Little People of Ontario

MENTAL HEALTH TOOLKIT



Help Lines/Crisis Supports

9-8-8: Suicide Crisis Helpline

24/7 for calls and texts, Languages: English and French

Distress and Crisis Ontario

Distress Centres (DC's) across Ontario offer support and services to their communities.
At a DC you can find help 24/7, in person, on the phone, or through the website chat function.
To find your nearest DC, visit their website: **http://www.dcontario.org/.**

Good2Talk Helpline:

Ontario's 24/7 helpline for post-secondary students.
Call **1-866-925-5454** or text **GOOD2TALKON to 686868.**

Kids Help Phone:

Youth mental health support available 24/7. Call **1-800-668-6868** or text **CONNECT to 686868**.

Hope for Wellness Help Line:

Offers immediate mental health counselling and crisis intervention to
all Indigenous peoples across Canada.
Phone and chat counselling is available in English, French, Cree, Ojibway and Inuktitut.
Call **1-855-242-3310.**

Talk4healing (for Indigenous women):

Talk4healing is a culturally grounded, fully confidential helpline for Indigenous women across Ontario, available in 14 languages.
Visit the site to chat online, or call **1-855-554-4325.**

LGBT Youthline Ontario:

Ontario-wide peer-support for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual,
two-spirited, queer and questioning young people.
Call **647-694-4275** + **https://www.youthline.ca/** (chat, text and email currently available)

Assaulted Women's Helpline:

24-hour telephone and TTY crisis line for women in Ontario who have experienced abuse.
Call:
TOLL-FREE: **1-866-863-0511** TOLL FREE TTY: **1-866-863-7868**
#SAFE (#7233) on your Bell, Rogers, Fido or Telus Mobile

Seniors Safety Line:

Provided by Elder Abuse Ontario, the Seniors Safety Line provides contact and referral information
for local agencies across the province that can assist in
cases of elder abuse. Call **1-866-299-1011.**

Service Directories

Canadian Mental Health Association Ontario

CMHA is a non-profit, charitable organization that promotes mental health through advocacy, knowledge development, and the provision of resources.
To find your nearest branch, follow this link: **cmha.ca/find-your-cmha**

ConnexOntario

Provides free and confidential health services information for individuals experiencing problems with alcohol and drugs, mental illness, or gambling by connecting them with local services. Reach them at **1-866-531-2600**, or chat on their website: **connexontario.ca/en-ca/**.

BounceBack Ontario

BounceBack Ontario is a free skill-building program designed to help adults and youth 15+ to manage low mood, mild-moderate depression and anxiety, stress or worry.

Togetherall

Togetherall is an anonymous online peer-to-peer support community. It also provides self-assessments and recommended resources, as well as a wide range of self-guided courses.

MindBeacon

Mind Beacon is a digital cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) program that is completely free. CBT is an evidence-based therapy that helps you identify the connection between your thoughts, feelings, and behaviours.

Lumino Health

Lumino Health provides a Stress and Anxiety Guide that provides resources to meet your specific needs, including self-help tips, where to find help, and signs and symptom management.

Children's Mental Health Ontario Centres

CMHO has developed a search system to direct you to where you can access care in your community. Children and youth mental health centres across Ontario provide virtual, phone, or walk-in clinics. You do not need a referral or health card.

MindyourMind

MindyourMind's online tools and apps supports youth mental health with co-created interactive tools and innovative resources to build capacity and resilience. Find information, wellness tips, interviews, and more on their site.

Bullying Canada

Bullying Canada resolves bullying situations by directly facilitating communication between bullied kids, bullies, parents, teachers, school boards, social services, and police. Services include a 24/7 crisis line, workshops for youth and community leaders, and a scholarship program.

Why is mental health important?

Mental health is more than just the absence of mental illness. There are a variety of socioeconomic, biological, and environmental factors which effect mental health (WHO, 2018). People of short stature are more likely to suffer from poor mental health because of the bullying and isolation they experience (Voss & Mulligan, 2000).

Buzzwords

What is mental health?

According to the World Health Organization, mental health is what enables individuals to manage the challenges in their life, understand their abilities, work and learn effectively as well as contribute to others. It is a vital aspect of one's health and well-being (WHO, 2022).

Mental health also encompasses our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. In turn, it determines how we act, feel, and think. Therefore, it influences how we respond to stress, interact with others, and how we make choices (CDC, 2023).

What is depression?

Depression is a persistent feeling of sadness, emptiness, or lack of pleasure which may occur without any particular reason. It is a separate experience from grief or other feelings and emotions (Medical News Today, 2022).

What is anxiety?

Anxiety refers to feelings of uneasiness, dread, and fear. It may cause an individual to start sweating, experience restlessness and tension. Their heartbeat may also begin to race. However, in some cases, it is a natural response to stress (Medline Plus, 2020).

What is isolation?

Social isolation is when someone explicitly lacks social relationships or there is obvious infrequency of social contact. In response, loneliness is subjective feeling of isolation (Tulane University, 2020).

What is resilience?

Resilience refers to the ability and process of successfully adapting to challenging life experiences by being emotionally, mentally, and behaviourally flexible (American Psychological Association, 2020).

Self-Care

Self-care is a holistic practice in which individuals, families, and communities establish routines, habits, and practices that encourage betterment of their health, prevent disease, as well as cope with illness and disability. These practices can be done with or without the support of a health-care provider (WHO, 2022).

Self-care is all about taking the time to implement practices in your life that help improve your quality of living and contribute to better physical and mental well-being (National Institute of Mental Health, 2022).

If we refer back to the definition by the WHO, self-care includes factors necessary to maintain physical health, like hygiene, nutrition, and medical care, as well as factors to maintain one's mental well-being (Everyday Health, 2023).

Self-Care



It's important to remember that one's mental health involves more than just the absence of mental illness – mental health is a vital aspect of one's overall health and quality of life.

Self-care is an important piece in maintaining one's mental health and supports the treatment of mental illness. Self-care helps in managing stress, lowering risk of illness, and it also increases energy levels (National Institute of Mental Health, 2022).

Self-care can be an individual practice or a collective one. Or it can be both.

Self-Care Strategies



Emotional self-care: these include self-talk, bubble baths, saying no to what may cause stress, a weekly coffee date with a friend



Physical self-care: prioritizing sleep, sticking to an exercise routine



Spiritual self-care: going outdoors, meditating, keeping a gratitude journal, practicing acts of kindness throughout the day (Everyday Health, 2023)



Self-Care Strategies

Getting started with self-care:

Consistently exercising: Even small amounts of exercise can have significantly positive effects on your mental well-being.





Eating healthy, regular meals and staying hydrating

Prioritizing sleep: sticking to a regular sleep schedule and ensuring your getting enough sleep has wonderful mental health benefits. It is also helpful to limit blue light exposure from devices before bedtime.



Try relaxing activities: activities like meditation, muscle relaxation activities, breathing exercises, or journaling are all positive self-care activities.

Prioritize and set goals: determine what tasks need to get done sooner and what can get done later, learn to say no and when you are taking on more on your plate than you can handle. Be proud of yourself for what you have accomplished rather than what you haven't done.





Practice gratitude: take time out of your day to practice gratitude. This can either be done by writing them down or thinking about them.

Focus on positivity: Challenge negative thoughts by reframing them with positive thoughts.

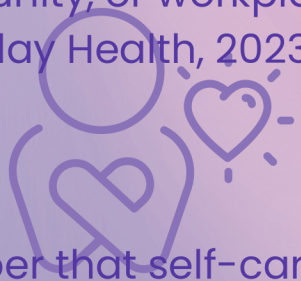
Keep up with your connections: reach out to friends and family who can provide you with emotional support and also help you in a practical sense (National Institute of Mental Health, 2022).

CONNECT

Self-Care Strategies

How to start a self-care routine

1. **Determine** which activities bring you joy, replenish your energy, and restore your balance
2. **Start small** by choosing one behaviour you'd like to incorporate into your routine in the next week
3. **Build up** to practicing that behaviour everyday for one week
4. **Reflect** on how you feel
5. **Add more** practices when ready
6. **Get support** through sharing practices from loved ones, a coach, a licensed professional (like a therapist or dietician), or through your healthcare plan, community, or workplace (Everyday Health, 2023)



Remember that self-care looks different for everyone, and although this is just a starting point it's important to be patient with yourself in the process of figuring out what self-care looks like for you!

Here's some space to begin mapping out your self-care routine!

Affirmations

Affirmations are phrases, which are believed, if repeated consistently enough can change negative behaviour and thought patterns. These phrases can be said to oneself or said out-loud. The purpose of these phrases are meant to shift a negative thought pattern to a positive one, motivate one to do some action, reduce stress, encourage perseverance, and increase one's confidence (Everyday Health, 2022).

Below are a list of affirmations that you can implement into your daily life or in different circumstances!

Daily Affirmations

1. I grow and improve every day.
2. Every day is full of potential.
3. I am capable of overcoming the challenge I face.
4. I am worthy of what I desire
5. I am doing my best, and that is enough

Self-love Affirmations:

1. I treat myself kindly and with compassion
2. I give myself permission to be myself
3. I trust myself fully
4. I am worthy of respect and kindness
5. I am still learning, so it's okay to make mistakes

Affirmations for Confidence

1. I love who I am
2. I radiate confidence
3. The only validation I need is from myself
4. I am stronger than my fears
5. I belong here, and I'm allowed to take up space

Positive Affirmations

1. I am enough
2. I have value
3. I am loved
4. I will be okay
5. I believe in myself

Self-care Affirmations

1. I'm allowed to take time for myself
2. I honor and respect my needs
3. Needing a break is not a weakness
4. My well being is my priority
5. Self-care isn't selfish

Affirmations for Growth

1. Today is a new day, I will allow myself to grow
2. Change is new and beautiful
3. I am growing everyday
4. I am healing and growing with each step that I take

(Skillshare, 2022)

REFRAMING YOUR THOUGHTS

What are some negative thoughts that often cloud your judgement? How can you reframe them in a positive light?

Example: I didn't get everything I wanted to get done today.

Use the rest of the page to reframe some negative thoughts with positive ones.

Negative thoughts can often be re-directed positively to focus on how you were able to do something positively instead.

Example: I was able to spend time getting rest that was much needed.

Mindfulness - What is it?

Mindfulness refers to being present and aware of one's surrounding and actions without being overly reactive and overwhelmed by the environment (Mindful, 2020).



Mindfulness meditation revolves around focusing on the present moment and what you are sensing and feeling in regards to that without any particular interpretation or judgement of it. It often includes breathing practices, guided imagery methods, as well as other practices to help relax one's body and relieve stress (Mayo Clinic, 2022).

Many clinical trials have shown that mindfulness meditation is effective in supporting various conditions such as: stress, anxiety, pain, depression, insomnia, high blood pressure. It has also been shown to improve attention, sleep and decrease job burnout (Mayo Clinic, 2022).

Mindfulness is a natural part of human existence; however, one can learn to access it. There are different types of mindfulness practices that help cultivate it.

1. Standing, walking, moving, seated meditation
2. Taking short pauses throughout daily life
3. Meditations that are merged with other activities like sports and yoga (Mindful, 2020)



Mindfulness - Example Exercises

The following are some sample
mindfulness exercises you can implement in your daily life.

Simple acts of mindfulness:

Pay attention: Life often gets really busy and chaotic, making it difficult to notice things. Try to slow down and appreciate and notice things more. For example, when going on a walk, try to notice the sounds of birds chirping more mindfully.

Live in the moment: Live more intentionally and live with more gratitude even for simple things.

Accept yourself: Give yourself more grace and patience. Treat yourself more kindly

Focus on your breathing: If you feel negative thoughts arising, try taking a moment to sit down, close your eyes, and take a deep breath. Take a few moments to just focus on your breath as it moves throughout your body. Even doing this for a moment can be beneficial (Mayo Clinic, 2022).



Mindfulness Practices:

Sitting Meditation: Find somewhere comfortable to sit down with your back straight and with your feet flat on the floor and your hands in front of you in your lap. Taking breaths in through your nose, focus on your breath as it moves in and out of your body. When your thoughts are interrupted, acknowledge them and then refocus on your breaths.

Walking meditation: Look for a quiet place that's about 10-20 feet long. Start walking slowly. Direct your focus on your experience of walking. In particular focus your attention on the sensation of standing and keeping balance. When you reach the end, turn and continue your focus on your walking.

Body Scan Medication: Lay down on your back with your legs straight and with your arms along your side, have your palms facing up. Take turns focusing your attention slowly focusing on different parts of your body in order, starting from your toes or your head all the way to the other end. Take time to be particularly aware of the sensations, thoughts, and emotions you associate with each part (Mayo Clinic, 2022).

This is only a starting point for mindfulness meditation, there are so many different ways to practice mindfulness and many different resources readily available.

ASKING FOR HELP



If you feel that you are struggling, it may not always be easy to ask for help. However, this is a time when you may need more help than others and that's why it's more important to ask for help now more than ever. It's normal to feel nervous to ask for help (Unicef, 2020).

Remember you're not alone, many people have a similar experience, finding people you trust to talk about what you're experiencing are the first steps in getting help (Unicef, 2020).

Why talking can help!



It helps you feel less alone



Helps direct you to resources/sources of help



Normalizes the conversation surrounding mental health challenges

Who to talk to

Who you talk to will vary depending on your comfort level. Sometimes you may want to confide in someone you trust like a friend or family member. Other times you may want to go to a professional. Regardless, finding someone to talk to and talking with them is an important first step to take. (Unicef, 2020).

How to Help Others

In many cases, you may see a friend or loved one struggling and may be in a situation where you need to support them. A huge part of mental well-being begins with empathy and understanding. Here are some tips on starting the conversation about mental health with others (Mental Health Foundation, 2023).









1. **Create a safe environment** – create a space without distractions that is open and non-judgemental.
2. **Let them share what they are comfortable with** – Let the other person lead the discussion how they will. There is no need to pressure them to share, as talking takes trust and courage.
3. **Don't diagnose** – you are likely not a professional medical expert, so even though you are providing support, you are not trained to provide professional advice. Don't be too quick to provide a diagnosis or solution.
4. **Keep it an open discussion** – ask open ended questions like "why don't you tell me how you are feeling?" Keep your language neutral
5. **Suggest self-care strategies**
6. **Listen thoughtfully** – take time to truly understand what they are saying to you
7. **Offer to help in linking them to professional supports** – offer to help connect them to professional supports, ensure they are the one taking the lead.
8. **Know your limits** – Take care of yourself in the process

(Mental Health Foundation, 2023).

References

“About Mental Health.” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, April 25, 2023. https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm.

“Anxiety.” MedlinePlus, May 22, 2020. https://medlineplus.gov/anxiety.html.

“Can Mindfulness Exercises Help Me?” Mayo Clinic, October 11, 2022. https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/consumer-health/in-depth/mindfulness-exercises/art-20046356.

“Caring for Your Mental Health.” National Institute of Mental Health, December 2022. https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/caring-for-your-mental-health.

Goldman, Rena, Michelle Pugle, Laura Williams, Sarah Prager, Moira Lawler, Savannah Bacon, Angela Haupt, Sara Lindberg, Emily P.G. Erickson, and Lauren Krouse. “Affirmations: What They Are and How to Use Them.” EverydayHealth.com, November 4, 2022. https://www.everydayhealth.com/emotional-health/what-are-affirmations/.

“How to Support Someone with a Mental Health Problem.” Mental Health Foundation. Accessed July 21, 2023. https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/articles/how-support-someone-mental-health-problem.

Lam, Sayana. “160 Positive Affirmations for All Aspects of Your Life.” Skillshare Blog, July 5, 2022. https://www.skillshare.com/en/blog/160-positive-affirmations-for-all-aspects-of-your-life/.

Lawler, Moira, Lauren Bedosky, Vivian Manning-Schaffel, Elizabeth Millard, Kate Lucey, Michael Dolan, Jessica Migala, et al. “What Is Self-Care, and Why Is It so Important for Your Health?” EverydayHealth.com, March 17, 2023. https://www.everydayhealth.com/self-care/.

Mental health: Strengthening our response. (2018). Retrieved October 21, 2020, from https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response

“Mental Health.” World Health Organization, June 17, 2022. https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response.

References

“Resilience.” American Psychological Association, May 2022. https://www.apa.org/topics/resilience.

Staff. “What Is Mindfulness?” Mindful, July 8, 2020. https://www.mindful.org/what-is-mindfulness/.

“Understanding the Effects of Social Isolation on Mental Health.” Tulane University - School of Public Health, September 15, 2022. https://publichealth.tulane.edu/blog/effects-of-social-isolation-on-mental-health/#:~:text=Isolation%20and%20Loneliness&text=Social%20isolation%20is%20an%20objective,they%20are%20surrounded%20by%20people.

UNICEF Thailand. Mental Health Toolkit for Young People. Thailand: UNICEF , 2022.

Voss, L. D., & Mulligan, J. (2000). Bullying in school: Are short pupils at risk? Questionnaire study in a cohort. Bmj, 320(7235), 612-613. doi:10.1136/bmj.320.7235.612

Washington, Nicole. “Depression: What It Is, Symptoms, Causes, Treatment, and More\.” Medical News Today, February 10, 2023. https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/8933.

“What Is Self-Care?” What is Self-Care, November 20, 2020. https://isfglobal.org/what-is-self-care/.

Thank you!

We hope you found this resource useful and one that you come back to in your journey! Remember, mental health is not the absence of mental illness, it is a part of everyone's health and wellness! Prioritize you!