

2023 Mental Health Month TOOLKIT

Elementary Schools

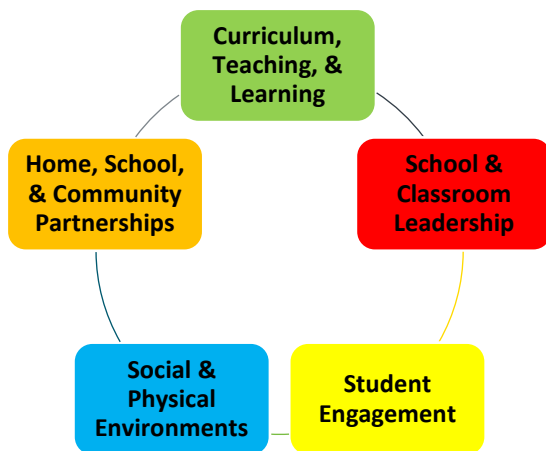
May is Mental Health Month – an important time to focus on staff and student mental wellbeing.

The week of May 1st-7th is Mental Health Week in Canada. This year the [Canadian Mental Health Association](#) theme, is My Story. Everyone has multiple layers and stories that make us who we are. While each year 1 in 5 Canadians experience a mental illness or a mental health issue, 5 in 5- all of us – have mental health. May 7th is Child & Youth Mental Health Day, recognizing the important mental health needs of children and youth in our country.

Schools are a key setting to promote the health and well-being of children. Mental health is an important part of our overall health and wellness and includes our emotional and social wellbeing. Our mental health affects how we think, feel, and act. It also determines how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices. Educating students about mental health is important as it helps them develop skills and knowledge to help them make healthier choices.

Using the Ministry of Education's [Foundations for a Healthy School framework](#), schools, school boards, parents and community partners can work together to develop healthy school environments that promote and support student well-being.

Figure 1. Foundations of a Healthy School Framework



The [Foundations for a Healthy School resource](#) from the Ontario Ministry of Education promotes and supports student well-being.

It includes the five interconnected areas to develop a comprehensive approach to healthy school policies, programs and initiatives related to mental health that will help schools, school boards, parents, and community partners work together.

Visit the [Foundations for a Healthy School](#) web page to understand how the Health Unit applies this framework in area schools.

EVALUATION

We ask educators to provide feedback on this toolkit to assist us in making improvements for future editions. A brief survey can be found at this [link](#) or by scanning the QR code below:





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WHO ARE THE MENTAL HEALTH MONTH CHAMPIONS AT YOUR SCHOOL?

- Mental Health Champion Educators or Student counsellors.
- Extracurricular groups (ex: student council, mental health groups within the school, announcement, or social media groups).
- Leadership classes/groups.

MENTAL HEALTH MONTH THEMES AND ACTIVITIES

Each week, there will be a theme that supports mental health:

Week 1: May 1st-5th: Self-Care

Week 2: May 8th-12th: Healthy Communication and Relationships

Week 3: May 15th-19th: Mental Health Education Week

Week 4: May 22nd-26th: Mental Health Resources Week

- For each week, schools can include announcements and activities relating to the theme.
- It is important to recognize that your school may need to roll out this campaign using strategies that best meets your needs. For example, the morning announcements and suggesting the activities included below may be a way to introduce and/or continue the conversation of mental health in your school. Many of the announcements can be adapted to use as social media messaging.

Tag the health unit on social media when posting about activities your students are taking part in:

Facebook: @TheWECHU

Twitter: @TheWECHU

Instagram: @thewechu

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Week 1: Self-Care- May 1st-5th

Topics	Activity	Announcements
Screen Time Based on the Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines , 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.	Schedule Screen-Free Nutrition Breaks Limit screen use at school by not allowing any screens during nutrition breaks or recess. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media Smarts Website 	This week is Screen Free or Screen Less Week. Try putting yourself on DND (Do Not Disturb) during meals and important conversations. Get outside and limit video games.
Sleep Based on the Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines , children 5-13 years old need 9 to 11 hours of sleep per night, with consistent bed and wake-up times. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about introducing a sleep routine, improving sleep hygiene, and sleep tips. 	Promote activities found in the World Sleep Day resource on our website . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kids Help Phone has a Sleep diary resource. 	Children need 9 to 11 hours of sleep per night. Create a routine before bed that includes no screens, relaxing activities, and a comfortable sleeping space.
Healthy Eating Introduce Canada's Food Guide and basic concepts of food and food skills (optional: provide Food Guide paper resource is available at the school for students/staff)	Have your class prepare a meal or snack together. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post a picture of your class eating/ making your meal. • Class can buddy up with an older grade to help. • Find examples of recipes on UnlockFood.ca 	Expand your skills and taste buds, try a new food or recipe this week. Enjoy it with a friend or family.
Move Your Body- Hobby Hopping Promote physical activity to improve mental health and decrease anxiety (ex: spending time outdoors [homework at the park], walking/going for a run with a friend, etc.)	Try new activities with you class during DPA or gym class. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find examples of activities on Ophea's website. 	Try something new. Get out of your comfort zone. Yoga, a sport, stretching, etc.
Self-Care Self-care is about prioritizing your own mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical health. And it's one of the keys to your overall well-being. It's about taking care of yourself and doing things that help you feel good, connect (or reconnect!) with your inner-self, engage with people or	Organize fun lunch time activities held by extracurricular groups (ex: student council, mental health support groups) to help reduce stress (ex: karaoke, board games, yoga, etc.) Here are some examples of self-care activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kids Help Phone Self-Care list 	Self-care is about being a champion for your own mental and emotional well-being. If you're looking for ways to balance your mind and body, Visit Kids Help Phone website and check out their self-care checklist.

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causes important to you, ask for help and more.

Week 2: Healthy Communication and Relationships- May 8th-12th

Topics	Activity	Announcements
Being You Day	<p>Students make an “I AM” portrait: Students can make and present an age-appropriate art piece, such as a self-portrait, that can also include elements of their identity/personality (i.e., likes or dislikes, hobbies, culture, etc.). Students can also include an accompanying poem, using prompts such as: I am... , I can... , I like... , I want... , I dream... , I fear... , I love... , I wonder....</p> <p>For older students, you can visit National Gallery of Art for additional inspiration and lesson plans.</p>	<p>Look around your class today. None of us like all the of same things or even fear the same things.</p> <p>We are all different and that makes us special. Be kind, be cool, be you!</p>
Getting to Know You	<p>Students can pair up and complete Getting to Know You (See Appendix A) question activity. Students can take turns asking questions or for younger students the teacher can read them out loud to the class. After the question session is completed, each pairing can present something new they learned about their partner.</p> <p>Use SMHO’s That’s Me activity in your class to help improve cohesion.</p>	<p>Sometimes the hardest part of making a new friend is taking the first step. Step out of your comfort zone today and see how many different people you can talk to.</p> <p>You might learn something new about a classmate or yourself!</p>
Talking About Emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SMHO’s What’s My Temperature activity teaches students to take their emotional temperature, so they can learn to recognize and regulate their emotions. • Watch SickKids video “How to feel feelings” with the class to learn about feelings. 	<p>How are you feeling right now? Happy? Sad? Angry? Worried? Surprised? Or maybe something else?</p> <p>It’s normal to feel emotions. Take some time throughout the day to stop and check-in with yourself and try to name the emotion you are feeling.</p>
Building Healthy Relationships	<p>SMHO’s High five to friendship activity can help students identify ways that they can be a better friend (primary level).</p>	<p>Friendships are important. Sometimes, we may not always agree with our friends, or we may do something that may hurt them.</p>

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	SMHO's Finding solutions activity helps to provide students with ways to find win/win solutions when conflicts arise. (primary/ junior/ intermediate level).	Today, let's think about ways that we can be better friends to others.
Belonging to School Community	Ophea's Gratitude Graffiti is a way for the students to express what they are thankful for within their school community. SMHO's What's New activity will help celebrate and acknowledge things going on in student's lives.	What are you thankful for? Remembering what we are thankful for can help brighten our day and helps us feel happier. Take time today to notice the things you are thankful for at school.

Week 3: Mental Wellness Education- May 15th-19th

Topics	Activity	Announcements
Mental Wellness	SMHO has developed a set of Mental Health Literacy Lesson Plans for grades 1 to 8. Have your class complete the Wheel of Well-Being activity from Kids Help Phone. SMHO has a Daily Check-in activity to help students manage their energy and stress so they are ready to learn.	It's important that you give yourself time to rest and relax every day -- even if it's just 5-10 minutes a day! Here are some ideas of what to do: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sit outside and listen to nature. • Talk with your best friend. • Read a book. • Write in a journal.
Supporting Friends	Share the SMHO Help a friend tips with your class. Play the song " What I Wouldn't do " in class and have students draw a poster or act out a skit of how they can help a friend who is struggling.	There are things you can do to listen and support a friend when they have a problem or are having a bad day. It's important that you know that you don't have to do this alone.
Stress	SMHO has a number of stress management and coping activities to do in the classroom. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress Management and Coping Virtual Field Trips are available. • Their Daily Check-in activity helps students manage their energy and stress so they are ready to learn. 	Our mind and bodies are connected. If you are not taking care of your physical health, you are more likely to feel stressed, irritable, or sad. Physical activity can increase energy levels and boost the way you feel. Be active and get your body moving. Setting a goal, like 20 minutes of activity each day, is a great way to start! You can go for a walk, play a sport, or just stretch.

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Coping Strategies	<p>SMHO has several stress management and coping activities to do in the classroom. Such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 • Deep Belly Breathing 	<p>Finding time to do things just for fun can help us to reduce our stress. You can try:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doing something fun. Try something new! Plan an outing with friends, take a walk in a different park, or do a new activity. • Doing something creative, like painting, drawing, or crafting. • Make time for a movie!
Self Esteem	<p>SMHO has a number of positive motivation and perseverance activities as well as self-awareness and sense of identity to do in the classroom. Such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjectives About Me • Positive Self-Talk 	<p>Take some time each day and write down 3 things you accomplished. You can use a piece of paper, a journal, or a phone app. Make a habit of this and you'll find that your brain loves the reward!</p>

Week 4: Mental Health Resources Week- May 22th-26th

Topics	Activity	Announcements
How to Identify a Safe Adult and Talk about Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review tips from Kids Help Phone on How to Identify a safe adult. • Share SHMO's- Reaching Out- Tip Sheet for Students 	<p>Do you need someone to talk to? A safe adult is someone who you can count on, respects your boundaries and doesn't ask you to keep secrets from others. Talking to a safe adult can help you feel listened to and help you know what to do next.</p>
Kids Help Phone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the Kids Help Phone videos and mental health activities for kids ages 5-12 with your class. • Students can fill out the Self Quest Journey to learn more about themselves and their well-being. 	<p>Did you know that Kids Help Phone has information and resources just for kids! There are over 30 videos and mental health activities for kids aged 5-12 years old. Visit the Kids Help Phone website.</p>
SickKids-AboutKidsHealth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overwhelmed: Managing Feelings and Racing Thoughts 	<p>A 7-minute video that can help hit the pause button to allow you to care for yourself and find out what you need right now.</p>	<p>AboutKidsHealth has created a video that gives you tips on how manage feelings of being overwhelmed. When having these feelings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look around and name 4 things you can hear. • Name 3 things you can touch.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about 2 things you can smell. • And lastly, one thing that you can taste. <p>As best you can, bring yourself back to here and now. You may need to do this many times in a row. There are no strict rules. You might prefer to pick five things you can hear.</p> <p>That's okay too. Try what works for you!</p>
SickKids-AboutKidsHealth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feelings of Uncertainty and How to Manage Them 	<p>A 5-minute video that gives students tools to cope with uncertainty and unknowns about the future, whether it's something specific or we want to know what will happen in the coming days, weeks, or months. This video helps with regaining perspective to focus on the things we can control right here and now.</p>	<p>AboutKidsHealth has created a video that gives you tips on how to manage feelings of uncertainty. While dealing with uncertainty is difficult, there are things you can do to support yourself like practicing self-care.</p> <p>Think about what you can and can't control. Notice the story you're telling yourself and take care of yourself in the here and now.</p>



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CURRICULUM, TEACHING, AND LEARNING

The resources in this section are to support educators in understanding the issues related to mental health. The resources are guidelines and suggestions that allow educators to choose which ones work best for them.

For Educators

Resources

- **Common student mental health concerns (SMHO)**: Early identification and prevention services can make a critical difference for a student who is having difficulty with their thoughts, behaviour, or emotions. Educators have a role in helping to identify students in need of more support and reinforcing helpful skills and strategies in the classroom.
- To find more resources about mental health, visit our [Mental Health Resources for Educators](#) web page.

Lessons and Activities

- Find lessons and activities on the [School Mental Health Ontario website](#).
- Use the [Mental Health Month Wellness Challenge Calendars](#) with your students.

SCHOOL & CLASSROOM LEADERSHIP

Improving school and classroom leadership involves all members of the school community to work together to create a positive classroom and school environment. Continue the conversation about stress and anxiety by registering for the [OPHEA Healthy Schools Certification- French Version](#) (check website for registration deadline). Ophea's Healthy Schools Certification gives your school the tools to promote and enhance the health and well-being of students, school staff, and the broader school community. Contact your school nurse for more information on how they can support your school in achieving a Healthy Schools Certification.

- **MH LIT- Mental Health in Action**: The *MH LIT – Mental Health in Action* course from School Mental Health Ontario (SMHO) is designed to provide educators with basic knowledge and information related to mental health, strategies to enhance student mental health, and everyday practices for use in the classroom. LEARN about mental health. INSPIRE through your actions. TEACH in ways that encourage belonging and that support student mental health.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

When students feel empowered and value their learning, they become engaged and have better learning outcomes. Below are resources that support improving student engagement in the topic of stress and anxiety.

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School Campaigns and Messaging

- Start a Student Wellness Committee. Ask your school nurse to help support this initiative.
- Advocate for Mindful Minutes- encourage teachers to give 2 min each day to allow students to take time to reflect on their feelings and allow students to relax in a way they find helpful.
- Use [Self-Care 101 for students](#) to keep morning announcements positive.
- Encourage the development of a walking club on nutrition breaks.

SOCIAL & PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTS

Social and physical environments are important for student learning. Social and physical environments that feel safe, caring, and healthy, contribute to better learning. It also supports social, emotional, and physical development.

- Post mental wellness statements throughout the classroom to remind students of the healthy coping strategies available to deal with their emotions.
- Create bulletin boards to display messaging relating to positive mental health throughout the school.

School Board Policies

School boards can set policy that influence the social and environmental norms that student's experience. Please review your specific school board and/or school's policies that promote mental health for further information. Individual schools should speak to their school boards about whether they can develop individual school policies.

HOME, SCHOOL, & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Home, school, and community partnership involves connecting parents, school staff, family programs, and the community to support and promote opportunities for well-being. To get students more in touch with their mental health, [SMHO provides activities](#) that families can do at home with their child.

If you are looking for more support for children and youth, you can visit the [health unit website](#), or:

- [Windsor-Essex Youth Services Card](#)
- Call 2-1-1 or visit [211ontario.ca](#) to find mental health resources near you.
- [WEConnectKids](#): a partnership between the five core service providers for child and youth mental health and addiction services in Windsor/Essex. It is a free, confidential mental health service for children, youth, and families who live in Windsor-Essex. Contact 519-257-KIDS (5437).
- The [Youth Wellness Hub Windsor-Essex](#) offers walk in services to youth ages 12 to 25 without a wait list or referral.



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- [Kids Help Phone](#) is available 24/7 at 1-800-668-6868. Their team of trained counsellors provide a free texting service and live online or live telephone chat for kids, teens, and young adults in both English and French.
- If a child is in a crisis, follow your school board policies. Visit the [Ontario webpage](#) to find more services.



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APPENDIX A: GETTING TO KNOW YOU ACTIVITY

Here is a list of questions that can be used of the Getting to Know You activity. Students can pair up and take turns asking each other questions. For younger students the teacher can read the questions out loud to the class, the students can discuss with their partner. After question session is completed, each pairing can present something new they learned about their partner. Students can also create their own questions.

1. What is your favorite subject in school?
2. What is your favorite dessert or flavor of ice cream?
3. What is/was your favorite pet? (If you've never had a pet, what pet would you choose if you could?)
4. What's your favorite thing to do during summer vacation?
5. What is your favorite TV show, movie, or book?
6. What do you like to do/play during recess?
7. What do you usually do after school?
8. If you could have one superpower, what would it be?
9. Describe your best friend (without saying their name).
10. If you could be any age, what would it be?
11. If you could trade places with anyone for a day, who would it be?
12. If you could eat one thing every day for the rest of your life, what would it be?
13. If you could invent something to make your life easier, what would you create?
14. Would you rather be 1 inch tall or 10 feet tall? Why?
15. What would a perfect day at school be like?
16. Name one thing that would make your parents/family proud of you.
17. If you could change one rule that your family has, what would you change?
18. If you could be an animal, what would you be?
19. What is the hardest thing about being a kid?
20. What is the nicest thing someone has done for you?
21. Do you think it would be easier to be an only child or have lots of siblings?
22. Describe a time in your life when someone was mean to you. What would you have changed about the situation if you could?
23. What is your biggest fear?
24. Name one thing you and I appear to have in common.
25. If we became friends, what is one thing we might enjoy doing together?