

Mental Well-Being Information and Resources

Ways to Support Our Children and Caring Adults

This may be a stressful and frightening time for our children. Fear and worry are normal for children of all ages. But there are things we can do to manage stress and support our children during these extraordinary times.

During a pandemic, like all of us, children may experience a range of emotions. You may observe they appear anxious, preoccupied, or tired, and/or you may notice a range of physical complaints.

Reactions will vary according to:

- children's development stage;
- level of awareness about the pandemic;
- exposure to accurate information about the pandemic;
- physical or emotional proximity to the outbreak;
- health status of child and/or loved ones;
- mental health status of child and/or loved ones; and
- prior experience with traumatic circumstances.

Some Common Reactions

- Anxiety
- Worry about self or loved ones
- Difficulty focusing on school
- Preoccupation with illness
- Need for reassurance
- Fatigue
- Stomach aches, headaches, etc.

As caring adults in children's lives, we can help by being a steady calming influence, providing developmentally-appropriate and factual information about the local situation, and helping them to feel some level of control. Being part of the solution, by thoroughly washing hands, physical distancing, and good etiquette when coughing or sneezing can help them to feel a sense of control in an uncertain situation.

Focus on the solutions

When talking to our children, a solutions-focused approach is most helpful:

- *Many things are being done to help the current situation (governments, doctors, nurses, schools, ...)*
- *It will get better*
- *Life will return to normal*
- *Let's focus on caring for our family and friends*

Ways to support all children:

Routines.

Routines can help create a sense of predictability and security. Maintain normal, predictable routines as much as possible. Some examples include scheduling daily academic time, outdoor activities, chores around the house and family time.

Stay Calm.

Have calm, age-appropriate, fact-based discussions. Remind children that you are taking precautions like hand-washing and physical distancing to stay safe. Listen well, validate feelings and let them know you have heard their concerns.

Focus on the positive.

Help children change their outlook from 'we are stuck inside' to 'we have time to focus on other things like family and home' – help them to notice opportunities. Model compassion, positive coping and self-care skills.

Nutrition.

Eat healthy meals and consider using this time to learn how to prepare healthy food together.

Sleep.

Make sure children are still getting enough sleep. www.sleepfoundation.org

Play.

Spend more time together, enjoy quiet times to read, listen to music, do puzzles and play games - increase play time – both inside and out

Digital Breaks.

For older children, encourage breaks from the news and social media. If you do watch the news, watch it together to provide an opportunity for conversation and help to keep things in perspective.

Personal Resiliency Tips for Adults:

It's essential to take care of yourself, not just for your well-being, but also for those you care about and support. Your self-care will help improve your energy, focus, ability to cope with challenges and overall life experience. And you're modelling wellness strategies for the children and youth in your life.

- **Nourish Yourself** – Take time to eat and hydrate adequately.
- **Stay Active** - Physical activity increases your energy, enhances your immune system, reduces insomnia, stimulates brain growth, and even acts as an antidepressant.
- **Sleep Well** - Getting enough sleep also helps you cope with the stresses of everyday life (7-9hrs per night).
- **Stay Connected** - Supportive relationships are one of the most powerful influences on our sense of wellness.
- **Pause** - Make sure to take time for yourself during the day with an activity that can help you feel restored.
- **Reflect** - Be mindful of your thoughts and feelings, both positive and negative, as part of your self-care – focus on what is meaningful for you.
- **Be Gentle** - Pay attention to how you talk to yourself. Treat yourself with compassion and gentleness, we are all doing our best.

- **Be Committed** - Commit to your self-care. Persist with this, even when life gets busy. Especially when life gets busy.

Your child may be experiencing a variety of emotions during challenging times. Mental health can move along a spectrum through mental well-being to mental illness. As a caring adult, it is important to monitor and check in with children and watch for changes in their emotions, mood and behaviour. Changes can signal a need for additional support and/or resources. Below is a list of different supports available to caring adults and children and linkages to direct service if a crisis arises.

Immediate Help

- [Kids Help Phone](#): Reach a counsellor 24/7 at 1-800-668-6868 (support in French or English), text CONNECT to 686868 (24/7), or [live chat](#) via the website (9:00pm – 4:00am).
- Mental Health Crisis Line: toll-free 1-800-784-2433 or (604) 872-3311 (Greater Vancouver), 24/7 confidential, non-judgmental free emotional support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including thoughts of suicide - available in 140 languages.
- Online Crisis and Youth Chat available at [Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention Centre](#).
- [HealthLink BC](#): Call 8-1-1 for 24/7 confidential health information and advice.

Indigenous Supports:

- IMMEDIATE Help: [Kuu-us Crisis Response Services](#): toll-free 1-800-588-8717, provides 24/7 culturally-aware crisis support to Indigenous people in B.C.
- [Hope for Wellness Help Line](#): toll-free 1-855-242-3310, offers 24/7 counselling and crisis intervention by phone or online chat. Available in French, English, Cree, Ojibway, and Inuktitut.
- [Metis Crisis Line](#): 1-833-638-4722, provides 24/7 mental health support, including crisis intervention and access to crisis programs.
- [First Nations Health Authority](#) – First Nations information, resources, supports latest news and Public Health messages on COVID-19, mental health and wellness.
****New (April 16, 2020)**

Online COVID-19 resources for students, families and other caring adults:

Please note that services available may be affected due to COVID-19.

- [Virtual Mental Health Supports During COVID-19](#) (Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions): links to virtual mental health supports, including supports for youth, frontline health care workers, seniors, Indigenous peoples, and victims of family or sexual violence.
****New (April 16, 2020)**
- [Managing Anxiety and Stress in Families with Children and Youth During the COVID-19 Outbreak](#) (Shared Care Committee - Doctors of BC and Ministry of Health): information and advice on stress and coping, and links to resources.
- [Foundry COVID-19 \(Novel Coronavirus\) Information](#): Foundry has a dedicated COVID-19 webpage with information on accessing Foundry services, links to resources and support, and articles on COVID-19, physical distancing, stress, and anxiety.

- [Parenting During COVID-19](#) (Kelty Mental Health): suggestions for parents for supporting and talking to their children about COVID-19, tips for self-care, and managing children's behaviour with links to resources. ****Updated (April 22, 2020)**
- [Coronavirus: A Book for Children](#): a free digital book, illustrated by Axel Scheffler, for primary school age children about the coronavirus and the measures taken to control it. ****New (April 22, 2020)**
- [COVID-19: Stay Well in Uncertain Times](#) (Canadian Mental Health Association): dedicated COVID-19 webpage providing resources and supports. ****New (April 16, 2020)**
- [Talking to Children About COVID-19 and its Impact](#) (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health): advice and information for parents and other caring adults on helping children cope with stress and anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- [Supporting Kids During the Coronavirus Crisis](#) (Child Mind Institute): tips for nurturing and protecting children at home
- [Helping Children Cope with Stress During the 2019-nCoV Outbreak](#) (World Health Organization): factsheet with tips for parents and other caring adults.
- [How to Talk to Kids and Teens about the Coronavirus](#) (Psychology Today): age-specific advice and information.
- [Managing COVID-19, Stress, Anxiety and Depression](#) (Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions): overview sheet, with links to resources.
- [SEL Resources During COVID-19](#) (CASEL): dedicated COVID-19 web page providing guidelines and resources for parents, caregivers, and educators.

LGBTQ2S+ Supports for Students and Families: **New (April 22, 2020)****

- [Youth Line](#): A peer support line through phone, text or online chat services for youth in Canada.
- [QCHAT](#): A peer support line through phone, text or online chat services and resource database for youth in B.C.
- [Youth Space](#): An online crisis and emotional support chat service through IM chat or text.
- [pflagcanada](#): A peer to peer support and resources site for youth and families in Canada.
- [BC Queer & Trans Homeschool Facebook group](#): Resources, support and encouragement for home schooling trans and queer families during the COVID-19 pandemic with a focus on B.C. K-12 curriculum.
- [Trans Care BC](#): Provides links to community support groups and family resources.
- [pflagcanada](#): A peer to peer support and resources site for youth and families in Canada.

General Resources:

- [erase](#) (expect respect and a safe education) website: Mental Health and Well-Being (Ministry of Education)
- [EASE \(Everyday Anxiety Strategies for Educators\) At Home](#): collection of classroom strategies, created by the Ministry of Children and Family Development, that have been adapted for use by parents and caregivers at home to help children manage their anxiety and worries in fun and practical ways. ****New (April 16, 2020)**
- [WE Schools @ Home virtual program](#): gives parents and teachers free educational resources and daily interactive programming to support well-being, service-learning, and at-home education. WE Schools Live! is broadcast daily on Facebook providing themed

educational content for families, and weekly live webinars are available for educators.

****New (April 16, 2020)**

- [WE Well-being Digital Toolkit](#): downloadable well-being resources, social media graphics, and links to inform and support parents and families.
- [Family Smart](#): provides support to families and caring adults who are parenting a child or youth who is struggling with a mental health challenge through their Parent in Residence program. ****New (April 16, 2020)**
- [Anxiety Canada](#): expert tools and resources to help manage anxiety (adults and children).
- [Bounce Back](#): free evidence-based program designed to help youth and adults experiencing symptoms of mild to moderate depression, low mood or stress, with or without anxiety. Teaches effective skills to help people improve their mental health.
- [Child and Youth Mental Health](#) (MCFD): information on Child and Youth Mental Health (CYMH) teams located across the province, and services provided. CYMH teams and CYMH Intake Clinics are operational, either virtually or by phone, and new referrals are being processed. ****Updated (April 22, 2020)**
- [HeretoHELP](#): provides information about managing mental illness and maintaining good mental health, including self-management resources and screening self-tests for wellness, mood, anxiety and risky drinking.
- [Mental Health Digital Hub](#): provincial website that provides information, services and education about mental health and substance use for adults, youth and children.
- [MindHealthBC](#): online mental health counselling program created by Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, Providence Health Care and community partners. Provides information and support for depression, anxiety, or other mental health or substance use challenges; and recommendations for further support in Vancouver, Richmond and other coastal communities.
- [Wellness Together Canada: Mental Health and Substance Use Support](#): provides free online resources, tools, apps, and connections to trained volunteers and qualified mental health professionals. ****New (April 22, 2020)**
- [Here2Talk](#) (BC Government): connects post-secondary students with mental health supports, confidential counselling, and community referral services; available 24/7 via app, phone and web. ****New (April 22, 2020)**

Mental Health Resources in Other Languages:

IMMEDIATE Help: Mental Health Crisis Line: 1 -800-784-2433, available in 140 different languages.

- [Here to Help Mental Health Resources](#): includes a variety of factsheets (depending on language) in Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Farsi (Persian)/ Dari, French, Korean, Punjabi, Japanese and Vietnamese.
- [Centre for Addiction and Mental Health Information in Other Languages](#): includes a variety of resources in French, Amharic, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Dari, Farsi, Greek, Hindi, Italian, Korean, Pashto, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Serbian, Somali, Spanish, Tagalog, Tamil, Twi, Urdu and Vietnamese.
- [Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre](#): includes a variety of resources in French, Farsi, Korean, Punjabi, Simplified Chinese and Traditional Chinese.