



Parent/Caregiver Handout

INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in the overview of Lesson 1, we all want good mental health and well-being for our children (and ourselves!). We want them to be able to thrive during times of stability and during times of stress. We want our children to know how to care for their own well-being and how to use effective coping and support strategies during challenging times.

MH LIT: Student Mental Health in Action is a series of four 45-minute lessons about mental health and well-being for secondary school students. It is delivered by classroom teachers and has been developed by School Mental Health Ontario with input from educators, students, and mental health professionals.

OVERVIEW OF LESSON 2

This second lesson is focused on helping students learn skills to monitor and support their own mental health and well-being so they can experience better overall mental health, quality of life, and school success. Content covered in this lesson includes:

1. Recognizing factors that can impact a person's mental health and well-being, such as:

- ▶ Our relationships (e.g., friendships, family/caregiver bonds, cultural/faith connections, mentors, allies)
- ▶ Our environment (e.g., having a safe place to live, learn, work and explore)
- ▶ Our physical health (e.g., access to food, rest, medicine, opportunities for exercise)
- ▶ Our access to care (e.g., wellness promotion and early identification/intervention services)
- ▶ Our experiences (e.g., happy moments, achievements, hurts, acceptance, stressors, traumas)
- ▶ Our circumstances (e.g., social and economic situations, neighbourhood/community context)

2. Identifying indicators of my mental health and well-being

- ▶ How do you think, feel, and act when your mental health is good versus when it is not?



3. Learning ways to support my mental health (especially during ongoing COVID-19 concerns)

- ▶ Maintaining a safe level of physical activity
- ▶ Spending less free time on digital screens
- ▶ Maintaining or increasing sleep quality and length
- ▶ Going outside once or more a day (if you feel safe to do so)
- ▶ Talking to a friend, trusted family member or caregiver about how you are feeling
- ▶ Increasing quality family or time with loved ones

4. Telling the difference between healthy and unhealthy coping strategies

Unhealthy coping strategies may feel okay in the moment, but over time they can leave us feeling unwell. The healthy strategies above are more likely to support our mental health and help us avoid unhealthy ones, such as:

- ▶ Unhealthy substance use (e.g., caffeine, nicotine, cannabis, alcohol)
- ▶ Over-using activities such as shopping, social media, or video games
- ▶ Withdrawing from friends, family/caregiver, or activities we enjoy
- ▶ Avoiding or denying what is bothering us
- ▶ Using food or sleep in unbalanced ways

HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT YOUR TEEN'S LEARNING IN THESE LESSONS?

Continue the conversation at your home/dwelling! The Student MH LIT lessons can provide a nice way to check in about how your teen is feeling. You can build on what your teen learned at school with other information that fits your family, culture, and/or community. Together, you can explore resources and open up dialogue about ways to stay mentally well, even during tough times. Here are some conversation starters:

- ▶ What did you learn about in the Student MH LIT lesson today?
- ▶ What are the factors that you think most affect your mental health, for better or for worse?
- ▶ What sorts of strategies did you and your classmates come up with for coping with stress?
- ▶ What are you already doing that helps with coping? Did you learn any new healthy strategies to try out?
- ▶ Is there something we could try together (e.g., going for a walk outside, decreasing our amount of screen time, watching a funny movie together, etc.)? When should we do it? How long should we take? Should we include anyone else?



RESOURCES FOR PARENT / CAREGIVER LEARNING:

While students learn about mental health, you can learn about mental health, too! Here are some resources for parents/caregivers to get you started.

CMHO Family Care Centre <https://cmho.org/familycarecentre/>

CMHA Ontario <https://ontario.cmha.ca/mental-health/child-and-youth-mental-health/>

AboutKidsHealth Resource Hub <https://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/mentalhealth>

Kids Help Phone <https://kidshelpphone.ca/>

School Mental Health Ontario <https://smho-smso.ca/covid-19/parents-and-families/>

SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS

You might consider cutting this out and putting on your fridge or another easily accessible family space.

Find help in your community through <https://cmho.org/findhelp>

Kids Help Phone

Call: 1-800-668-6868

Text: CONNECT to 686868

First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line

Call: 1-855-242-3310

Black Youth Helpline

Call: 416-285-9944 or toll-free 1-833-294-8650

LGBT YouthLine

Text: 647-694-4275

Trans Lifeline

Call: 877-330-6366



MH LIT Student
Mental Health
in Action

SUPPORTS FOR PARENTS / CAREGIVERS:

Supports are also available for adults. If you feel you might benefit you can contact your family doctor or go to <https://www.ontario.ca/page/mental-health-services> to find local resources. You may also wish to visit [Wellness Together Canada](#). Parents can also contact [Kids Help Phone](#) for support.

If you have questions about the lessons, please reach out to your teens teacher or principal/vice-principal. Your school is there to help.

