

Children's Mental Health Week

May 1st - 7th

Children's Mental Health Week is about raising awareness across the province for children's mental health. Green is the colour that represents Children's Mental Health Week so decorate your house green, wear green and use your social media to raise awareness with the hashtag #kidscantwait. Many Ontario landmarks will be lit up green in honour of Children's Mental Health Week. For more information visit www.cmho.org



Facts about Mental Health

As many as **1 in 5 children and youth** in Ontario will experience some form of a mental health problem. Five out of six of those children **will not receive the treatment they need.**

70% of mental health problems have their onset during childhood or adolescence.

17% of children ages 2-5 years meet diagnostic criteria for mental health problems.

28% of students report not knowing where to turn when they wanted to talk to someone about mental health.

Canada's youth suicide rate is the third highest in the industrialized world.

Definitions

Mental health is a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. The Public Health Agency of Canada describes **Positive Mental Health** as, "the capacity of each and all of us to feel, think and act in ways that enhance our ability to enhance and enjoy life and deal with challenges we face. It is a positive sense of emotional and spiritual well-being that respects the importance of culture, equity, social justice, interconnections and personal dignity".

Mental illness refers to a wide range of **mental health** conditions — **disorders** that affect your mood, thinking and behavior. Examples of **mental illness** include depression, anxiety **disorders**, schizophrenia, eating **disorders** and addictive behaviors. Many people have **mental health** concerns from time to time.



Key Points

- Mental Health and Mental Illness are not the same thing.
- Everyone has some level of mental health all of the time, just like physical health, whereas it is possible to be without mental illness. Mental illness is extremely prevalent in Canada and around the world. Someone can be mentally healthy with a mental illness and someone can have poor mental health without a mental illness.
- Mental Health is not static; it can change over time depending on many variables including: genetics, psychological, biological and environmental factors.

How to Support Your Child's Well-Being

- Practice your own self-care and do things to promote your own well-being as a parent. You cannot be an effective parent/ caregiver if you are not taking care of yourself. Take credit for the wonderful things you are doing. Being a parent is one of the most important jobs there is, so make sure you are taking care of yourself too!
- Connect- Children need to feel connected to the world around them. Social isolation is a key contributor to poor mental health. As a parent, take the time to connect with your child where you can provide your total attention even if it's just for a few minutes a day. Provide opportunities for your children to socialize with others such as having friends over, participating in extra-curricular activities, or volunteering.
- Be Active- Children need opportunities to be active indoors and outdoors. Exercise helps to improve your physical health and mental health. Being a part of a team or group activity can help promote self-esteem, self-confidence, social skills and relationship building.
- Be Creative and Play- Giving children opportunities to promote creativity and the opportunities to play and learn new things encourages children to have a growth mindset which fosters resiliency.
- Learning- Learning outside of school is just as important as learning at school. Taking the time to teach your children new things is important. As a parent the attitude you model to your child about learning is crucial because you can teach to be excited about learning.
- Children are natural learners. As parents you do your best to provide an environment for children that is full of possibilities, experiences, ideas and culture.
- Take Notice- Teach your children about mindfulness. Being present and living in the moment is an important and difficult skill. Teaching your children about living in the present moment, acknowledging the feelings they are experiencing and teaching them how to process them in a positive way is a crucial for developing a positive sense of self.

Compiled by Riley Keast Mental Health Lead

