

CMHA, HAMILTON

A FAMILY GUIDE TO MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

May 4-10, 2020

LAST YEAR WE

GOT LOUD



THIS YEAR WE

GET REAL

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CMHA Hamilton Social Media Campaign

MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is more than the absence of a mental health condition or illness: it is a positive sense of well-being, or the capacity to enjoy life and deal with the everyday challenges we face.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stress of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a meaningful contribution to their community.

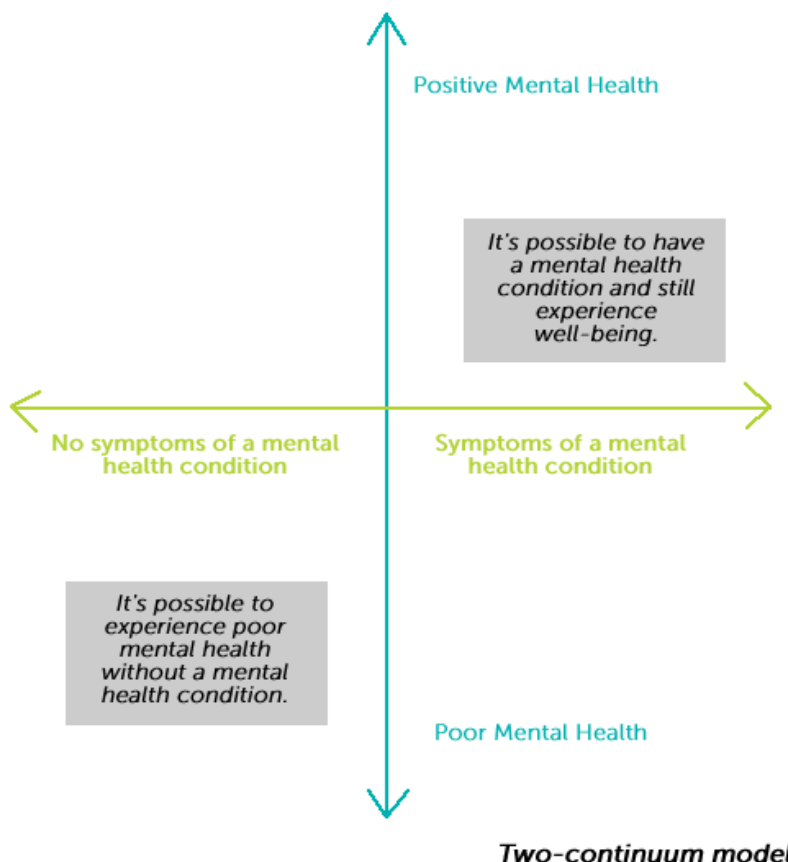


MENTAL ILLNESS

Mental illnesses are health conditions involving changes in emotion, changes in behavior or thinking, and are commonly associated with distress and/or problems functioning in social, work, or family activities.

Mental health affects every one of us. We all have mental health, just as we all have physical health. People living with a mental health issue or condition can experience positive mental health, just as an individual may experience poor mental health without experiencing a mental health condition.

Mental health is not fixed. A range of factors, including our life experiences, workplace and environments, and the social and economic conditions that shape our lives, influence our mental health.



WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH WEEK?

Since 1951, the CMHA Mental Health Week has taken place annually on the first full week of May. This year, Mental Health Week is being observed from Monday, May 4 - Sunday, May 10. Mental Health Week aims to reduce the stigma of mental illness and promote positive mental health and well-being for all Canadians.

Last year, CMHA encouraged Canadians to #GetLoud about mental health - to normalize the conversation around mental health. This year, we are taking it a step further. We want you to #GetReal about mental health.

This year's campaign is based on the insight that people in Canada commonly ask one another how we are, but it is also common not to provide – or expect – a truthful answer. Many of us say we're fine, even when we don't mean it. 'Fine' keeps us at arm's length from real social connections with others. Every time we just go through the motions, we miss a chance to connect with others in a meaningful way.

Each year, 1 in 5 Canadians will experience a mental illness or mental health issue, but 5 in 5 Canadians have mental health—we all need social connection.



SOCIAL CONNECTION IN A TIME OF SOCIAL DISTANCING

THE LONELINESS EPIDEMIC

Even before there was COVID-19, loneliness and social isolation were already of major concern in our society. People with weak or few social connections are at increased risk for anxiety, depression, anti-social behaviour, and suicidal behaviours. Lack of strong relationships affects the risk of mortality in a comparable way to smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day.

A 2017 Vancouver Foundation survey found that nearly a third of people aged 18-24 in the bustling city said that they felt lonely.

Research shows that loneliness is more keenly felt by people who belong to a visible minority, who are Indigenous, who have mobility challenges and who are LGBTQ-identifying.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL CONNECTION

Social inclusion and social integration have been identified by the WHO and the UN as important protective factors for good mental health.

By providing emotional support, companionship and opportunities for meaningful social engagement, social networks have an influence on self-esteem, coping effectiveness, depression, distress and sense of well-being (Berkman & Glass, 2000). Social networks and social ties have a beneficial effect on mental health outcomes, including stress reactions, psychological well-being and symptoms of psychological distress including depression and anxiety (Kawachi & Berkman 2001).

Studies show that having social connections and being civically engaged are associated with positive mental and physical health and well-being. Research has shown that even having one good friend can save children from being lonely.

YOU AS A CAREGIVER

Raising children is already a high-stress job. And there you are on the front lines of ensuring the well-being of your children. You play a key role in your child's mental health, but you are not necessarily a mental health expert. The very good news is that you don't have to be. In fact, with the right tools, you have the capacity to create a mentally healthy household environment. In fact, you are probably already promoting positive mental health in your home, maybe without even calling it that.

By understanding what you can do and learning how to integrate it into your daily practices, you can support and build your child's emotional and social well-being. While you're at it, you can actually improve your own experience of parenting.

This year, CMHA Mental Health Week emphasizes the importance of social connection in a time of physical distance.

So, what does it mean for your child to have positive mental health?

One thing mental health isn't: it isn't just simply the absence of mental illness. It is a positive state. It is the state of being able to feel, think, act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face.

If children don't have positive mental health, they are at risk of being unhappy, in distress, isolated, and/or bullied. They are at risk of depression, anxiety and suicide. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among children 10-19 years old. (Statistics Canada)

Mental illness is tragically a very real experience for many Canadian children. The stats vary, but it is estimated that 1/6 Canadian children live with a mental illness and that 70% of mental illnesses start in childhood. Although mental illness may be caused by a combination of biology, psychology and environment, getting ahead of it is often possible, through mental illness prevention and by intervening and treating it early.



MENTAL HEALTH WEEK ACTIVITIES FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

We at CMHA want to welcome you to Mental Health Week and thank you for supporting mental health within your community! The Canadian Mental Health Association of Hamilton has put together some resources and fun activities to promote healthy behaviours and attitudes that foster well-being, support good mental health and help to create a culture of understanding and acceptance within your home and in your community.

Here's what you'll find in this activities section:

- The Emoji Game
- Coping Skills Bingo
- Positive Affirmation Jars
- Apples and Onions
- Teamwork Tower

The activities in this toolkit are designed for students ages 7-14, however, the activities and exercises found within this tool kit can easily be adapted for older, or even younger children.

I have been up all night
with two little kids and I am
basically running on coffee
and I feel like I've been run
over by a truck and I'm so tired
I can't even think straight.





ACTIVITY 1: THE EMOJI GAME

Time: 30-60 Minutes.

Objective: To promote, encourage, and normalize recognizing our emotions while fostering a home culture of understanding and acceptance.

Materials: Emoji printout sheet (see next page), a pencil or pen (optional), and your family.

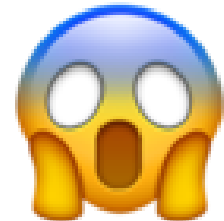
HOW TO DO IT:

1. Print out the emoji sheet on the next page.
2. Ask your kids to identify each emoji's emotion - write it down on the sheet if you'd like!
3. Have a discussion on how you feel when you experience each emotion, and to healthily cope with that emotion when you or your children experience that emotion.
4. Reinforce that it's okay to feel your emotions and it's important to talk through your feelings. Having your kids recognize the importance of emotional acceptance. Discuss how acknowledging our emotions creates support in your home environment and can strengthen your family relationships.

ACTIVITY 1: THE EMOJI GAME

ACTIVITY SHEET

happy, funny, loved, upset, confused,
annoyed, hungry, sleepy, surprised,
sad, stressed, scared, angry, sick, silly





ACTIVITY 2: COPING SKILLS BINGO

Time: 30 - 45 mins.

Objective: Show children different things they can do to cope with how they are feeling.

Materials: Bingo cards, coping skills list, bingo markers/macaroni/any writing utensil.

#GetReal

HOW TO DO IT:

1. Discuss situations which might cause your children to worry e.g. exams.
2. Discuss what they could do if they are feeling this way.
3. Give a bingo card to every child.
4. Play bingo as usual by reading out the coping skills and let the children mark them off.
5. Decide how you want to play - the first child to mark a row/full card wins.
6. Finish the activity with an upbeat identification of things you can now do to be positive and manage difficult feelings. Remind your children that this is not the same as ignoring difficult feelings or pretending not to have them.

ACTIVITY 2:

BINGO CARD 1

B	I	N	G	O
Play an instrument	Phone a friend	Knit	Share a meal	Journal
Lift weights	Garden	Savour something delicious	Cry	Build something
Send a card	Breathe	FREE SPACE	Have a virtual party	Word puzzles
Listen to music	Run	Positive self-talk	Play a video game	Cook
Watch a movie	Meditate	Play a board game	Sing	Play basketball

ACTIVITY 2:

BINGO CARD 2

B	I	N	G	O
Yoga	Play a video game	Use a stress ball	Give a gift	Cook
Listen to music	Play an instrument	Take a bath	Laugh	Send a card
Lift weights	Read	FREE SPACE	Pray/think about life	Dance
Word puzzles	Share a meal	Knit	Walk	Draw
Talk to a therapist	Garden	Watch a movie	Positive self-talk	Play a video game

ACTIVITY 2:

BINGO CARD 3

B	I	N	G	O
Play basketball	Draw	Spend time in nature	Give a gift	Breathe
Cook	Learn a language	Yoga	Talk to a therapist	Say something nice
Journal	Experience joy	FREE SPACE	Play an instrument	Learn kickboxing
Word puzzles	Give a gift	Listen to music	Run	Write
Knit	Have a video party	Play a video game	Read	Laugh

ACTIVITY 2:

BINGO CARD 4

B	I	N	G	O
Walk	Build something	Savour something delicious	Cry	Paint
Play a video game	Lift weights	Use a stress ball	Take a bath	Send a card
Phone a friend	Dance	FREE SPACE	Pray/think about life	Laugh
Gardening	Sing	Meditate	Learn a language	Cook
Knit	Share a meal	Run	Draw	Positive self-talk

ACTIVITY 2:

BINGO CARD 5

B	I	N	G	O
Savour something delicious	Experience joy	Play basketball	Sing	Cook
Spend time in nature	Meditate	Paint	Give a gift	Run
Learn a language	Dance	FREE SPACE	Share a meal	Talk to a therapist
Take kickboxing	Build something	Breathe	Read	Cry
Yoga	Laugh	Say something nice	Phone a friend	Write

Coping Skills Bingo Word Bank

Cut out and shuffle to play!

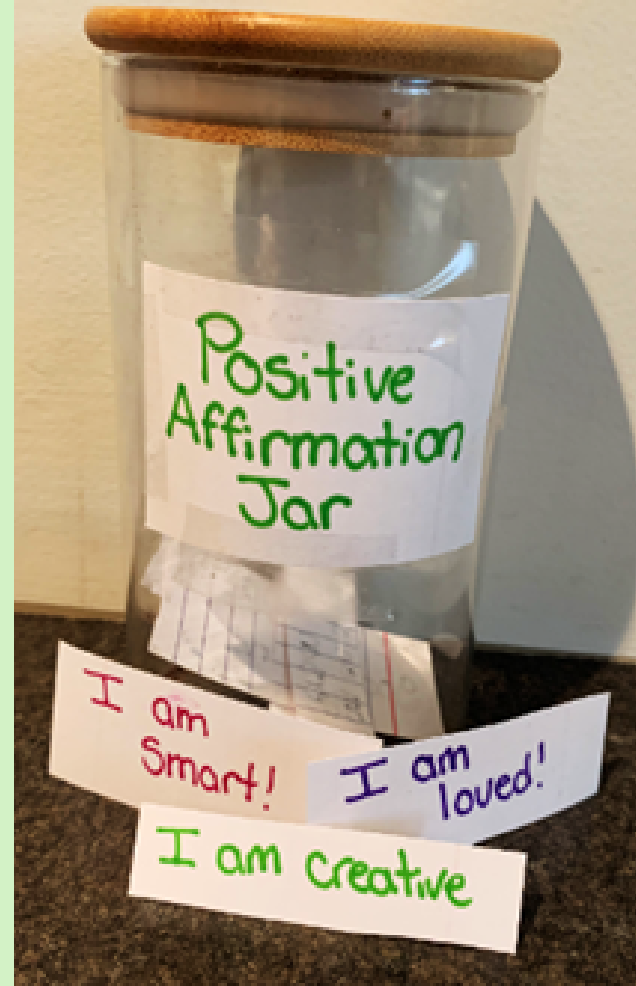
Yoga	Dance	Lift weights	Run	Play basketball
Sing	Walk	Take kickboxing	Phone a friend	Have a video party
Give a gift	Send a card	Play a board game	Say something nice	Share a meal
Knit	Paint	Draw	Word puzzles	Cook
Play a video game	Garden	Spend time in nature	Listen to music	Play an instrument
Learn a language	Read	Watch a movie	Take a bath	Build something
Write	Savour something delicious	Breathe	Meditate	Positive self-talk
Use a stress ball	Talk to a therapist	Pray/think about life	Experience joy	Laugh
Cry	Journal			

ACTIVITY 3: AFFIRMATION JAR

Time: 10 minutes.

Objective: To provide an opportunity to enhance self-esteem and foster self-expression through the use of positive affirmations and positive self talk.

Materials: One mason-jar, pens, paper.



WHAT ARE POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS?

Positive affirmations are positive “I am” statements (example: I am kind, I am smart) that are used to challenge negative or unhelpful thoughts. Just like we do repetitive exercises to improve our physical health, affirmations are exercises for our mind and outlook. These positive mental repetitions can reprogram our thinking patterns so that, over time, we begin to think – and act differently. Practicing positive affirmations can be extremely simple, and all you need to do is pick a phrase and repeat it to yourself. You may choose to use a positive affirmation to motivate yourself, encourage positive changes in your life, or boost your self-esteem!

HOW TO DO IT

1. Give your child(ren) a brief overview of what positive affirmations are and why positive self-talk is important. Reinforce that affirmations could even be neutral affirmations, like “it is going to be okay” can also be put in the jar on days that you don't feel great.
2. Ask your child(ren) to write down a positive or neutral affirmation on a piece of paper and place it in the mason-jar.
3. Read each of the positive affirmations at the end of the week.
4. Debrief at the end of the week: discuss how positive self-talk can enhance our self-esteem, but also reinforce that it's okay to not feel great all the time.

ACTIVITY 4: APPLES AND ONIONS

Time: 10 minutes.

Objective: It's ok to not be ok.

It's not always possible to tell how your children are feeling, or if they need support. This activity offers a very simple way to check in on how your children are feeling. It creates opportunities both to check in and to get insight into their behaviour.

Apples and onions are both good foods, but you wouldn't eat them the same way just as you wouldn't handle a 'good day' in the same way you would handle a harder day. This activity also lets your kids know you're there for them if they need help, and it conveys the message that it's okay to not be okay all the time.



HOW TO DO IT:

1. Start your mornings by going around the table and asking your child(ren) to share an apple and an onion. One thing that was really good about yesterday, and one thing that was a little bit harder to deal with yesterday.

****TIP-** don't force your kids to share. If they're not feeling up to sharing that's ok! Just by opening up the conversation of sharing our thoughts and feelings you're fostering a culture of understanding and acceptance. You never know, maybe your child will feel more comfortable sharing by day 5!



ACTIVITY 5: TEAMWORK TOWER

Time: 45 minutes.

Objective: Help strengthen teamwork in your family and identify strategies on getting through difficult situations. It takes a village to support one another.

Materials: old news paper or flyers, a timer, masking tape, measuring tape.

HOW TO DO IT:

1. Set your timer for 30 minutes and work together as a family, to build the tallest tower you can out of newspaper and masking tape alone.
2. Aim to build to the ceiling of your home if you can!
3. When you are finished building, measure the height of your tower.
4. Debrief with your family - communicate your experiences building your tower. What did you do successfully? What could you have done better? How did you feel while building your tower?

MORE MENTAL HEALTH WEEK ACTIVITIES FOR YOUR FAMILY

Daily Mental Health Quotes

Consider having your child(ren) read one of the following at breakfast each day of Mental Health Week:

"Do you have a brain? Then you have mental health. Mental Health is as important as physical health. Let's Talk About It."

"What is the best thing about today? Instead of asking someone how was your day?, why not connect with them on what was the best part of the day."

"Did you know that exercising actually changes the chemicals in your brain - in a good way? What do you like to do? Let's Talk About It."

"Almost every day we ask someone hey, how are you? How about we stop today and listen to the answer. Let's Talk About It"



Daily Mental Health Quotes

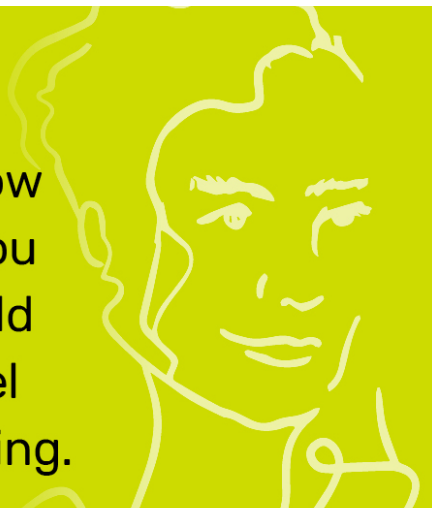
"Crying alleviates stress and allows humans to decrease feelings of anger and sadness. It physically does help to let it out."

"Without any words, you may be able to determine if someone is in a good mood, is feeling sad, or is angry just by reading the face. A small area in the brain called the amygdala is responsible for your ability to read someone else's face for clues to how they are feeling."

"Be aware of what thoughts you may be having throughout the day, and how this affects your feelings/experience"

"Multitasking makes you less productive. When you multitask, your brain simply rapidly toggles back and forth between tasks. This results in decreases in attention span, learning, performance, and short-term memory."

I'm grateful for your
friendship because I know
I can always count on you
and that means the world
to me and makes me feel
like I can conquer anything.



MORE MENTAL HEALTH WEEK ACTIVITIES FOR YOUR FAMILY

Positive Mental Health Tips

Keep these in a mason jar in your house for you and your child(ren) to pick up when you feel like you need them.

- Exercise – But something you enjoy!
- Read something you enjoy.
- Collect positive moments – text messages, emails, voice mails, pictures anything that made you feel happy (save them).
- Create a To-Done List instead of a To-Do List.
- Focus on one thing at a time.
- Do something fun.
- Find humour.
- Talk to a Friend.
- Pet an animal.
- Ask for a Hug.
- Eat something yummy.
- Listen to music – whatever you like.
- Try to be grateful instead of feeling guilty.
- Take a Mental Health Day.
- Spend 20 minutes a day on you!
- Set reasonable goals.
- Keep a gratitude journal.
- Write down one good thing that happened today.
- Find a new recipe to try out.
- Call a friend or a family member who makes you happy.
- Do something kind for someone else.
- Go for a walk around your neighbourhood.
- Take a few deep breaths.
- Write down a list of all the things that make you happy.

CHECK OUT OUR MENTAL HEALTH WEEK SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

Monday May 4	Tuesday May 5	Wednesday May 6	Thursday May 7	Friday May 8
#GetReal Tell us what you're REALLY doing to cope with your mental health while social distancing. Maybe it's binge-watching Netflix, playing with your pet, playing an instrument, or going on walks.	#AloneTogether. Send us a screenshot of your virtual hangouts on FaceTime, Zoom, Facebook messenger, Instagram messenger, or House Party using #AloneTogether!	#GoGreen! Decorate your home or wear green to celebrate hope and recovery! Take a photo of your green decorations or you and your family wearing green using #GoGreen	#MentalHealthMatters Tag us in your positive mental health tweets and use #MentalHealthMatters	#ItTakesAVillage When we work together and foster social connection, we foster our mental wellness too. Share with us what you're doing to maintain social connection while physically distant



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