

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....

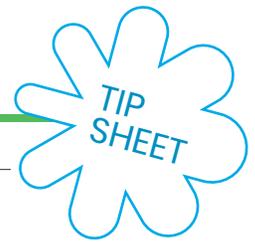
- W** **When** did the concern start?
- I** How **Intense** is the concern for my child?
- T** What is the **Timing** and how often does it happen?
- H** **How** is the concern impacting on my child in their daily life?

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)





What is the **TIMING** and how often is it happening? How frequently are you noticing the concern? Is this a change from before?



HOW is this concern impacting my child and their daily life? Is my child struggling to do schoolwork or even play? Are they less interested in things they used to enjoy? Are they having trouble with eating or sleeping?



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.

There are many caring professionals who can assist. Start with your child’s teacher and/ or your child’s doctor. Community resources are available. Find help in your community through <https://cmho.org/findhelp>

If it is an emergency – your child is talking about an active suicide plan or has already engaged in suicidal behaviour – do not leave your child or teen alone. Immediately contact Crisis Services Canada 1.833.456.4566 or a local crisis line, go to the emergency room of your local hospital, or call for an ambulance.

For more in-depth information check out:

<https://smho-smsso.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Info-sheet-noticing-concerns.pdf>

