



# Mental Health WEEK TOOLKIT:

## Unmasking Mental Health

### UNMASKING MENTAL HEALTH

It's Mental Health Week and the theme for this year is “unmasking mental health.” Many people wear “masks” to feel safe in social situations, protecting their personal boundaries and privacy. These masks allow us to decide who sees different parts of ourselves, as we don’t always want to share everything with everyone we meet. However, living with mental health issues often leads people to hide behind a “mask” to protect themselves.

It is important to encourage people to look beyond the surface and to see the whole person. *Unmasking Mental Health* is a call to action for all of us to remove our masks and help other others do the same, as they feel safe to do so. Masking takes a lot of energy and can lead to isolation and a loss of self-identity. It can also impact a person’s self-worth and can cause feelings of emptiness and shame. Most importantly though, masking may prevent people from getting help when they need it.

This week let's talk with students about what masking is, why it happens, and how it affects those who mask and the people around them. Consider using morning announcements and activities to promote mental health conversations in your school.

Open and honest conversations connect us all. Let’s unmask mental health together!

### Who Are the Champions at Your School?

Identify the individuals or groups at your school who can lead mental health initiatives:

- Educators, child and youth workers, or student counsellors.
- Leadership classes or groups.
- Extracurricular groups, including student council, mental health or kindness groups in the school (i.e., Jack.org groups), groups responsible of announcements or social media.

### WHAT’S THE FOCUS OF THIS RESOURCE AND WHAT’S INCLUDED?

This resource focuses on:

- Self-Care and Supporting Others
- Screen Time and Sleep
- Food and Nutrition
- Get Moving/Active

Resources include:

- [School Wide and Classroom Resources for Educators](#)
- [Mental Wellness Calendars](#)
- [School Announcements](#) and [Social Media Posts](#)
- [Activities to do at home with Parents/Caregivers](#)
- [Links to Mental Health Supports and Resources](#)



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### SCHOOL WIDE AND CLASSROOM RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS

#### Lesson Plans and Activities

- **School Mental Health Ontario (SMHO)- [SMHO Wayfinder](#):** Sign up for the grade-by-grade guide to teach about mental health from School Mental Health Ontario. Includes lessons for Kindergarten through Grade 12.
- **Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA): [Unmasking Mental Health: Journalling Activity](#)** to encourage students to reflect on masking and mental health, why and how it shows up, the impact it has on the people who mask and those around them, and how we can all help unmask mental health together.
- **PHE Canada-[Teach Resiliency!](#)** are a collection of resources for teachers and students to learn about belonging, overcoming difficulties, and improving mental health literacy.
- **Kids Help Phone- [Self-Care list](#):** If you're looking for self-care ideas to share with your school community, visit [Kids Help Phone](#) website and check out their [self-care checklist](#).
- **Family Smart: [National Child and Youth Mental Health Day toolkit](#)** (May 7<sup>th</sup>) with lesson plans and fun activities. The ["Say, Don't Say" cards](#) can be used by teachers or parents to have meaningful conversations about mental health with children and youth.

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Topic	Elementary	Secondary
<b>Day 1: Self-Care and Supporting Others</b> Encourage students to reflect on self-care and the value of developing a sense of self, as this is critical to developing self-identity, and masking can muddle this development.	Resources from <b>SMHO</b> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Virtual Field Trip Stress Management and Coping</a> (Grade 1-3)</li> <li>Virtual Field Trip Stress Management and Coping (<a href="#">Grade 4-6</a> and <a href="#">Grade 7-8</a>)</li> <li><a href="#">No Problem Too Big or Too Small: student help-seeking resource</a></li> <li><a href="#">Reaching Out Tips for Students</a></li> </ul> <a href="#">Kids Help Phone: Counsellor in the Classroom Program (Grades 4-12)</a> The program is designed to help students gain a better understanding of mental health and identify how and where they can seek support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">CMHA's Unmasking Mental Health: Journalling Activity</a></li> <li><a href="#">Jack.org- Be There for Yourself Resources</a> and offers the <a href="#">5 Golden Rules</a> if you're supporting a friend with their mental health,</li> <li><a href="#">SMHO: Virtual Field Trip: stress management and coping with virtual field trips (secondary)</a></li> </ul>
<b>Day 2: Screen Time</b> This week overlaps with the <a href="#">Connected, Not Controlled Challenge</a> – a PSA video contest open to students in Grade 6 to 12 in Windsor and Essex  Based on the <a href="#">Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines</a> , kids 5 to 13 years old should get no more than 2 hours per day of recreational screen time and limit sitting for extended periods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Media Smarts- Finding balance in our digital lives</a> (Grades JK-3)</li> <li><a href="#">Media Smarts- Game Time</a> (Grades 4-6)</li> <li>Encourage students in Grade 6 or above to participate in the <a href="#">Connected, Not Controlled Challenge</a></li> </ul>	Encourage students to participate in the <a href="#">Connected, Not Controlled Challenge</a> .  <a href="#">Media Smarts</a> offers lots of beneficial materials to support students, families, and educators.

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<p><b>Day 3: Sleep</b></p> <p>Introduce students to a sleep routine and teach other sleep tips, as sleep directly impacts mental health and wellbeing.</p> <p>The <a href="#">Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines</a>, provides the following guidance on sleep:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Children (5-13 years):</b> 9 to 11 hours of sleep</li> <li>• <b>Teens (14-17 years):</b> 8 to 10 hours, with consistent bed and wake-up times.</li> </ul>	<p>Find other sleep activities and information on the <a href="#">Health Unit Sleep Page</a>, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Sleep Activities for the Classroom: Ideas for Educators</a></li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Tips for building a mentally healthy nighttime routine</a> (SMHO)</p>	<p>Here are a few resource students can use to support sleep hygiene</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Teen Sleep Checklist</a> (WECHU)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Sleep Diary</a> (Kids Help Phone)</li> <li>• <a href="#">How to Stay Well Rested</a> (mindyourmind)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Day 4: Get Active</b></p> <p>Being active is good for our mental health. Promote being active to improve mental health and decrease anxiety, as regular physical activity is connected to better health, positive self-image, better school grades, and improved social well-being in general.</p>	<p><a href="#">Get Activity for Life</a> provides great resources for teaching physical literacy, including a large database of activity ideas which can be organized by age group or skill.</p> <p>Try new activities with your class during DPA or gym class. Find examples of activities on <a href="#">Ophea's website</a> or find new DPA activities in the <a href="#">DPA toolkit</a>.</p>	<p>Encourage students to find a new way to be active, as it is important to both physical and mental well-being.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try a new sport</li> <li>• Try a walking app</li> </ul> <p>Have students review the <a href="#">Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines</a>, to ensure they sweat, step, sleep and sit the right amounts each day.</p>
<p><b>Day 5: Food and Nutrition</b></p> <p>Teaching students about food and nutrition is crucial for demonstrating the positive impact food has on their physical, social, and mental well-being.</p>	<p>Have your class watch the Health Unit's <a href="#">You Can Cook</a> video series and have your class prepare a meal or snack together.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Growing Chefs Teacher Resources – Growing Chefs Ontario</a> <b>Grades 1-8</b> Curriculum-based lesson plans involving food, activities, resources and videos to support food literacy.</li> </ul>	<p>Encourage students to try something new. The <a href="#">You Can Cook</a> video series is a great way to learn food skills – visit the <a href="#">Health Unit's website</a> for other ideas or find examples of recipes on <a href="#">UnlockFood.ca</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Teach Nutrition</a> – Dairy Farmers of Canada's Registered Dietitians <b>Grades K-12</b> Food and nutrition resources, lessons plans and activities that compliment Canada's Food Guide. Available in French.</li> </ul>



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### Wellness Calendars

The **Wellness Calendars** provide daily activities to make positive mental health a habit.

Wondering how to use these calendars?

- Integrate them into your daily announcements to challenge your school community to complete the daily activities for a boost of energy.
- Use them to encourage staff, students, and families to try new activities.
- Use the blank calendar as a template to create your own classroom or school Wellness Calendar.
- The blank version of this calendar can be used as a classroom activity.
- The secondary calendar can also be used for student in grades 7 and 8.

**Download the calendars from our [website](#).**

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### SOCIAL MEDIA

Your school can use or adapt these messages on your social media accounts.

**Social media graphics** for mental health week can be found on the Canadian Mental Health Association's [Mental Health Week toolkit](#)

#### Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.

##### May 5<sup>th</sup> to May 11<sup>h</sup>: Mental Health Week

🌈🌟 There's so much more beneath the surface! This #MentalHealthWeek, let's celebrate the beauty of being ourselves without fear. ❤️ Together, we can combat stigma and discrimination through compassion. Let's unmask mental health! 😊 Check out CMHA for more: [cmha.ca/mental-health-week/](https://cmha.ca/mental-health-week/)

#MentalHealthWeek

💚🌟 No problem is [#TooBigOrTooSmall!](#) This awesome resource, made by youth for youth helps makes reaching out easier. When we take off our masks, we connect better with others, feel like we belong, and support our mental health. 😊 See how you can get involved! #MentalHealthWeek

Sleep 🛌 has many benefits. Studies show it can:

- ✅ Help us reduce stress and manage emotions;
- ✅ Make us more alert, attentive, and productive during the day
- ✅ Kids 5-13 yrs. need 9-11 hours of sleep each night.
- ✅ Teens 14-17 yrs. need 8-10 hours of sleep.

Remember, good sleep helps you shine 🌟 during the day! Learn more about how to get a better sleep: [wechu.org/sleep](https://wechu.org/sleep)

Almost 1 in 5 Canadians who needed mental health support didn't ask for help because they felt uncomfortable talking about their struggles. Speaking up, seeking help, and supporting others can save lives.



Join in #UnmaskingMentalHealth this #MentalHealthWeek. Learn more at [mentalhealthweek.ca](https://mentalhealthweek.ca)

Hiding who we are all the time is tiring and can affect our mental and physical health.

This #MentalHealthWeek, I'm #UnmaskingMentalHealth so others don't have to hide. Let's create a world 🌍 where no one feels the need to mask mental health struggles.

Join me: [mentalhealthweek.ca](https://mentalhealthweek.ca)

🔴 Digital Tech & Mental Health Alert! 🔴

Did you know that more screen time can mean more stress and anxiety? From increased anxiety and depression to multitasking, it's time to take control of our screen habits.

Remember: balance is key! What are your favorite ways to unplug?! Find more ideas at [wechu.org/cnc](https://wechu.org/cnc)

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How does food bring you joy, fuel your body, teach you skills, connect people, or excite your senses? This week, try a new food or recipe with your family. Let's keep working to improve our mental and physical health. 🍆 🥑 🍉

#MentalHealthWeek

💡 What you eat affects how you feel! 🧠

Feeding your brain starts with simple choices:

🍓 Add a fruit or veggie

🥤 Stay hydrated

✕ Avoid skipping meals

Let's fuel out mind! 💪 ✨

💡 It's #MentalHealthWeek! 💡 Together, we can fight stigma and encourage open conversations about mental health. Hiding who we truly are can be draining and affect our mental and physical health. How do you create a safe space for yourself and others? Share your thoughts below! 💬 ❤️



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### ANNOUNCEMENTS

Below are a series of announcements that can be used to inform the students of the themes during the week:

#### Self Care and Supporting Others

- We all go through good and bad times with our mental health, and everyone's experiences are different. There is no "normal" for mental health. That's why during this #MentalHealthWeek, we can unmask mental together!
- When we're able to be ourselves, we create deeper connections, and we can shed our masks! This can lead to a sense of belonging, improved self-esteem, and better mental health. Open and honest conversations connect us all. Let's unmask mental health together!
- It's #MentalHealthWeek! The more we work together to fight stigma and encourage open conversations, the easier it gets for people to be who they are without fear. Hiding who we are all the time is tiring and can affect our mental and physical health.

#### Screen Time

- Do you know how digital tech can impact your mental health? Too much screen time can lead to anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. Let's talk about it! How do you balance your tech use? Find more digital tech facts at [wechu.org/cnc](http://wechu.org/cnc)
- Screen time overload? Let's talk about it! Join the Connected, Not Controlled PSA Challenge by submitting a 30 second video on the impact of technology on mental health. The deadline is May 12! A chance to win prizes, raise awareness, and make a difference!
- Technology is everywhere, but are we connected or controlled? Excessive screen time can affect mental health, sleep, relationships, and even school performance. It's time to start the conversation! Make a plan, gather a few friends, and start filming! Visit [wechu.org/cnc](http://wechu.org/cnc) for all the details. Let's create change—one video at a time!

#### Sleep

- Start your day at your best by making sure you get enough sleep. Creating a bedtime routine can help you get enough sleep. Challenge yourself to make your sleep a priority.
- Did you know that sleep is important for our mental health? Getting enough sleep helps us cope with stress, handle problems, and think more positively. Make sure to get your zzzz!!!

#### Food and Nutrition

- How does food bring you joy, fuel your body, teach you skills, connect people, or excite your senses? This week, try a new food or recipe with your family. #MentalHealthWeek

#### Being Active

- Did you know that getting active can boost your mental health? Moving your body helps reduce anxiety, leaving you feeling refreshed! Exploring new activities can be exciting and help you feel great about yourself! Jump into something and try something new this week!



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### Wrap-Up

- This week we have been taking steps to take off our masks and looking at ways to be kind to ourselves and others. Let's keep working to improve our mental and physical health.

### A RESOURCE FOR PARENTS/CAREGIVERS AND FAMILIES



Students can practice their self-care and healthy habits to support mental health and well-being at home this week, with their families.

Download the resource from our [website](#) and share it with your school community.

### School Mental Health Ontario

Access the [By Your Side Toolkit](#): To empower educators this collection of Parent/caregiver resources is intended to support mental health education and well-being for every family. Be sure to sign up for the **FREE parent education webinars** at [School Mental Health Ontario](#).

### WHERE TO GET HELP

- Find local services by viewing the [Windsor-Essex Youth Services Card](#).
- [WEConnect Kids](#) (Coordinated Access): Call 519-257-KIDS (5437)- A free, confidential mental health service for children, youth, and families who live in Windsor-Essex.
- [Youth Wellness Hub](#): Provides mental health counselling in a one-on-one setting, allowing youth 12 to 25 years old to drop in as needed.
- [Kids Help Phone](#), 24-hour help line: Call 1-800-668-6868 or text 686868, services available in English or French.
- [One Stop Talk - 24 hours](#): Virtual or Call 1-855-416-TALK (8255) A free, confidential service that lets kids and youth under 18 years of age get immediate mental health support with a registered therapist.



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