



Student Mental Health and Addictions Newsletter

May 2022

YRDSB Mental Health services are provided by YRDSB psychology and social work personnel

Children's Mental Health Awareness Week

Every year in Ontario, the first week in May is acknowledged as [Children's Mental Health Awareness Week](#); this year it will fall on May 2-6, 2022. In recognition of this important week, at YRDSB, we are planning a variety of classroom daily activities, increasing awareness through our social media platforms as well as working with our community partners to build awareness about children and youth mental wellness through [webinars and workshops](#). Over the course of the pandemic the need to support children's mental health has been amplified. There are several definitions to Mental Health; the First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum highlights the holistic ways of understanding mental health and wellness. A balance of the mental, physical and emotional enriches one's daily lives, their hope for the future which in turn provides a sense of unity to themselves, families and communities. In addition, [School Mental Health Ontario](#) (SMHO) explains mental health as a dual continuum. Similar to our physical health, there are days where we might not feel mentally well. This can include our children, families and communities. SMHO reports that 70% of people indicated their first mental health concerns emerged when they were a child or an adolescent. Each year, one in five Canadian children and youth experience significant mental health challenges. Think of your average class size, this may mean many students can have mental health impacts in which support can be beneficial.

We continue to strive towards foundations laid out in the [Director's Annual Plan](#), which highlights the goal of building safe, healthy and inclusive learning and working environments where all feel they matter and belong. We strive to build on the notion of Acknowledging, Bridging and Connecting ([ABCs of mental health](#)) and create actions to support this framework.

In this edition of our Newsletter, we would like to share a video by [Strong Minds Strong Kids Psychology Canada](#) titled "[Supporting Teen Resilience: What Adults Need to Know](#)". This video showcases an open panel discussion with high school students and registered psychologists, Dr. Chantal Regis with a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the University of Guelph, and Dr. Michael Saxton who maintains a practice working with children and youth in Ontario. They discuss the resiliency, intensity of emotions, intersecting identities, vulnerability children and youth encounter as well as key strategies for adults to enhance young people's mental wellness. This video highlights some important factors to keep in mind:

- **Taking Time to Foster Strength** - Dr. Regis explains that caring adults can hold a safe space for youth by displaying listening skills, curiosity, and practicing open body language which symbolizes signs of caring adults. By doing so, caring adults can help facilitate dialogue with our children and youth to talk about their feelings, understanding that children's emotions and thoughts are amplified during brain development. For example, an adult may say to a child, "I see this is not making you happy, how are you feeling now?" Sometimes the use of colours can help children explain their emotions.
- **Creating a Care Plan** - Setting boundaries and taking time for YOU is essential as mental health is experienced across a dual continuum. Ask yourself, what does care look like for me? What one small thing do I need to feel cared about? Who is my support system that is identity affirming? What motivates me to care for myself? Who can I trust to share this care plan with? For some, this can include journaling, going on a walk, mindfulness, deep breathing, connecting with their roots and identities, being in identity affirming spaces, connecting with their loved ones and so on. Check out: [My Circle of Support Pocketbook-Student Help Seeking Resource](#) by School Mental Health Ontario.

Additional Resources:

[YRDSB Mental Health Resource Page](#)

[SMHO Parent/Family Page](#)

Upcoming Workshops:

[CMHA 2022 Mindful Compassion](#) - Wed, May 2nd , 2022 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm EDT

For more additional workshops visit [York Hills Centre for Children, Youth and Families website](#).

We look forward to creating pathways for caring connections and meaningful relationships with parents, caregivers, and families. Share your voice by using this [feedback form](#), and let's pave the path forward together.

Mental Health COVID-19 Page

As we focus on keeping ourselves healthy and containing the spread of COVID-19, we must also keep ourselves mentally well. The link below is dedicated to supporting student mental health during this Pandemic. Resources for students, parents/guardians as well as community resources are listed. In addition, there are various links to YRDSB mental health support as well as community support. Please consider taking some time to familiarize yourself with the supports found on the [COVID-19 Mental Health Supports for Students and Families](#) webpage.

Continue to check out the [YRDSB website](#) for updated information as well as the Twitter account [@MH_YRDSB](#).

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