



Resources for parents and caregivers

We all want good mental health and well-being for our teens. We want them to thrive during times of stability and during times of stress. We want them to know how to care for their own well-being and how to use effective strategies during challenging times. As part of ongoing work to support student mental health, school boards are introducing two Ministry of Education Mental Health Literacy Modules as part of the Career Studies course.

Overview of the learning

These mental health modules offer ways to prepare for and help manage the stresses we all experience, and knowing when, where, and how to seek mental health support, should we need it.

Did you know?

Students want to learn about mental health, and they want their parents/caregivers and families to learn more about mental health, too!

[#HearNowON 2021: Student Voices on Mental Health – Final Report - School Mental Health Ontario \(smho-smsso.ca\)](#)

Here are some key learnings from the modules:

- We **all** feel stress at times. **Day-to-day routines** and **stress management strategies** can help us keep stress in a range where we are best able to manage it.
- Our ability to manage stress is impacted by **many things**, like our experiences, health, and environment.
- Knowing how stress shows up in our **thoughts, emotions, bodies, and actions** can help us to choose strategies that will work. Using these strategies early can help minimize the impact of stress on our lives.
- Different strategies may work for each of us. Different strategies may work at different times, too, so it's important to have a few **options available** and to **practice** them **regularly**. Practicing strategies before we need them increases the chance that they'll work when we need them most.
- When the signs of stress are **strong, long-lasting**, and **have a negative impact** on our day-to-day lives, it's probably time to connect with a **person, resource, or service** that can help.



- Some sources of stress, like stress linked to experiences of prejudice, discrimination, or racism, or ongoing stress related to things like a medical condition or finances, are **not a student's individual responsibility to manage**. When they appear, **seeking support** from a trusted adult is essential.
- We have an important role to play in **supporting our friends**. Sometimes we need other people to play a role, too. We don't have to carry a concern for a friend alone.

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

Did you know?

You likely know and use many ways of managing stress based on your personal, family, cultural, and community strengths. Share what helps you and encourage your teen to try different strategies to find what works for them. When you model constructive ways of managing stress, you are helping your teen learn them, too.

How can you support your teen's learning?

The modules focus on learning about and understanding stress and its effects. Parents/caregivers may further reinforce this learning by supporting conversations that personalize it. Talking about mental health is a great way to share information, reduce stigma, and support everyone's mental health. Here are some conversation starters to try:

- What did you find interesting or helpful about what you learned? Was there anything that stood out or surprised you?
- What is stress like for you? When does it appear? What does it feel like?
- What healthy habits do you use now that might support you after secondary school? Are there any you'd like to add? What helps you feel your best?
- Which stress management strategies work best for you? Are there any new ones you'd like to try? Is there anything I can help with or any other support that you need?
- How could you tell if you were experiencing more than just the usual ups and downs we all face? How would you know it might be time for more support? As your parent/caregiver, how could I tell? What could I look for?



- What are some ways you might start the conversation if you needed support for your mental health? In addition to me, who could you go to? Is there someone at school, in our community, or our family that you would feel comfortable with?
- Have you ever had a friend you tried to help with a mental health problem? Did you learn any tips in the lesson that might help? If you told me about a friend you were worried about, how would you want me to help?

"If I would look for support it would be from my mom or dad or my very good friends and no one else. I go to my family for help."

Ontario Secondary School Students

How else can parents/caregivers help?

In situations when your teen may be stressed, upset, worried, or experiencing other uncomfortable feelings (but they are safe and at no risk of harm), here are some ways you might provide support:

- Encourage stress management strategies. Ask your teen what works for them and help them build strategies into their day-to-day life. Encourage day-to-day routines that support them, too, like getting enough sleep and taking breaks from technology.
- Help students prioritize and determine what matters most. For example, your teen might wish to consider reducing the number of extracurricular activities they take on and trying to minimize their exposure to worrisome news in the media.
- As parents/caregivers, we may feel the urge to jump in and offer quick solutions, but sometimes just listening and reflecting back any thoughts or emotions your teen shares can go a long way in helping them feel heard and supported. This can also help when they share a worry about a friend. We all want our experiences to be validated and understood.
- Inspire hope. Even if you don't know the answers, or if solutions seem a long way away, reassure your teen that you will find a way through it together.
- Help your teen to notice ways they have overcome challenges in the past. Sometimes when feelings overwhelm us, we focus on all that is wrong and lose sense of our strength and resiliency.

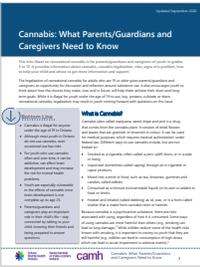
Did you know?

When asked about strategies to manage stress, Ontario secondary school students noted talking to their parents, family, and people they trust is important. Just talking to you can be an important stress management strategy.



Where can parents/caregivers learn more?

Your understanding of mental health is valuable to your teen's well-being. Below, you'll find resources that support your learning about how to notice mental health concerns, understanding substance use, and other ideas about how to respond to your teen's mental health needs.

RESOURCES	
	<p><u>Noticing Mental Health Concerns for Your Child</u> This info sheet explores what parents/caregivers may notice if their child might be experiencing a mental health problem and how to access help.</p>
	<p><u>How to Talk With Your Child When You Feel Concerned</u> This webpage offers tips to help parents/caregivers talk to their teen about mental health.</p>
	<p><u>Cannabis: What Parents/Guardians and Caregivers Need to Know</u> This info sheet contains facts on cannabis, information on cannabis legalization, the health and social effects of cannabis use on children and youth, as well as where to find support and additional information.</p>
	<p><u>Vaping: What you and your friends need to know</u> This resource is designed for students but can be informative for parents/caregivers, too, and may be a good conversation starter.</p>



RESOURCES	
	<p>Helping Your Child Manage Digital Technology</p> <p>This resource provides information on how to know if your teen’s screen time is problematic and provides supports if you are concerned.</p>

There are reputable Canadian organizations that offer information for parents/caregivers, including:

- [About Kids’ Health / Sick Kids](#)
- [Canadian Mental Health Association – Ontario Division](#)
- [Children’s Mental Health Ontario Family Resource Hub](#)
- [Kids Help Phone](#)
- [School Mental Health Ontario](#)

Support for your teen

As part of every lesson, your teen’s school will discuss how and where students can access supports such as trusted adults (e.g., family members, coaches, cultural and faith leaders, Elders), community professionals, and helplines. It can help to have some resources available at home, too. Consider placing these on a fridge, cupboard, or other easily accessible space.

Find help in your community through:

- <https://cmho.org/findhelp>
- <https://kidshelpphone.ca/resources-around-me>
- <https://youthhubs.ca/ywho-sites>

Or access the following helplines:

- **Kids Help Phone** call 1-800-668-6868 or text CONNECT to 686868
- **Black Youth Helpline** call 416-285-9944 or toll-free 1-833-294-8650
- **First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line** call 1-855-242-3310 or visit hopeforwellness.ca to chat online



- **Health 811** call 811 to connect with a registered nurse for secure and free confidential health advice, day or night
- **Naseeha Youth Helpline** call 1-866-627-3342 for counseling for Muslim and non-Muslim youth or visit naseeha.org to chat online
- **One Stop Talk** call 1-855-416-8255 or visit onestoptalk.ca to chat online
- **Suicide Crisis Helpline** call or text 988

If you feel your teen needs additional support or just needs to talk things through, you can also connect with your school or community resources to help you determine next steps.

Support for parents/caregivers

Supports are also available for adults. If you feel you might benefit, you can contact your family doctor or go to www.ontario.ca/page/mental-health-services to find local resources. Parents/caregivers can also contact [Kids Help Phone](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca) for support.

Thank you for being part of our learning community! You are an important part of supporting your teen's learning about mental health and well-being.

