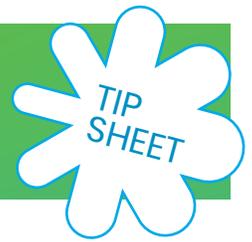


# Small Conversations, Big Impact



For Secondary Students

**Young people within our education system attempt to navigate this “new normal” while also trying to understand themselves during a transitional time in their lives. Secondary students across Ontario are experiencing a unique set of challenges at this moment. Some of these challenges stem from the uncertainty that this pandemic has created about their school, work and personal lives.**

This resource was created to equip educators with the language and additional resources to help support secondary students with their questions, concerns and comments related to loss and disappointment, uncertainty about the future, living life virtually, substance use and loss of caring connections.

Students often turn to educators as caring adults who can help when they are feeling upset or worried about something. The goal in these, often brief interactions, does not necessarily need to solve a young person's problem or provide advice, but rather to offer a soft landing in which a young person can be left feeling validated and acknowledged. However small these conversations may be, they provide an opportunity to leave a positive impact on a young person's mental health and well-being.

This resource uses some suggestions from an emotion coaching approach to offer language and direction when educators are met with conversations that may be difficult to navigate.



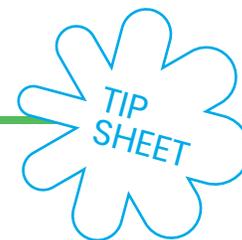
## Key tips to remember when using an emotion coaching approach:

1. Validating how someone feels and demonstrating that we understand is critical.
2. Once we validate a young person's feelings, we are better able to help with problem solving and solutions.
3. Use language that feels natural and genuine for you.

For more on supporting positive mental health for students:

[Tip sheet for staff to support positive mental health for all students](#)





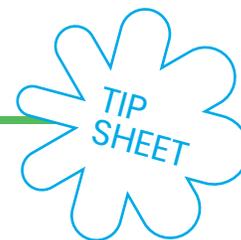
## Loss and disappointment

Question / Comments	Prompt	Resource links
<p>Will I get to play sports this year?</p> <p>I felt very disappointed that last year they cancelled all social events.</p> <p>I'm in my final year, and my family is hoping to see me...I'm worried it might get cancelled this year too...</p>	<p><b>Validating language:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I can see that you are feeling (sad/disappointed/frustrated/upset) because...</li> <li>I understand why you might feel _____ because you are missing out on an important moment.</li> </ul> <p><b>Solution seeking language:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can I help?</li> <li>What would you need to feel supported?</li> </ul>	<p><a href="https://smho-smsso.ca">Loss and Grief During the COVID-19 Pandemic (smho-smsso.ca)</a></p> <p><a href="https://camh.ca">Loss, Grief, and Healing (camh.ca)</a></p> <p><a href="https://kidshelpphone.ca">8 Ways to Celebrate Special Events During the Pandemic (kidshelpphone.ca)</a></p>

## Uncertainty about the future

Question / Comments	Prompt	Resource links
<p>Will I have to do another grade via online?</p> <p>My part time job let me go because of the pandemic. How can I find another job?</p> <p>I was looking forward to co-op this year. But I am afraid that it will be on-line. I am tired of everything being virtual.</p>	<p><b>Validating language:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is a challenging time, concerns about your future are completely understandable...</li> <li>I imagine that this must be difficult...</li> </ul> <p><b>Solution seeking language:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can I help?</li> <li>I can see how you would feel upset about _____ because.</li> </ul>	<p><a href="https://kidshelpphone.ca">How I Cope With Change During COVID-19 (kidshelpphone.ca)</a></p> <p><a href="https://mentalhealthcommission.ca">Goal Setting in a Year of Uncertainty (mentalhealthcommission.ca)</a></p>

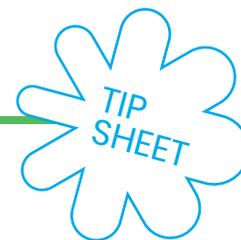




## Living life virtually

Question / Comments	Prompt	Resource links
<p>I am really struggling with learning online.</p>	<p><b>Validating language:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It sounds like you have found it tough with on-line learning because you have missed...</li> <li>• I can understand why you have mixed feelings about virtual or face to face learning because of _____ that can be confusing for sure...</li> </ul> <p><b>Solution seeking language:</b></p>	<p><a href="http://smho-smsso.ca">Supporting Minds Strategies at a Glance (smho-smsso.ca)</a></p> <p><a href="http://smho-smsso.ca">Supporting Student Mental Health During a Pandemic (COVID-19) (smho-smsso.ca)</a></p> <p><a href="http://smho-smsso.ca">Supporting the Mental Health and Well-Being of Students Who Will Return to School Remotely (smho-smsso.ca)</a></p> <p><a href="http://kidshelpphone.ca">Ways to Ease Concerns About School During COVID-19 (kidshelpphone.ca)</a></p>
<p>I don't know how to make new friends in my on-line classes</p>	<p><b>Solution seeking language:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let's look into this together to see if we can find someone to support.</li> <li>• I wonder if we could just brainstorm together some ways to keep in touch with your friends.</li> </ul>	<p><a href="http://kidshelpphone.ca">Tips for Staying Connected During COVID-19 (kidshelpphone.ca)</a></p> <p><a href="http://kidshelpphone.ca">How to Cope With Social Distancing During COVID-19 (kidshelpphone.ca)</a></p> <p><a href="http://kidshelpphone.ca">Feeling Lonely? Here Are Some Ways to Feel Better. (kidshelpphone.ca)</a></p>





## Substance use

Question / Comments	Prompt	Resource links
There is nothing to do but smoke weed.	<p><b>Validating language:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It sounds like you have a lot going on, and I understand why you are worried because _____ I am happy to listen, and I also know some others in our school who could help...</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Cannabis: What Parents/Guardians and Caregivers Need to Know (smho-smsso.ca)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Cannabis: What Educators Need to Know (smho-smsso.ca)</a></p>
All my friends and I have been doing during the pandemic is vaping. There isn't anything else to do.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It sounds like you are worried about how you are coping right now because you are smoking more than you have been...</li> </ul> <p><b>Solution seeking language:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I wonder if we could talk to (adult ally), I know _____ knows a lot about this, they may have some ideas where to start _____.</li> <li>Would you be interested in getting some help...</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Student Vaping Resources (smho-smsso.ca)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Secondary School Teachers Vaping Resource (smho-smsso.ca)</a></p>

Comments about substance use, gaming or other behaviors may sound like the statements above. Please refer to the [substance use and addiction webpage](#) for more information about responding to these concerns in school.

## Loss of caring connections

Question / Comments	Prompt	Resource links
I have not connected with my school social worker for over a year. I am not sure if the relationship will be the same anymore?	<p><b>Validating language:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I hear that you are looking for someone to talk to...</li> <li>I understand why it has been difficult to maintain the same relationships you had before...</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Circle of Support (for educators) (smho-smsso.ca)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Reaching Out (smho-smsso.ca)</a></p> <p><a href="#">No Problem Too Big or Too Small (smho-smsso.ca)</a></p>
I have not seen my friends in over a year. I am worried that our friendships are not the same anymore?	<p><b>Solution seeking language:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Let's see how we can figure this out.</li> <li>What would you need to feel supported?</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">How to Map Out Your Community of Support (kidshelpphone.ca)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Resources Around Me (kidshelpphone.ca)</a></p>