else. PICs and school boards shared their actions. Examples include:

- school board multi-pronged approach to build capacity, working on prevention/intervention, healing and growth, affirming sense of belonging
- school board has comprehensive addictions strategy coming out of pandemic; sessions for parents last school year to be repeated this Spring
- PIC working in collaboration with school board mental health staff to deliver workshops for parents, funded by PRO grants
- PIC working with school board mental health staff to deliver a presentation of what is offered provincially; developed an inventory of resources available to share with parents; consulted with school councils to prepare a list of priorities to share with mental health lead and board staff; mental health lead giving presentations
- present to school councils, who in turn present to their parent communities; discussion with parents; discussion with secondary school students
- University research study – benefits of movement to mental health; noting difference in overwhelming and anxious thoughts in students from affluent vs disadvantaged families; low participation in study compared to pre-Covid in spite of incentive; feeling effect of pandemic isolation

- PIC facilitation of sessions to address on-going interest and need emerging from parents for information and practical tools to support children's self-regulation

Discussion: *PICs and SMH-ON working together to ensure student mental health resources and materials are reaching parents*

Participants expressed appreciation of SMH-ON's support of student mental health and resources developed. They endorsed the concept of student ambassadors and wanted to know more about the formation of the parent/caregiver collaboration group. Some parents feel a lack of support around mental health and bullying, suggesting mental health is moving to mental illness. Parents need information and resources.

Challenges and solutions

Participants articulated challenges for families and caregivers to access information: some families do not have internet access; the current distribution model is not necessarily getting information to school councils. Suggestions and shared effective practice for dissemination included:

- school and trustee newsletters
- school council meetings
- PIC and board parent symposia
- community gathering places and places of worship

In response to the suggestion that barriers need to be addressed, SMH-ON will connect with school boards on issues of regarding cultural differences and how best to leverage communication channels to get the information in the hands of parents and caregivers.

Working in Partnership

Many PICs develop strategic plans for the following year in May/June, some determine priorities in the first meeting of the year; consultation with SMH-ON regarding partnership to serve parents will facilitate more intentional work; may vary among PICs, so suggest SMH-ON ask PICs what works best for them.

Discussion: *Future parent engagement meetings*

Looking Ahead

Participants made suggestions for networking and learning together: that there be a PIC symposium, as used to be held in-person, where parent leaders can share promising practices, ideas and processes; form mentor board partnerships; PIC Facebook group.

Interest was expressed in learning more about:

GSN, funding for school boards: difference in the parent engagement funding this year, reporting, French-language school boards and English-language school boards and how the funding addresses varying challenges.

PART 4: Resource Links

To support the work of PICs and school board leads, selected topical source links were shared:

Ministry of Education home page: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-education>, constantly updated with news and information

Curriculum:

Parent and Curriculum Resources: <https://www.dcp.edu.gov.on.ca/en/parents> where you will find resources to help you support your child's learning. We invite you to visit this site regularly – as new digital versions of the Ontario curriculum in all subjects and grades are added, more parent guides will be available here

Curriculum Guides: [Digital Curriculum Platform](#) where you will find full descriptions of all the elementary and secondary curriculum

Mental Health Resources:

Roots of Empathy: <https://rootsofempathy.org/temperament/> *Understanding Children's Behaviour Through the Lens of Temperament Video Series* helps parents and educators understand children's behaviour through understanding their temperament

Kids Help Phone: [Get support with these mental health resources - Kids Help Phone](#) offers a variety of mental health resources as well as confidential, anonymous and free conversation, support, and work with a counsellor

Conclusion

Throughout the series of engagements, PIC chairs/co-chairs and school board leads have continued to demonstrate their commitment to enhancing parent engagement and supporting parents and families of their boards. This session centred around children's mental health. Many participants in this session expressed challenges that have been exacerbated by the pandemic, including lack of social skills and challenge with co-regulation, self-regulation, relationships. Increased stress, anxiety, and depression was noted in younger and younger children. Appreciation was expressed for the service and resources provided by School Mental Health Ontario.

Participants shared various means their PICs have undertaken to reach out and provide families with information about supporting their children's positive mental health. Once again parents expressed appreciation of the opportunity to meet with each other and with the ministry.

We are grateful to all participants for your willingness to share challenges, innovations and effective practices that support parents and families. The perspectives, questions and concerns shared will be used to inform Ministry actions, and to plan future engagements.

Thank you for your continued commitment to work with your school boards to support, encourage and enhance parent engagement in support of student achievement and well-being.





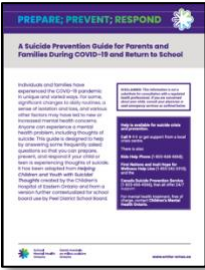



SMH-ON Resources

Scan the QR codes below to access resources to support children's mental health

The following resources contain strategies for parents and caregivers to support children's mental health.







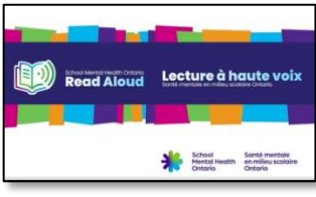

How to use a QR code:

- open the camera on your device
- focus the camera on the QR code by gently tapping the screen
- follow the instructions on the screen to access the resource

Resources for parents/caregivers to support children's mental health		
	By Your Side – video series In this video series, School Mental Health Ontario's Family / Caregiver Engagement and Literacy Lead, Patricia Codner, speaks directly to parents and caregivers to provide inspiration and information to support student mental health.	
	Prepare; Prevent; Respond <i>A Suicide Prevention Guide for Parents and Families During COVID-19 and Return to School</i> This guide is designed to help by answering some frequently asked questions so that you can prepare, prevent, and respond if your child or teen is experiencing thoughts of suicide.	
	Helping Your Child Manage Digital Technology This resource provides information on how to know if your child's screen time is problematic and supports if you are concerned that it is.	





	With Care: Tip Sheet for Parents & Caregivers This tip sheet explores how parents and caregivers can identify if their child might be experiencing a mental health problem, what to look for and how to access help.	
	Noticing Mental Health Concerns for Your Child This info sheet explores what parents and caregivers might notice if their child might be experiencing a mental health problem and how to access help. The info sheet was created to support return to school in September 2020, but the information remains relevant.	
	Easy and Fun Mental Health Activities for Home This is a series of 12 mental health activities designed for parents and families to try at home. They're connected to six areas of social-emotional learning and are available as a PDF file or graphics.	
	Read Aloud Videos The read aloud videos can be enjoyed at home, or for classroom use as part of integrated learning supporting the elementary Health and Physical Education curriculum lesson plans, the virtual field trip series, or adapted in your own planning.	

Visit smho-smso.ca for more free resources available to educators, school staff, parents/ caregivers and students.



School Mental Health Ontario

Leading Mentally Healthy Schools

February 22, 2023

Theresa Kennedy – Co-Director

Gail Lalonde – Resource Development, Learning & Training Lead

Patricia Codner – Parent/Caregiver Engagement and Literacy Consultant

Joyce Erogun – Student and Parent/Caregiver Engagement Team Lead



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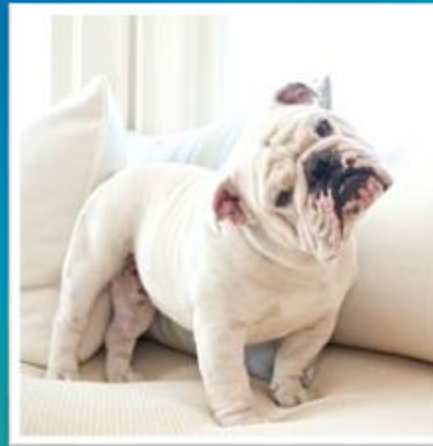
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Opening Activity

On a scale of dog emotions, how are you feeling?

Share the number that resonates most with you today.

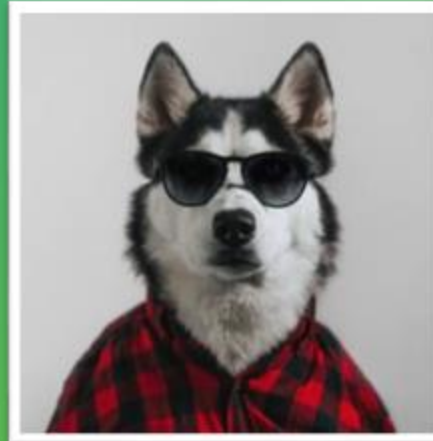
1



2



3



4



5



6



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Today we will:

- Provide an overview of SMH-ON supports and action plan for student mental health 2022-2023
- Explore parent and caregiver resources for supporting their child's mental health
- Spotlight a number of classroom and educator resources
- Hold time for questions, comments, and discussion



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We work together with Ontario School districts to enhance student mental health through the use of evidence-based strategies and services.

We are a provincial implementation support team.

We provide leadership and guidance about best practices in school mental health, including tailored co-created resources and training.





Every student has access to **differentiated and identity-affirming, evidence-informed mental health promotion, prevention, and early intervention services** at school and is guided to more **intensive mental health services** when needed.

1. Centre the needs of students who have been disproportionately impacted.
2. Amplify the promotive and protective influence of home, school, and community.
3. Elevate student participation and leadership in mental health promotion and stigma reduction.
4. Equip school staff to identify emerging and escalating student mental health problems and make connection to appropriate supports.
5. Work in collaboration with partners to enhance the system of care for child and youth mental health.

2022–2023 School Mental Health Action Plan



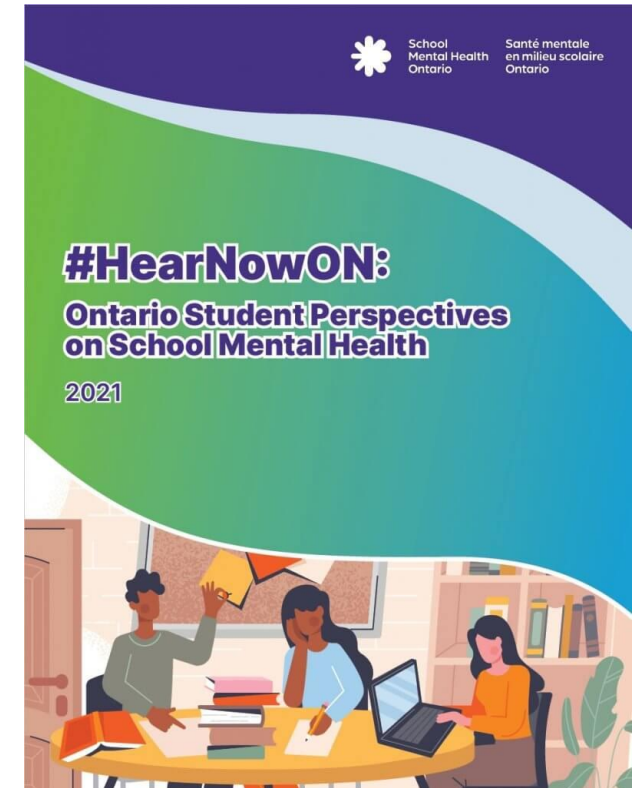
How Does School Mental Health Ontario Support School Boards?

- Coaching support
- Role specific training
- Communities of practice
- Development of resources by audience
 - Educator
 - School & system leader
 - Student support staff (CYW, Chaplain, EA, Other)
 - Regulated mental health professionals (Social Work, Psychology)
 - Parents/caregivers
 - Students



#HearNowON 2021:

Ontario Student Perspectives on School Mental Health



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Mental Health Foundations



What is Mental Health?



Often, when we think about mental health, our minds turn to images like this one...



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What is Mental Health?



**When really, mental health looks something more like this.
It is a positive state of flourishing and balance.**



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What is Mental Health?

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines **mental health** as “a state of well-being in which every individual realizes [their] own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to [their] community”.



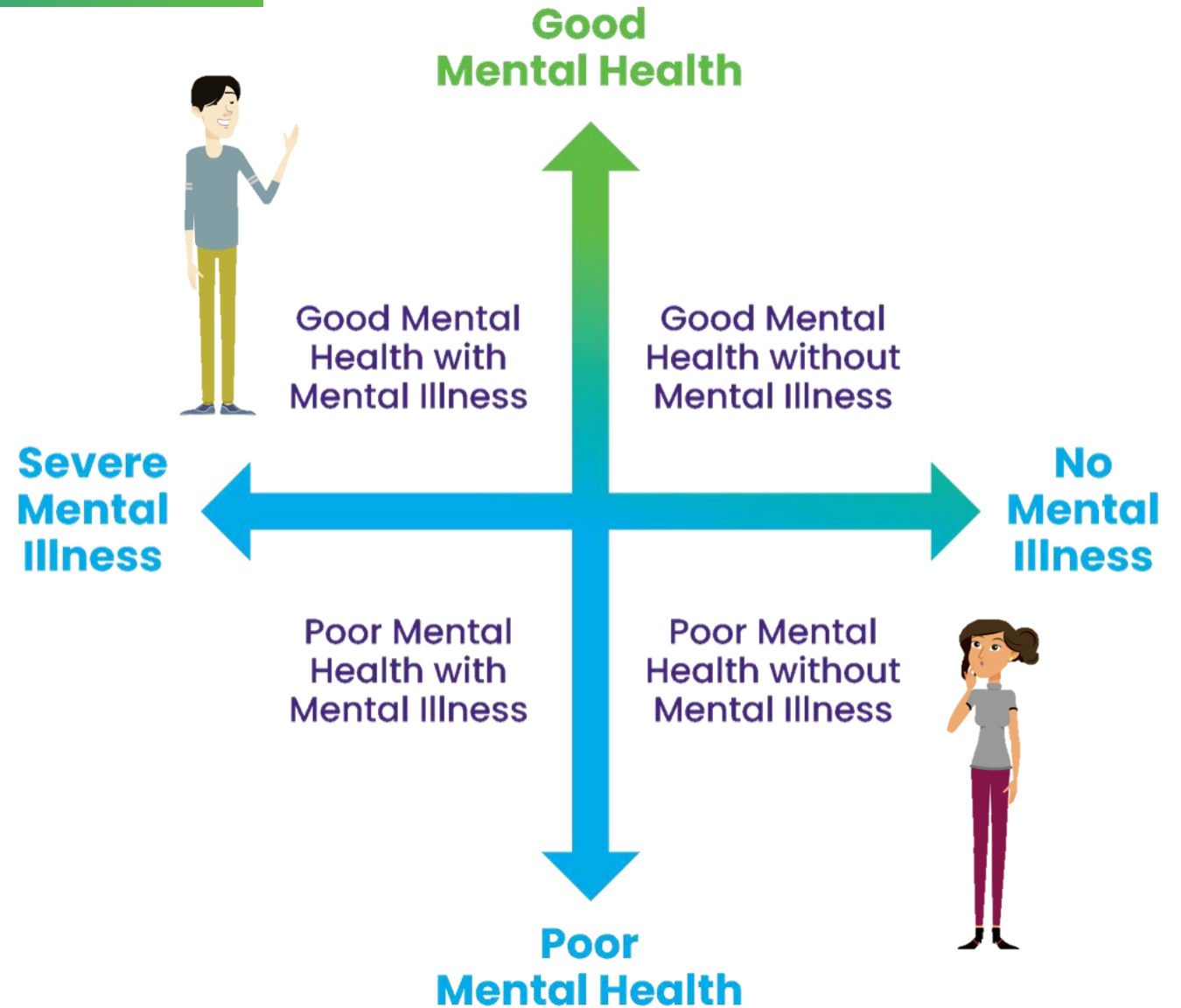
What is Mental Illness?

Mental illness is defined by Health Canada as a range of illnesses that “are characterized by alterations in thinking, mood or behaviour associated with significant distress and impaired functioning. One in five Canadians have a diagnosed mental illness”



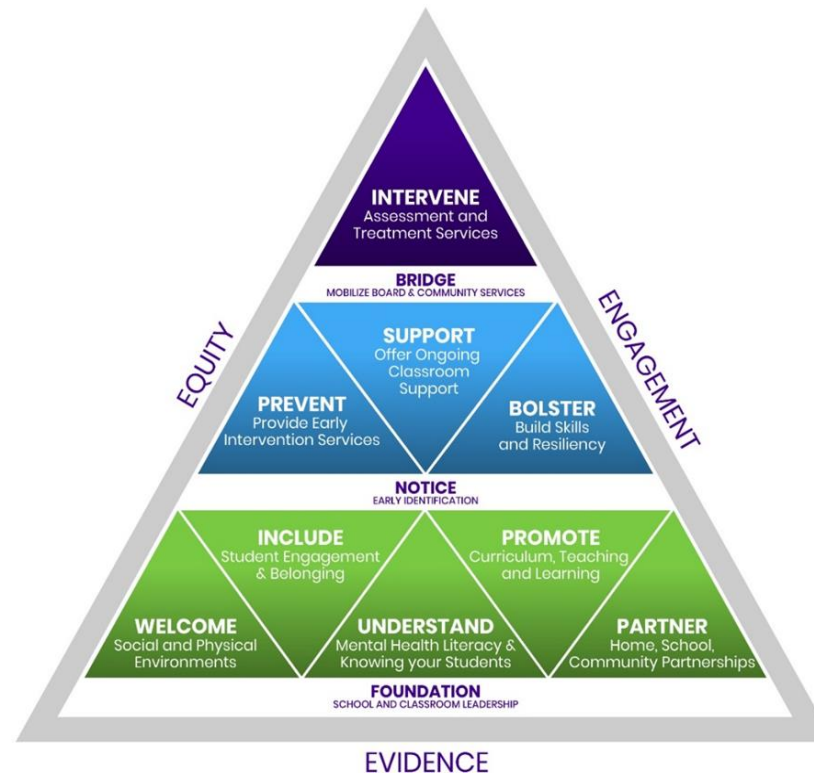
Dual Continuum

The presence or absence of a mental illness is not a predictor of mental health; someone *without* a mental illness could have poor mental health, just as a person *with* a mental illness could have excellent mental health.





Our main role in school mental health is promotion and prevention



**We are all different, however we all have
mental health.**

**Mental health supports and resources need to be tailored to
the strengths and abilities of all learners.**



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Identity-Affirming School Mental Health: A Frame for Reflection and Action



The Identity Affirming–School Mental Health Frame is rooted in:

- ① Anti-Oppressive practice
- ② Decentring whiteness
- ③ Centring Black and Indigenous perspectives
- ④ Cultural humility

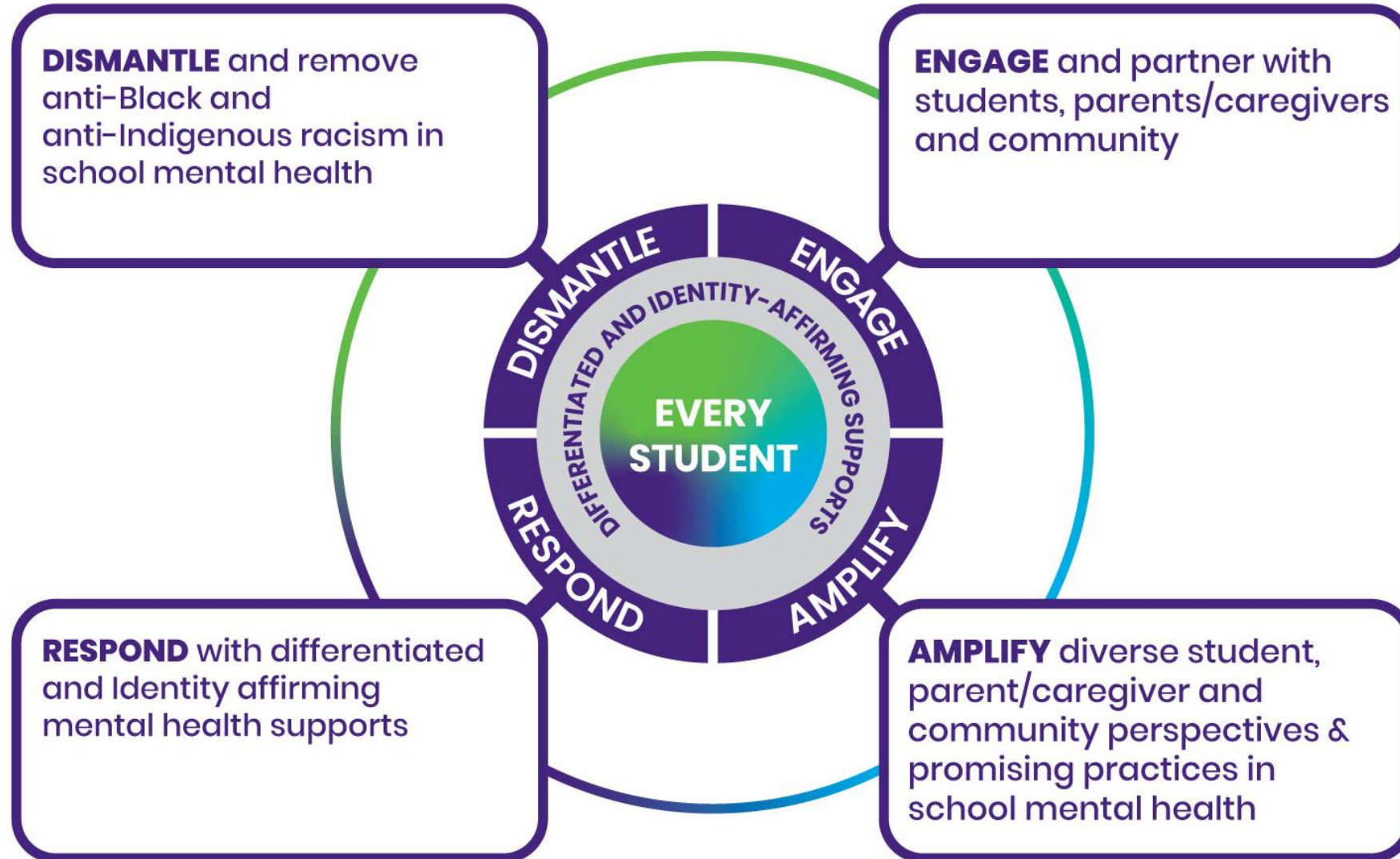


Identity-Affirming School Mental Health: A Frame for Reflection and Action



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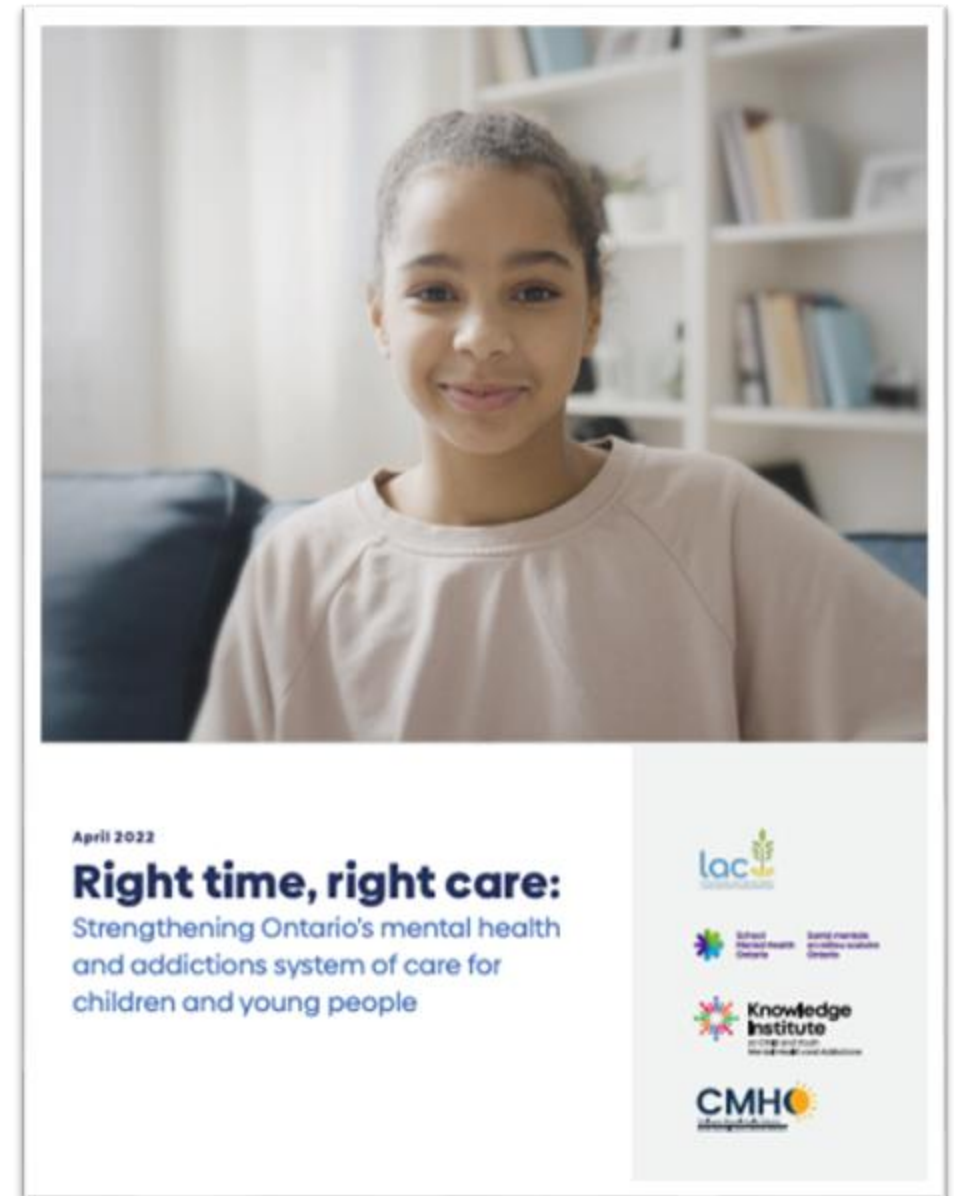
**Centering Black and Indigenous
student voices and
perspectives requires intentionally
including and centring different
worldviews and cultures.**



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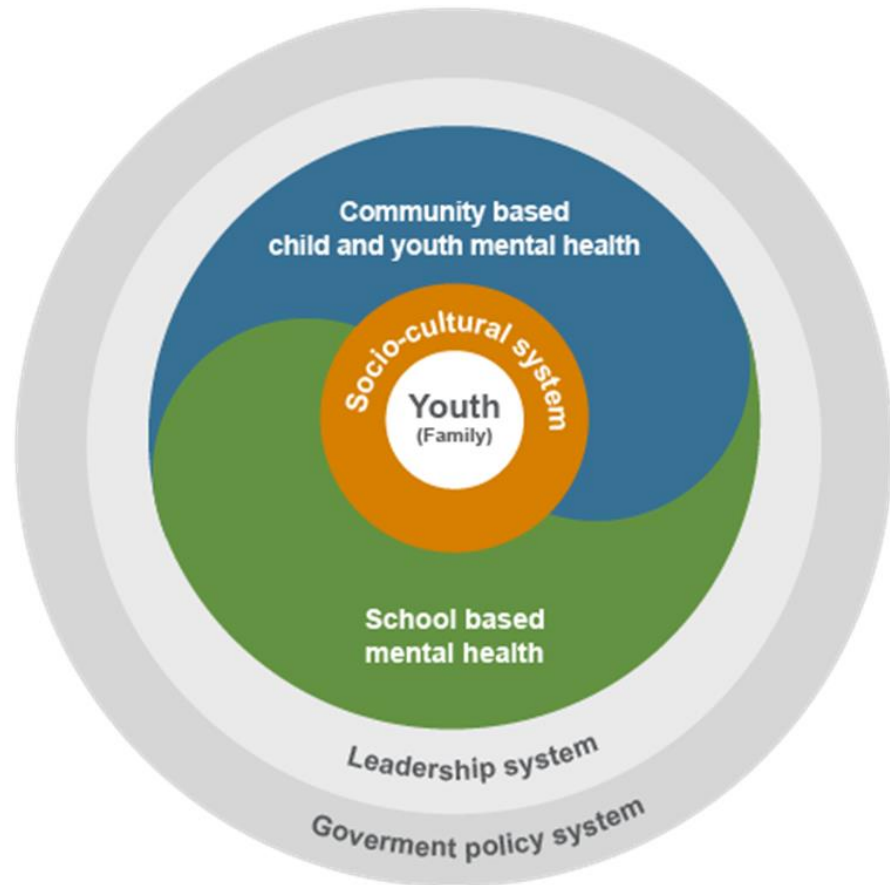
Strengthening Ontario's Mental Health and Addictions System of Care for Children and Young People



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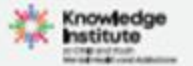
School Mental Health Professionals Provide Mental Health Services Within a Wider System of Care



April 2022

Right time, right care:

Strengthening Ontario's mental health and addictions system of care for children and young people



Circle of Support



- ✿ Their engagement is critical to your child's well-being at their school
- ✿ Children do better when their parents/caregivers are involved at their school
- ✿ Parents/caregivers are an important members of the Circle of Support for their child
- ✿ Building respectful, identity affirming, two-way communication with your child's school (parents/caregivers) is essential
- ✿ It is Important that parents and caregivers' have access to supports for their child's mental health and well-being in ways that best align with their values, beliefs and culture
- ✿ **They know their child best!**



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Parent & Caregiver Collaboration Group

Launched Dec. 1, 2022

A photograph of a woman with dark hair and a yellow top, smiling as she reads a book to a young girl with curly hair and a pink headband. They are in a library, with bookshelves visible in the background. The woman is holding the book open, and the girl is looking at the pages. The text 'Resources for Parents and Caregivers' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Resources for Parents and Caregivers

By Your Side Videos




- how to find resources to support your child's mental health
- signs of a mental health issue
- how you can support your child through transitions


[Link to videos](https://bit.ly/mentallyhealthyreturntoschool)

Easy and Fun Mental Health Activities for Home

Social-emotional learning supports mental health through life


What's the temperature?






Get ready

1. Gather paper, crayons or markers.
2. Write or draw different feelings on a piece of paper (e.g. happy, sad, angry, excited).
3. Ask your child to pick one feeling for the activity.



Go

- Have your child draw a big thermometer on a piece of paper.
- Mark off different points along the thermometer from 0 at the bottom, to 5 at the top.
- Write the feeling your child picked at the top of the paper.
- Talk about the different intensities of that feeling with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest. *For example, if your child chooses anger, 1 might be not at all angry and 5 might be furious.*
- Describe a situation and ask your child to rate where on the thermometer that situation might make them feel.
- This can be used during different times to help your child recognize the feeling and the intensity.
- Make a new thermometer using a different feeling.

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A series of 12 mental health activities designed for parents and caregivers to try at home.

[Link to resource](#)

Helping Your Child Manage Digital Technology



INFO SHEET
For Families and Caregivers

Helping Your Child Manage Digital Technology

As families prepare for the return to school, it is important to consider the relationship your child has with digital technology, also referred to as "screen time."

The most common forms of digital technology devices used by children and youth are smartphones, computers, and game consoles. Most children use these devices to talk with their friends, find information, or just play. Through these devices, children listen to music, use social media (e.g., Instagram), watch video sharing sites (e.g., YouTube), or play on-line video games.

The level of digital technology use during the pandemic has significantly increased for most people, including our children. In addition to online learning, digital technology has helped us to stay connected with family and friends and to engage in some recreational activities. Understandably, parents and caregivers have tended to relax family rules around screen time due to the limited options for face-to-face interaction and outdoor activities. Unfortunately, for some students the tremendous increase in use has had a negative impact on their mental health and well-being. Some students may be experiencing problems related to or worsened by their use of digital technology. It is anticipated that as families prepare to transition to in-person learning, adjusting to a reduction in screen use might be challenging for some students and cause some conflict at home. This resource is intended to assist parents and caregivers in navigating their child's use of digital technology as they return to school. It is important to identify and address problems early in the school year before problems get too big.

How do I know if my child's screen time is problematic?

Here are some things you may wish to watch for:



Is your child spending more time on screens than on other enjoyable activities such as hobbies, physical activities and face to face interaction? Technology use can have a powerful "crowding out effect" by taking the place of other interests. You may notice your child prefers the virtual world over involvement in the real world (e.g., child consistently prefers to play a basketball video game instead of joining their friends in a game of basketball outside). Perhaps your child reads less, spends less time on hobbies, or neglects their physical hygiene (e.g., showering, bathing, brushing their teeth).



Does your child's use of digital technology get in the way of their ability to do the things that are expected of them at their age? When screen time is problematic, you may find that your child is not as involved in school, isn't attending class regularly (or on time), doesn't participate as much in family life, and/or neglects extracurricular activities and friendships.



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It is important to consider the relationship your child has with digital technology, also referred to as "screen time."

- How do I know if my child's screen time is problematic?
- What should I do if my child's digital technology use is problematic?
- What resources can help?

[Link to resource](#)



WITH CARE

Tip sheet for Parents and Caregivers

TIP SHEET

How do you know if you should be concerned about your child/teen's mental health and well-being?

(Please note this Tip sheet is not a replacement for a consultation with a regulated Mental Health Professional, but offers some guidance to parents/caregivers about how you might know when to access professional supports)

This pandemic has lasted longer than many of us anticipated. While we have adapted and coped as best as we can, many parents or caregivers may be concerned about the mental health and well-being of their child or teen. For many children it has been a long time since they have seen their friends, participated in social and recreational activities, especially if they have continued to learn remotely. Mental health professionals have reassured us that children experiencing some sadness, worry, or even anger is natural during these challenging times. But some parents are worried that their child or teen may be suffering more – so how do you know? Do not forget you still know your child/teen best. You have the most important role to notice when your child is experiencing distress that can result in changes in their thoughts, their feelings or the way they behave.

Think about your relationship WITH your child....

W

When did the concern start?

I

How **intense** is the concern for my child?

T

What is the **timing** and how often does it happen?

H

How is the concern impacting on my child in their daily life?

WHEN did the concern start? Has the concern been going on for some time? (i.e., more than two weeks)

How **INTENSE** is the concern? Given your child's age and stage of development how serious is the concern at this time? (on a scale of 1 – 10)

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Think about your relationship **WITH** your child...

- W** **When** did the concern start?
- I** How **intense** is the concern for my child?
- T** What is the **timing** and how often does it happen?
- H** **How** is the concern impacting on my child in their daily life?

Parents can help! When problems arise and feel too big, parents can help their child manage temporary distress in healthy ways through the CARE you provide. Here are four things to try.

- C** Practice **Calm** together. Breathing exercises or simply being present in the moment and listening to “quiet” together...
- A** Find the **awesome** in the everyday (including the great outdoors) and model gratitude
- R** Set **routines** that are easy to follow and include time for fun, connection and rest!
- E** **Engage** in physical activities – get outside and let nature sooth your child’s spirit.

[Link to resource](#)





Noticing Mental Health Concerns for Your Child

Individuals and families have experienced the COVID-19 pandemic in unique and varied ways. For some, significant changes to daily routines, a sense of isolation and loss, and various other factors may have led to new or increased mental health concerns. Emotional and behavioural difficulties can arise at any time, and can affect anyone.

It is important to consider signs that could indicate that your child is struggling with an emerging or escalating mental health problem. Identifying problems early, and providing caring support, goes a long way towards prevention and/or worsening of difficulties.

You know your child best, and can notice changes in their behaviours or emotions. Right now, however, it can be difficult to know whether things you observe are just normal ups and downs associated with the pandemic, or related to an emerging mental health concern.

Here are some ways to consider whether your child might be experiencing a mental health problem, and offer help. While we use the term "child" throughout, we recognize that your child may actually be a teenager or young adult. No matter their age, they are still your child.

How would I know that my child is experiencing a mental health problem?

Parents and caring adults may notice changes in behaviours and emotions that could be potential signs of a mental health problem. Ask yourself:

- Are these behaviours and emotions out of character for my child?
- Are they having a negative impact on my child's ability to enjoy everyday life?
- Are they having a negative impact on our family life?
- Are they getting in the way of my child's progress at school?
- Are these concerning behaviours happening more often?
- Are they more intense?
- Are they lasting longer?



Noticing Mental Health Concerns

- How would I know that my child is experiencing a mental health problem?
- How can I talk to my child about mental health?
- How can I get ready to approach my child if I am concerned?
- What can I do to help if my child is struggling with their mental health?
- How can I access professional mental health help for my child?

Signs that may indicate a mental health concern for younger children:

- frequently changing mood/emotions
- easily hurt feelings, crying, anger
- ongoing temper tantrums, throwing things, hitting people, etc.
- ongoing sadness and lack of interest in things they normally enjoy
- withdrawal from friends and family
- increased need for contact and reassurance
- little motivation or interest in schoolwork, activities
- difficulty concentrating
- low frustration tolerance, irritability
- increase in headaches stomach aches, other aches and pains
- decreased energy, problems with sleep or appetite changes

Signs that may indicate a mental health concern for older children and teens:

- outbursts of anger or distress
- frequent irritability
- feelings of anxiety and panic
- excessive worries and fears about the safety of family, friends, self
- increased defiance and opposition
- school refusal
- use of drugs and/or alcohol
- withdrawal from friends
- ongoing negative remarks about self
- interest in activities from younger years
- declining grades, low motivation to complete tasks
- changes in eating and sleeping
- frequent talk about death and dying
- giving away possessions

[Link to resource](#)



Suicide Prevention Guide for Parents/Caregivers

PREPARE; PREVENT; RESPOND

A Suicide Prevention Guide for Parents and Families During COVID-19 and Return to School

Individuals and families have experienced the COVID-19 pandemic in unique and varied ways. For some, significant changes to daily routines, a sense of isolation and loss, and various other factors may have led to new or increased mental health concerns. Anyone can experience a mental health problem, including thoughts of suicide. This guide is designed to help by answering some frequently asked questions so that you can prepare, prevent, and respond if your child or teen is experiencing thoughts of suicide. It has been adapted from *Helping Children and Youth with Suicidal Thoughts* created by the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario and from a version further contextualized for school board use by Peel District School Board.

DISCLAIMER: This information is not a substitute for consultation with a regulated health professional. If you are concerned about your child, consult your physician or seek emergency services as outlined below.

Help is available for suicide crisis and prevention.

Call 9-1-1 or get support from a local crisis centre.


There is also:

Kids Help Phone (1-800-668-6868);

First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line (1-855-242-3310); and the

Canada Suicide Prevention Service (1-833-456-4566), that all offer 24/7 support.

For mental health treatment, free of charge, contact Children's Mental Health Ontario.

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www.smho-smso.ca

PREPARE; PREVENT; RESPOND

Quick Reference for Youth Suicide Prevention

Know what to watch for

Suicide is the second leading cause of death amongst youth and young adults. A key part of prevention is for caring adults to know the signs.

- withdrawing from family and friends
- hopelessness about the future
- talking or writing about suicide or wanting to die
- conveying that they are feeling overwhelmed, helpless, or out of control
- good-bye gestures, such as giving important belongings away
- changes in behaviour (decline in school performance, acting out, risk-taking, etc.)
- problematic substance use
- inattention to hygiene
- negative mood or signs of depression (sadness, irritability, less enjoyment of previously enjoyed activities, difficulty sleeping or eating)

Know what to do if you are concerned

- Educate yourself on local services that can help.
[ConnectOntario 1-866-531-2600](#)
[Children's Mental Health Ontario](#)
- Click the link to find a centre in your area
- Consult with your family doctor, cultural/faith leader, for additional support
- Work with your child's school to create daily supports. Caring professionals are there to help
- Prioritize your own wellness so you can be there for your child or teen. Visit [Wellness Together Canada](#) for ideas and supports
- Try to make time for connection and low stress activities with your child or teen each day
- Remember, suicidal thoughts can happen to anyone and when you provide direct, caring support you can truly help your child or teen

Know what to do in a crisis

If your child or teen has a realistic suicide plan and intends to act on it right away or has already made an attempt, this is a mental health emergency. Do not leave your child or teen alone. Immediately contact Crisis Services Canada 1.833.456.4566, go to the emergency room of your local hospital, or call for an ambulance.

Help is available for suicide crisis and prevention:

Block Youth Helpline
1-833-294-8650 (9am-10pm)

[Crisis Services Canada](#)
1-833-456-4566 (24/7) or text 456-45 (4pm-12am)

[Kids Help Phone](#)
1-800-668-6868 or text CONNECT to 488868

[First Nations Hope for Wellness Help Line](#)
1-855-242-3310 or click the link to chat.

[Naseeha \(naseeha.org\)](#) 1-866-627-3342


[Trans Lifeline](#) 1-877-330-6366

[Distress and Crisis Ontario](#)
Click the link to chat.

Or contact a telephone distress line for your area

Parents, families to learn more about your important role in suicide prevention, view the full document:

[Prepare, Prevent, Respond: A suicide prevention guide for parents and families during COVID-19 and return to school](#)

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Express your concerns
"I love you and I'm worried about you"

Remark on what you're noticing
"It seems like things have been stressful for you lately"

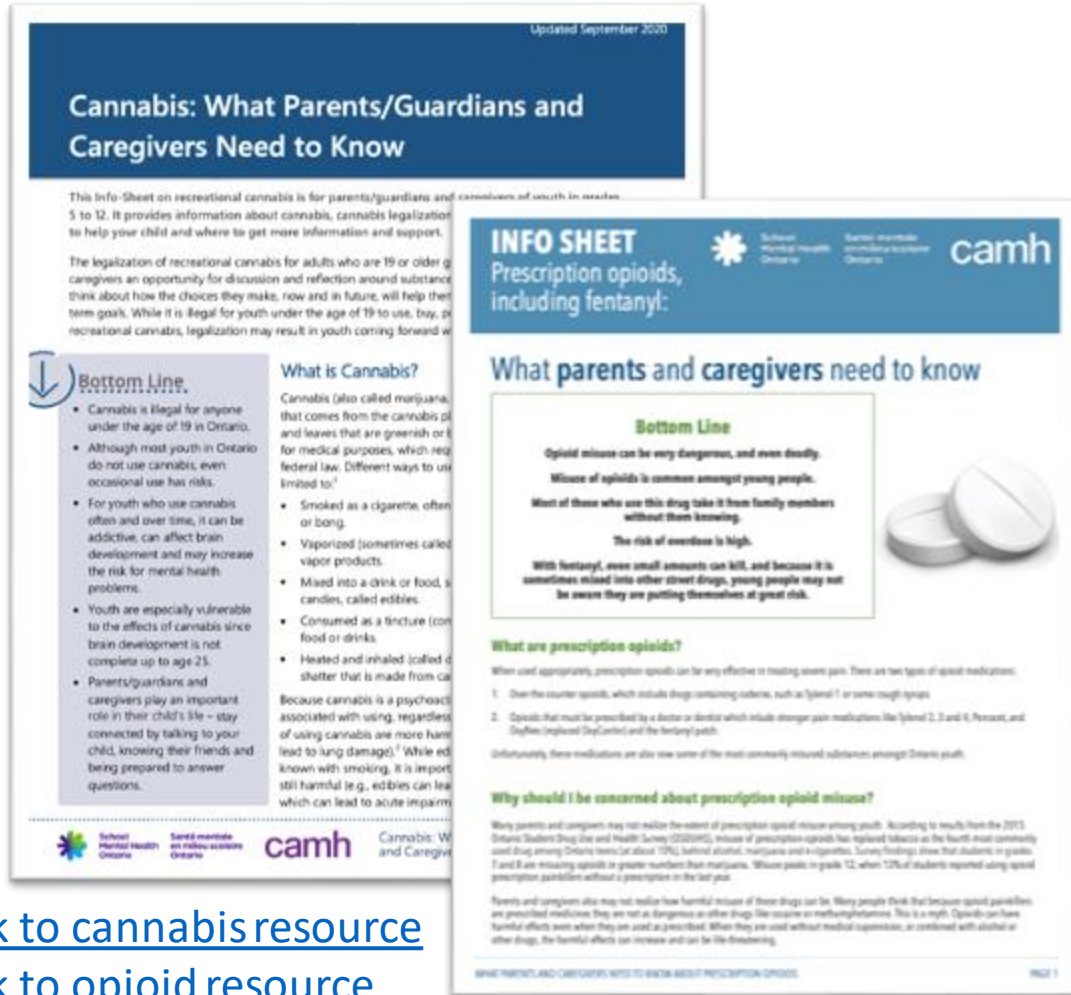
Ask about suicide
"Does it ever get so stressful that you think about suicide?"

Be persistent. Ask more if needed.
"I love you. I'm concerned. Are you thinking about suicide?"

Prepare; Prevent; Respond



Cannabis & Prescription Opioids: What Parents and Caregivers Need to Know



Developed in collaboration
with the Provincial System
Support Program at the Centre
for Addiction and Mental Health,
and the Ministry of Education

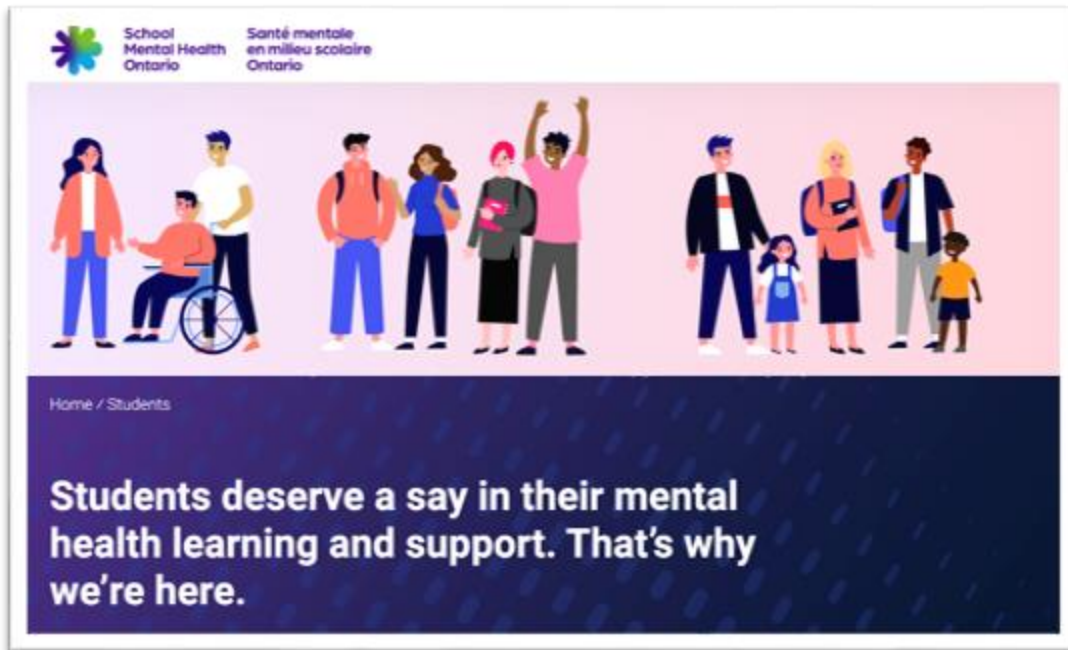


Joyce



<https://smho-smso.ca/blog/community-and-school-mental-health-leaders-get-a-first-look-at-right-time-right-care-a-collective-vision-strengthening-ontarios-mental-health-and-addictions-system-of-care-for-children-and-youth/>
<https://smho-smso.ca/blog/bons-soins-au-bon-moment/>

Resources for Students

School Mental Health Ontario's anglophone student reference group.



[My favourites](#) [Blog](#) [Go to main site](#) [Find a resource](#)

  [EN / FR](#)

About ThriveSMH

Last updated: January 31, 2023

ThriveSMH (Thrive School Mental Health) is School Mental Health Ontario's English-speaking student reference group. ThriveSMH members work with SMH-ON's team of educators, mental health professionals, and partners to make sure that we are providing the kind of support students want and need.

On this page:

[Meet the ThriveSMH team](#) [Connect with us](#)

Student Mental Health Strategies

FLOWER BREATHING EXERCISE

- Trace the **right side** of the flower, while taking a **deep breath** for **four seconds**
- **Hold** in your breath while tracing the **stem** of the flower for four seconds
- Breathe **out** while tracing the **left side** of the flower for four seconds
- **Repeat** four times



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Find out
more at

jack.org/covid

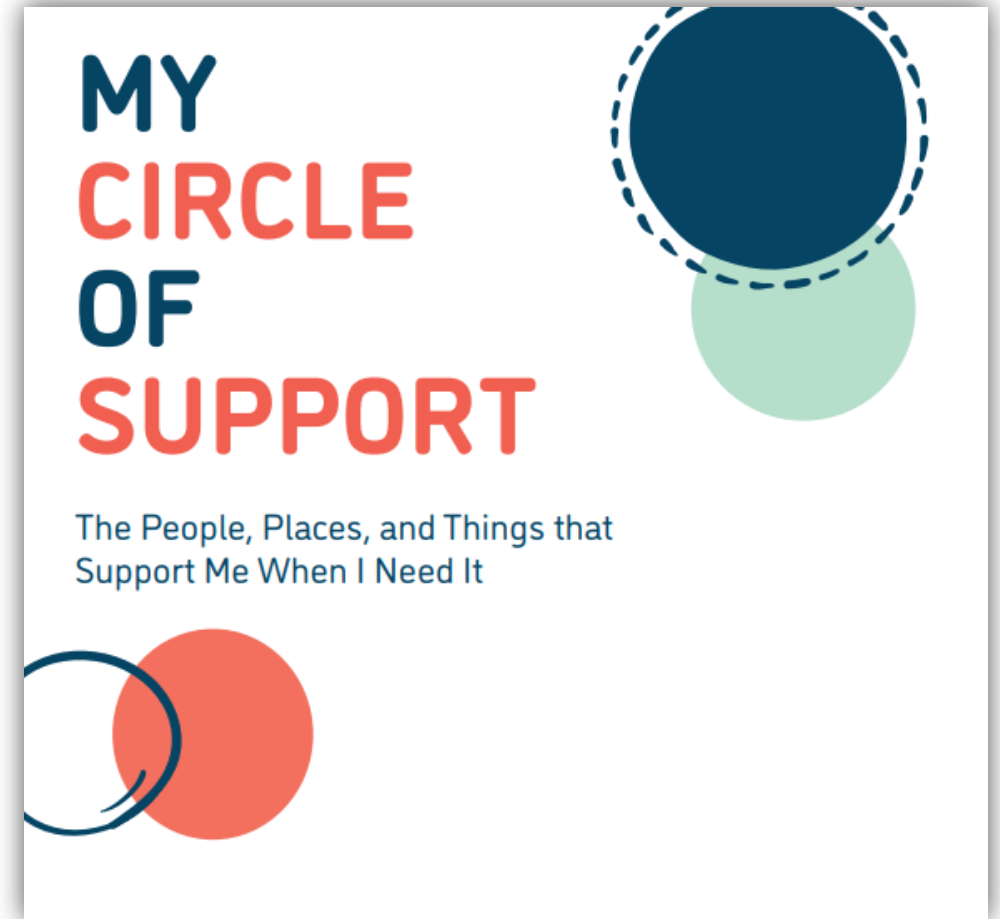


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[Video: SMH-ON social media shareables](#)

Student Help Seeking



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**Classroom resources
for educators**

Click & Play Resources



[Tense & Relax](#)



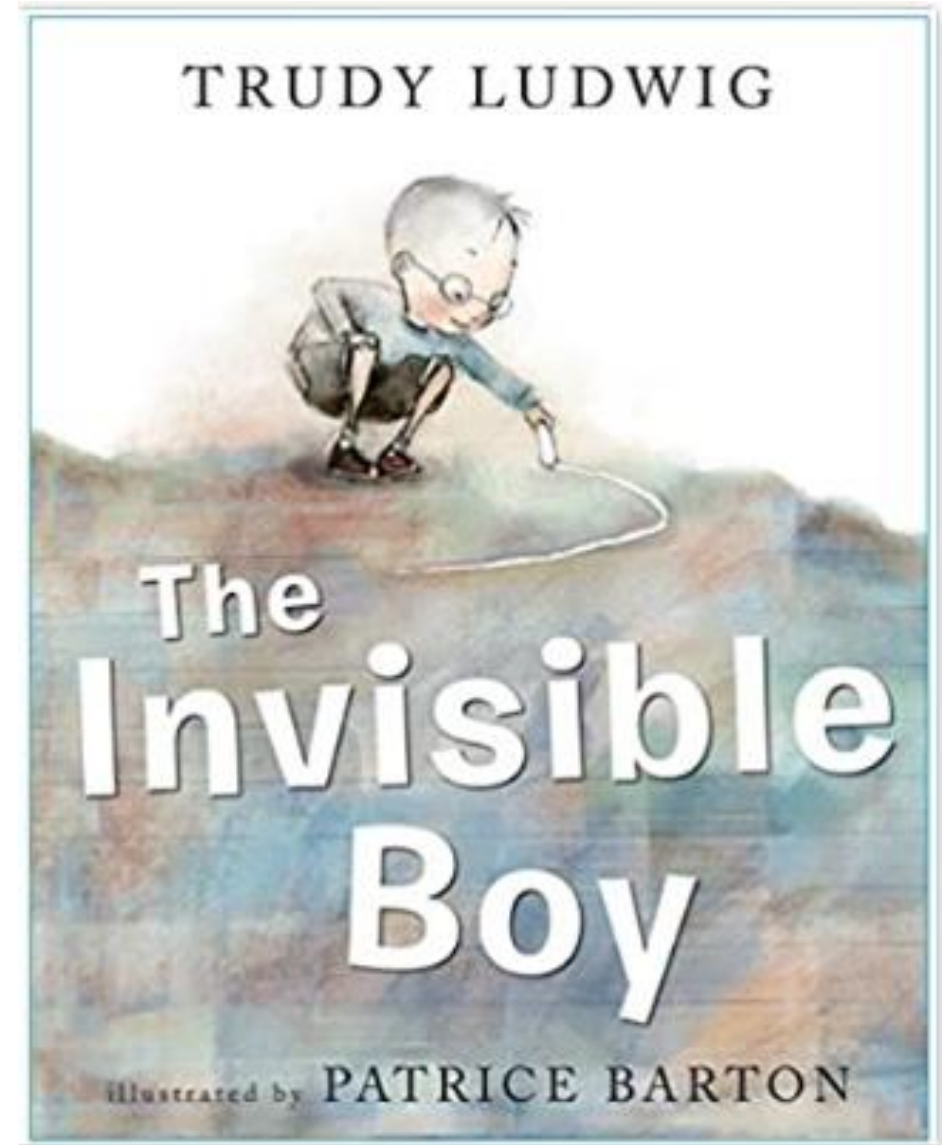
[Read Aloud Videos](#)



Read Alouds



School Mental Health Ontario
Read Aloud



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Elementary & Secondary SEL Classroom Posters



Calm Place

Where do you feel the most relaxed?

Imagine you are there.

What do you see?

What do you hear?

Are there any smells, tastes, or textures?

Keep In Mind

- You can use your **Calm Place** to feel more at peace during stressful moments.
- Spend time developing details of your **Calm Place** to make it feel more realistic.
- Use your imagination and walk around your **Calm Place** – notice every detail.






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We work together with Ontario school districts to support student mental health.
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Just Listen

Start with a deep breath.
If you feel comfortable, close your eyes.

Open your ears to sounds far away from you.

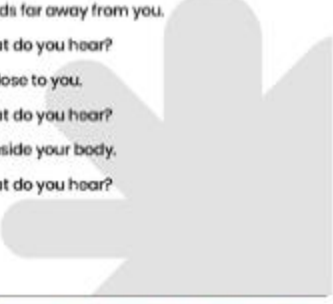
Listen for a minute. What do you hear?


Next focus on sounds close to you.

Listen for a minute. What do you hear?

Now focus on sounds inside your body.

Listen for a minute. What do you hear?



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Four Finger Affirmations

Select four words that make you feel calm and confident. It might be a sentence or just four words.

Examples: "I am loved today"
"I believe in me"
"Breathe, listen, smile, love"
"I can handle this"

Keep In Mind

- The more you say this to yourself the more you will feel that what you say is true.

Each word you have chosen will match a finger on your hand.

As you say your affirmation in your head, connect each finger with your thumb.



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Differentiated Classroom Resources to Promote Everyday Student Wellness

Ensuring access for ALL: special education considerations



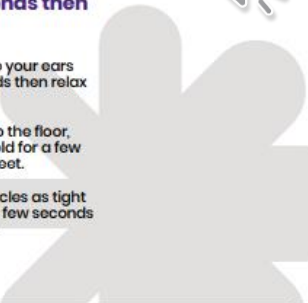

Tense and Relax


Squeeze your hands into fists as tight as you can hold for a few seconds then relax your hands.


Push your shoulders up to your ears and hold for a few seconds then relax your shoulders.

Push your heels down into the floor, squeeze your toes and hold for a few seconds then relax your feet.

Tense your stomach muscles as tight as you can and hold for a few seconds then relax your stomach.


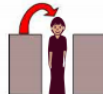
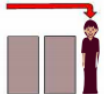










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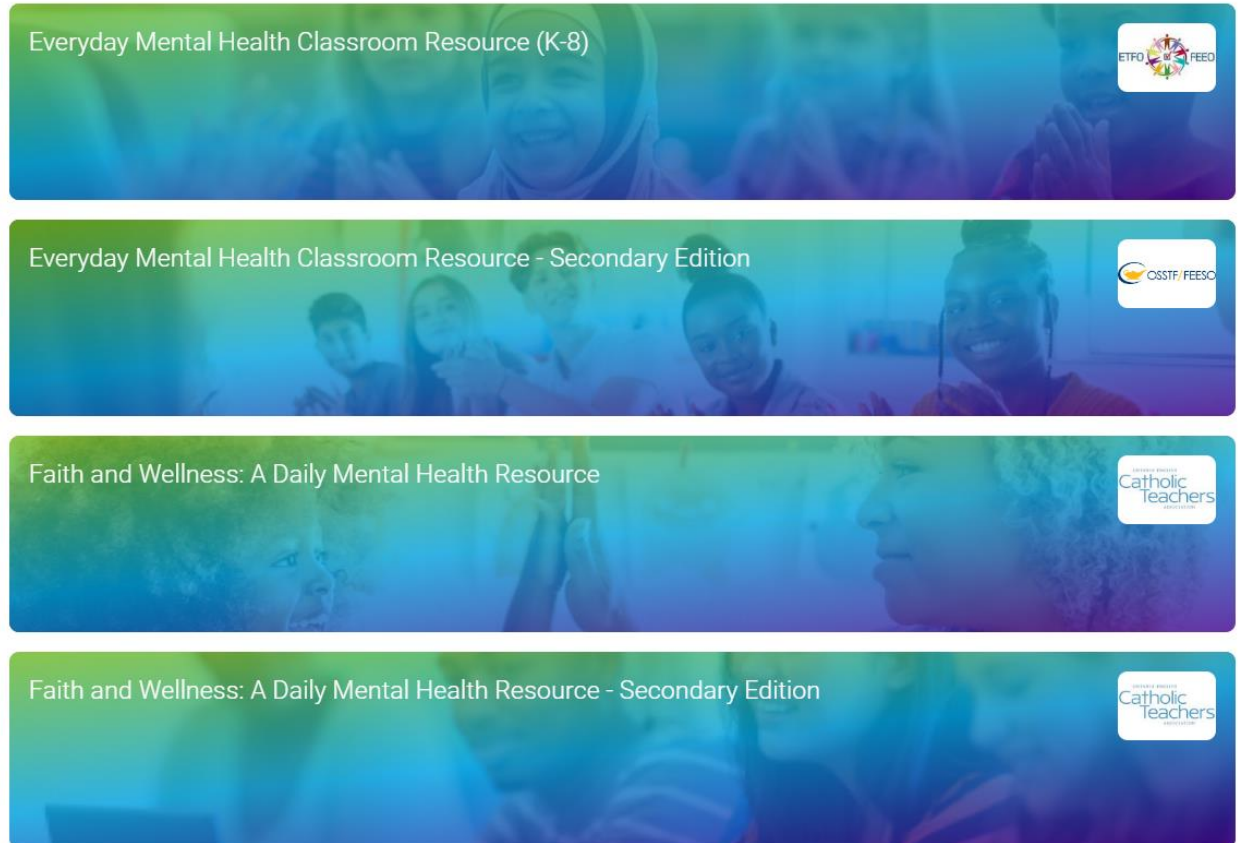
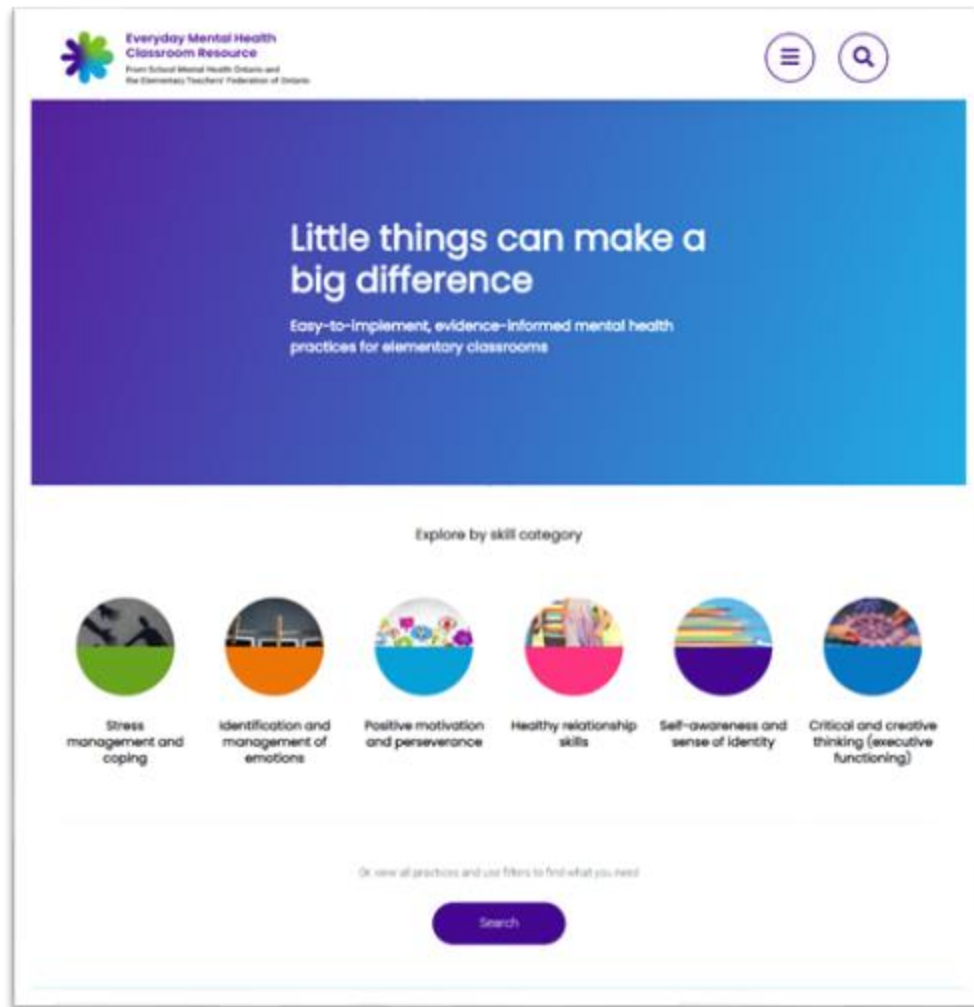
Tense and Relax

1st  First	 Next	 Then
 Squeeze your hands into a fist	5 Count to five	 Relax your hand
 Push your shoulders up to your ears	5 Count to five	 Relax your shoulders
 Push your feet into the ground	5 Count to five	 Relax your feet
 Tense your stomach	5 Count to five	 Relax your stomach

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Everyday Mental Health Activities



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Virtual Field Trip Lesson Plans

Secondary

Secondary

Virtual Field Trip Stress Management and Coping

Breathing strategies

Download

Secondary

Virtual Field Trip 2 Stress Management and Coping

Muscle relaxation strategies

Download

Secondary

Virtual Field Trip 3 Stress Management and Coping

Download

Secondary

Virtual Field Trip 4 Stress Management and Coping

Distraction strategies

Download

Secondary

Virtual Field Trip 5 Stress Management and Coping

Thought changing strategies

Download

All six lessons

Download

Junior

Junior

Virtual Field Trip Stress Management and Coping

Breathing strategies

Download

Junior

Virtual Field Trip 2 Stress Management and Coping

Muscle relaxation strategies

Download

Junior

Virtual Field Trip 3 Stress Management and Coping

Download

Junior

Virtual Field Trip 4 Stress Management and Coping

Distraction strategies

Download

Junior

Virtual Field Trip 5 Stress Management and Coping

Thought changing strategies

Download

All six lessons

Download

Intermediate

Intermediate

Virtual Field Trip Stress Management and Coping

Breathing strategies

Download

Intermediate

Virtual Field Trip 2 Stress Management and Coping

Muscle relaxation strategies

Download

Intermediate

Virtual Field Trip 3 Stress Management and Coping

Download

Intermediate

Virtual Field Trip 4 Stress Management and Coping

Distraction strategies

Download

Intermediate

Virtual Field Trip 5 Stress Management and Coping

Thought changing strategies

Download

All six lessons

Download

Primary

Primary

Virtual Field Trip Stress Management and Coping

Breathing strategies

Download

Primary

Virtual Field Trip 2 Stress Management and Coping

Muscle relaxation strategies

Download

Primary

Virtual Field Trip 3 Stress Management and Coping

Download

Primary

Virtual Field Trip 4 Stress Management and Coping

Distraction strategies

Download

Primary

Virtual Field Trip 5 Stress Management and Coping

Thought changing strategies

Download

All six lessons

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Kindergarten

Early Years

Virtual Field Trip Stress Management and Coping

Breathing strategies

Download

Early Years

Virtual Field Trip 2 Stress Management and Coping

Muscle relaxation strategies

Download

Early Years

Virtual Field Trip 3 Stress Management and Coping

Visualization strategies

Download

Early Years

Virtual Field Trip 4 Stress Management and Coping

Distraction strategies

Download

Early Years

Virtual Field Trip 5 Stress Management and Coping

Thought changing strategies

Download

Early Years

Virtual Field Trip 6 Stress Management and Coping

Gratitude strategies

Download

All six lessons

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Health & Physical Education Curriculum | Mental Health Literacy Lesson Plans

Health & Physical Education Curriculum – Mental Health Literacy



Grade 1: Lesson 1

Positive Mental Health

Mentor text: "Pete the Cat's Groovy Guide to Life"

Additional Mentor Text: (optional) **We Sang You Home** – Richard Van Camp – Gentle and rhythmic text captures the wonder and love that new parents feel when they welcome a baby into the world. This is a celebration of the bond between parent and child.

Time: Lesson – 1 period
Extension – 1 period

OVERALL EXPECTATIONS:

A1. apply, to the best of their ability, a range of social-emotional learning skills as they acquire knowledge and skills in connection with the expectations in the Healthy Living strand for this grade.

D1. demonstrate an understanding of factors that contribute to healthy development.

SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS:

A1.1 apply skills that help them identify and manage emotions as they participate in learning experiences in health and physical education, in order to improve their ability to express their own feelings and understand and respond to the feelings of others.

A1.3 apply skills that help them develop habits of mind that support positive motivation and perseverance as they participate in learning experiences in health and physical education, in order to promote a sense of optimism and hope.

A1.5 apply skills that help them develop self-awareness and self-confidence as they participate in learning experiences in health and physical education, in order to support the development of a sense of identity and a sense of belonging.


D1.5 demonstrate an understanding that mental health is a part of overall health and reflect on the things they can do to appreciate and take care of their body and mind.

- Lesson plans for grades 1-8
- Aligned with HPE Curriculum
- Include links to key resources such as the mentor
- Texts and virtual field trips
- Links to cross curricular expectations



Educator MH LIT: Mental Health in Action

- Elementary, secondary, and school leader course
- Guidance extension modules
- 6 One-hour Online Learning Modules



Course Introduction

Learn – Inspire – Teach

The MH LIT – Mental Health in Action course is designed to provide educators with foundational knowledge and information related to mental health, strategies to enhance student mental health, and everyday practices for use in the classroom. The course consists of six one-hour modules covering the following topics:

[Open All Panels](#)

MODULE 1:
THE EDUCATOR'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AT SCHOOL

Module Topics:

- The educator's role in supporting student mental health at school
- Creating a mentally healthy classroom
- Helping students to build social-emotional learning skills
- Helping students to learn about mental health
- Understanding common mental health problems
- Supporting students when they need additional mental health supports & services



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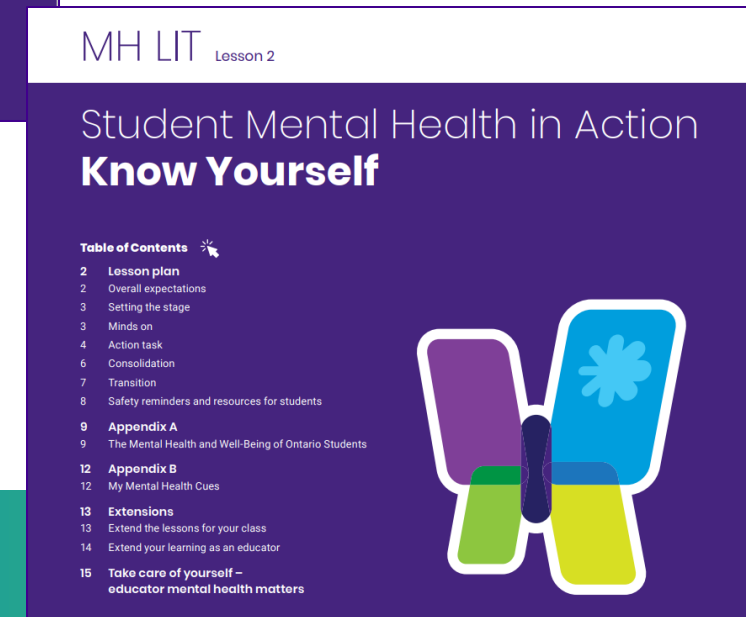
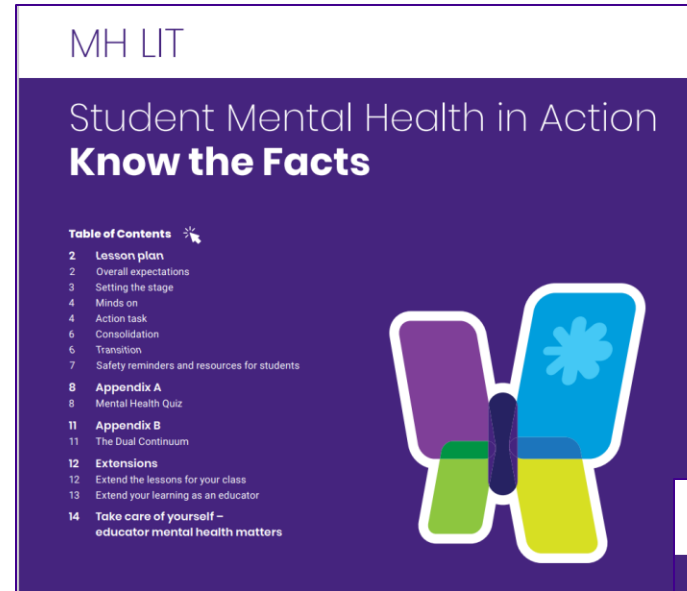
Building Mental Health Literacy – Secondary



4 x 45 minute lessons

- Lesson 1 : Know the Facts
- Lesson 2 : Know Yourself
- Lesson 3 : Help Yourself (with KHP)
- Lesson 4: Help a Friend (with Jack.org)

[Student MH Lit](#)



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MH LIT: Student Mental Health in Action



- **Minds On:** an activity for student reflection
- **Action Task:** engagement with the core content of the lesson
- **Consolidation:** activities for students to continue the learning
- **Transition:** a brief practice to end in a positive way and help students transition to the rest of their day
- **Safety:** a reminder about available resources and encouragement of help-seeking
- **Extensions:** Optional activities to extend the lesson for the class and ideas to continue bringing well-being into the classroom
- **Handout for parents and caregivers** to extend the learning at home



Supportive Conversations



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INFO SHEET

A Mental Health Literacy Resource for Educators

Supporting Mentally Healthy Conversations About Anti-Black Racism With Students

A Resource for Educators

This return to school year will be like

While systemic oppression is not new, the pandemic has magnified deep-rooted economic, social and racial inequities. These have disproportionately affected the most vulnerable and marginalized communities.



INFO SHEET

A Mental Health Literacy Resource for Educators


Supportive Conversations with Students During Challenging World Events

Many events taking place globally increase feelings of distress for students locally. News and information, both fact-based and speculation, travels quickly in the digital age. It is not uncommon for young people, and adults, to experience a range of emotions and to have questions about challenging world events. Reactions may vary with developmental stage, physical or emotional proximity to the event, and prior experience with traumatic circumstances (e.g., students with family in affected areas, those with refugee backgrounds, those impacted by racial trauma). These feelings and inquiries often come to school. Educators may be concerned about how best to address these questions and emotions in a supportive and helpful manner.


Techniques like **Validation** and **Support** can be helpful. These techniques are part of an approach called Emotion Focused School Support (developed by Dr. Adele Lafrance), which is a practical way to help when students are

Resource Summary





School Mental Health Ontario



SMH-ON Resources







Scan the QR codes below to access resources to support children's mental health


The following resources contain strategies for parents and caregivers to support children's mental health.

How to use a QR code:

- open the camera on your device
- focus the camera on the QR code by gently tapping the screen
- follow the instructions on the screen to access the resource

Resources for parents/caregivers to support children's mental health

	<p>By Your Side – video series In this video series, School Mental Health Ontario's Family / Caregiver Engagement and Literacy Lead, Patricia Codner, speaks directly to parents and caregivers to provide inspiration and information to support student mental health.</p>	
	<p>Prepare: Prevent: Respond A Suicide Prevention Guide for Parents and Families During COVID-19 and Return to School This guide is designed to help by answering some frequently asked questions so that you can prepare, prevent, and respond if your child or teen is experiencing thoughts of suicide.</p>	
	<p>Helping Your Child Manage Digital Technology This resource provides information on how to know if your child's screen time is problematic and supports if you are concerned that it is.</p>	








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<p>With Care: Tip Sheet for Parents & Caregivers This tip sheet explores how parents and caregivers can identify if their child might be experiencing a mental health problem, what to look for and how to access help.</p>	
<p>Noticing Mental Health Concerns for Your Child This info sheet explores what parents and caregivers might notice if their child might be experiencing a mental health problem and how to access help. The info sheet was created to support return to school in September 2020, but the information remains relevant.</p>	
<p>Easy and Fun Mental Health Activities for Home This is a series of 12 mental health activities designed for parents and families to try at home. They're connected to six areas of social-emotional learning and are available as a PDF file or graphics.</p>	
<p>Read Aloud Videos The read aloud videos can be enjoyed at home, or for classroom use as part of integrated learning supporting the elementary Health and Physical Education curriculum lesson plans, the virtual field trip series, or adapted in your own planning.</p>	

smho-smso.ca for more free resources available to educators, school staff, parents/ caregivers and students.

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Thank You!



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