



Special Education Superintendent Update

May 2019



May is Speech, Language and Hearing Awareness Month

Celebrate with us!

Did you know that 1 in 6 Canadians will have speech, language and/or hearing difficulties?

Speak to your school Speech-Language Pathologist or the D/HH Team if you have concerns about a student's communication skills.



TCDSB DEAF/HARD OF HEARING

 30TH Annual Family Picnic
Friday, May 24th, 2019
rain or shine, see you there
10 am – 2 pm

NEW LOCATION

Sts Cosmas and Damian School
111 Danesbury Ave.
North York, M6B 3L3
(By TTC - Glencairn Station)

You're Invited

PICNIC

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT D/HH DEPARTMENT
416 393-5405 or email: deaf.dhh@tcdsb.org



TCDSB Student Mental Health Newsletter

May 2019



Mental Health Week is May 6-12!

Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community (WHO). Mental health is not the same thing as mental illness. We know that in any given year, 20% of us will experience a mental health problem or illness. Regardless of whether we currently have a mental illness or not, we ALL have mental health, the same way we all have physical health. CAMH has created a great video on the topic of mental illness versus mental health, see the below link.
<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=mental+health+mental+illness+video+camh&view=detail&mid=E70E3A5ECED20E68DDE2E70E3A5ECED20E68DDE2&FORM=VIRE>

6 Signs of GOOD MENTAL HEALTH

1. I feel like I'm reaching my potential.
2. I feel like I belong.
3. I don't worry too much about what others think of me.
4. I make the world a better place.
5. I enjoy my life.
6. Knock me down and I'll get back up again.

(CMHA)

Nature is Nurturing

Research shows that when we immerse ourselves in the natural world, our sense of well-being is heightened. You don't need to spend the day in a forest to reap the benefits. Spending time in a backyard, a schoolyard, a nearby park or near a neighborhood tree will do. The benefits can be gained whether you are actively doing something in a natural setting or simply viewing the setting. It is important to be "in the moment," so try enforcing a no electronics rule for outdoor time. Now that warmer weather is coming, it is a good time to start creating new routines that incorporate outdoor time, rain or shine (*Psychology Today*; CMHA).



Outdoor Inspiration for Children...

- Have a picnic
- Observe an insect
- Draw pictures in the dirt
- Look for different shades of green while on a walk
- Explore the design of a cobweb
- Paint on rocks with water

Outdoor Inspiration for Older Children/Youth...

- Walk to school instead of taking the bus
- Eat lunch outside
- Go for a jog or a bike ride with a friend
- Join the environmental club at school (or start one)
- Organize a neighbourhood scavenger hunt
- Take a younger sibling or neighbour outside
- Walk the family dog

If You Are Concerned About Your Child

If you are concerned your child may be struggling, look at whether there are changes in how the child is thinking, feeling or acting. Also, pay attention to how the child is functioning at home, at school and with friends (cps.ca). There are caring adults and professionals you can consult with to determine next steps and identify supports for your child. Consider the following:

- Talk to the child/adolescent to find out what's going on and how he/she is feeling
- Talk to the classroom teacher(s) to see if they also notice the changes/concerns
- Discuss your observations with the family doctor
- Inquire with the school principal about mental health supports available at school, such as the guidance counselor, social worker, psychologist, or Child and Youth Worker
- In case of emergency proceed to your local **hospital** or call 911



Studies have shown that individuals who pray to a loving and protecting God with whom they have a meaningful relationship are less likely to experience symptoms of anxiety (psychcentral.com).

A Holistic Approach to Well-Being



The Ministry of Education's model for well-being highlights the need to support our children and youth's development in each of the four domains.

PHYSICAL: Encourage good sleep patterns, physical activity, and healthy eating.

COGNITIVE: Teach and model problem solving skills and critical thinking.

EMOTIONAL: Support children/youth in recognizing different emotions; model good coping skills.

SOCIAL: Encourage positive relationships and model good communication skills.

Community Mental Health Resources

Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868

<https://kidshelpphone.ca/>

Professional and confidential counseling available 24/7 via phone. Text and live chat also available – see website.

What's Up Walk-In Counseling

<http://www.whatsupwalkin.ca/>

Professional and confidential walk-in counseling for children, youth, young adults and their families. No fee. No appointment. No Health Card. Six locations across Toronto. See website for locations and hours of operation.

A Laugh a Day...

"A good sense of humour is a tool that kids can rely on throughout life..." It helps children to "see beyond the surface of things" and "not take themselves too seriously" (www.kidshealth.org).







TIPS TO PROMOTE WELLNESS IN THE CLASSROOM

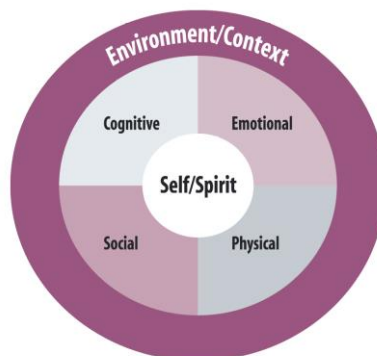


Some definitions:

Mental Health: *Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.*








Source: World Health Organization

<p>Physical Health</p> 	<p>Physical health is determined by the quantity and quality of our sleep, our nutrition and our level of physical activity. These elements impact directly on our emotional state (e.g., our mood) and our cognitive state (e.g., level of concentration, our performance, our thoughts, etc.).</p>
<p>Cognitive Wellness</p> 	<p>Our thoughts impact our behaviour and our performance. Our beliefs about ourselves influence a given outcome. "If we think you can, you can. If you think you can't, you're right". (Henry Ford).</p>
<p>Emotional Wellness</p> 	<p>Our emotional wellness is determined by maintaining a balance between our negative and positive emotions. Positive emotions improve our performance, our level of concentration and even reduce our risk of illness. Positive emotions increase our tendency to engage in positive behaviours. Negative emotions increase our tendency to either engage in negative behaviours or isolate ourselves from others. To increase happiness, research shows that the ratio of positive to negative emotions should be about 3:1.</p>
<p>Social Wellness</p> 	<p>We are social beings. We need to connect with people that support us, that validate us and with whom we feel good. Social exclusion impacts the same centers of the brain as physical pain.</p>










Source: *Stepping Stones: A Resource on Youth Development*, p. 17







Tips To Promote Wellness In The Classroom (1)

	<p>1. Practice relaxation: Practice relaxation techniques throughout the day at appropriate times (e.g., at the beginning of the day, before lunch recess, at the end of day, etc.). Relaxation reduces the reactivity of our nervous system, reduces our anxiety and improves our ability to concentrate. We are also less likely to get angry and be impulsive. Examples of relaxation techniques: stretches, deep breathing, visualization, mindfulness, progressive muscle relaxation (i.e., we tense them, and then we release them one by one).</p>
	<p>2. Expend energy: When you feel the students' level of energy needs to be expended, it might be important to do the opposite of relaxation in the classroom. We can ask them to take a few minutes at their tables, get up on their tippy toes, and stretch out their arms to push the clouds away up in the sky. These stretches will help students evacuate stress hormones (i.e., cortisol) that can sometimes accumulate in the body, rendering them hyper-vigilant to any slight trigger.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Source: Kids Have Stress Too, The Psychology Foundation of Canada</i></p>
	<p>3. Get physical: At transition times, throughout the school day, we can ask students to do 10 jumping jacks at their table. Following the jumping jacks, we can lead students in taking 10 deep breaths to come back to a calm state for classroom work.</p>
	<p>4. Validate effort not end result: When it comes to behaviour, it is preferable not to evaluate by the end result, but by the effort the student makes. If a student normally interrupts their teacher 10 times per day and with support and clear efforts, the student reduces that behaviour to 5 times a day, it is a success. We cannot expect that student to jump from 10 interruptions to 0.</p>
	<p>5. Recognize unique strengths: Help students find their unique strengths while developing their personal identity: encourage students to complete sentences like "I am ..." with one of their strengths (e.g., a good soccer player). If students have difficulty completing the sentence, it would be important to be cognizant of their strengths and help them see them as well. One can have monthly themes to structure the activity. The Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations (iceont.ca/resources/ontario-catholic-school-graduate-expectations) can be used for inspiration (for e.g., be a collaborative contributor, etc.).</p>
	<p>6. Choose words carefully: Take note of the vocabulary you use. Attempt to emphasize the students' strengths and efforts. If a student has specific challenges, try to avoid saying "<i>despite</i> your memory difficulties, you still did well", but instead recognize that it is surely <i>thanks</i> to their areas of need, that they developed other techniques to overcome the challenge. There are many easy examples that demonstrate that our biggest challenge can become our greatest strength (e.g., David and Goliath in the Bible, The story of the Turtle and the Rabbit Race).</p>
	<p>7. Positively validate students: Try to avoid congratulating students' non-modifiable characteristics (e.g., "you are so smart!") but instead emphasize methods used by the person (e.g., "you worked so hard", "I see that you used great organizational techniques for this presentation"). This change in perspective promotes the <i>Growth Mindset</i> that expands performance possibilities and reduces the fixed mindset, which can be limiting.</p>

Tips To Promote Wellness In The Classroom (2)

	<p>8. Problem-solving: Teach students the steps to effective problem solving. They can use their fingers to count each step:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify the problem. 2. Evaluate the importance of the problem (e.g., the extent to which it is affecting them, do they need to resolve immediately) from 1 to 5. 3. What are some possible solutions to the problem? 4. What are the possible consequences to each proposed solution? 5. Evaluate the options and choose wisely or ask for help. <p>By offering students tools for solving their problems, but also encouraging them to come speak to you about them, you are progressively teaching them to slow down their reaction time to the problem. By slowing down the time between the problem and their reaction to the problem, you are teaching them to access the more advanced centers of their brain (i.e., not just their reptilian brain that tends to react selfishly). You can also ask them to imagine someone they admire and love, and to think about how that person would react to this situation.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Source: Friends for Life program.</i></p>
	<p>9. Reframe your thoughts: Use tools to teach students to reformulate their negative thoughts or catastrophic thoughts into more positive ones. You can play this game in the classroom where students take turns uttering a negative (or red) thought and someone else reformulates it as a positive (green) thought. You can even use a beach ball to play with students. The first student that receives the ball, says the first sentence (the red thought) and throws the ball to a second student that reframes it as a positive thought, etc.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Source: Friends for Life program.</i></p>
	<p>10. Mistakes are necessary for learning: In the classroom, adopt the philosophy that mistakes are <i>essential</i> and even <i>necessary</i> to learning. Take the example of an athlete that must practice their tasks 100 or even 1000 of times and commit multiple mistakes before perfectly mastering the task.</p>
	<p>11. Greeting: Greet students with a smile whilst saying their names. People enjoy hearing their names. Model a culture of warm greetings in your class/school. Target specific objectives: each student/adult should receive 4 greetings a day.</p>
	<p>12. Recognize something unique: Attempt to recognize something unique and positive about each student (e.g., make a chart of students for yourself and attempt to know something positive and unique for all students).</p>
	<p>13. Reassure: When attempting to reassure a student, bring yourself down to their eye level or even lower to speak to them. This will make them feel more secure and safe.</p>
	<p>14. Be a good listener: Be an active listener for students, ask open-ended questions, rather than simple yes/no questions (e.g., "how are you feeling?" vs. "are you ok?", "how was your week-end" vs. "did you have a good week-end?").</p>

Tips To Promote Wellness In The Classroom (3)

	<p>15. Mindfulness: Mindfulness can be easily practiced in classroom (e.g., make a mindfulness glitter bottle: blissfulkids.com/mindfulness-kids-teens-calming-glitter-jar-aka-mind-jar) or use a unique object (e.g., seashell, autumn leaf, etc.) to distribute to each student. After a few deep breaths, we can ask groups of 4-5 students to concentrate on their individual object for about 30 to 60 seconds (depending on the age of students). We would ask them to look at their object in all its facets, to observe it, to touch it, to close their eyes and feel the texture of the object with their hands, to smell it, etc. Then, they may place their object in the middle of the table of groups of 5 (or more). We can speak to students about the benefits of mindfulness, the importance of focusing on the present moment. Anxious people tend to worry about <i>tomorrow</i> or regret <i>yesterday</i>, whereas research shows us that happier and more content people enjoy the present moment. Finally, we would ask the students to recognize the object assigned to them, from amongst the other objects.</p>
	<p>16. Deep breathing: For younger students, we can get large eyeglasses and attach strings to them. These glasses could be used to teach students deep breathing. The strings will move with the breath giving visual feedback to the students. The important learning objective here is to help students recognize important characteristics of a calm emotional state. By practicing this technique during the day, they will come to learn to use these calming techniques in a preventative manner (before anger sets in) and they can resort to them when they feel anger or frustration.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Source: Kids Have Stress Too, The Psychology Foundation of Canada.</i></p>
	<p>17. Say Thank You: Find occasions everyday to say "Thank you" to students for small gestures that often go unnoticed. This could be a student who picks up a peer's pencil. Once you validate these behaviours publically in your class, you will see them multiply progressively.</p>
 	<p>18. Positively validate students: With a student who poses a behavioural challenge, find moments (sometimes rare) when they are on task or listening, congratulate them with a positive comment and smile at them approvingly. Try as much as possible to strike a balance between the reprimands and positive comments. For each reprimand, it takes about 3 positive comments to continue to have a positive relationship between an adult and a student. Consequently, we need to choose our moments of reprimand carefully! We can challenge ourselves to find 10 positive comments for a student that has challenges listening. You might just begin to see the behaviour transform.</p>
	<p>19. Smile! Smiling is contagious. Challenge yourself to smile at least 3 times each day for at least 3 days. See if you feel a difference in your mood. Try to smile at someone you would not normally smile at ... but it is important that your smile be authentic and sincere.</p>



SPECIAL SERVICES

TCDSB Celebrates Children's Mental Health Awareness Week

First Week of May

(May 6th to 12th, 2019)



Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week

May 6th to 12th, 2019 ToolKit

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TCDSB Celebrates Children's Mental Health Awareness Week

May 6th to 12th, 2019

Each year, Ontarians mark the first full week of May as **Children's Mental Health Week**. This important week is about:

- **Increasing awareness** of the signs of child and youth mental health problems
- **Decreasing stigma**
- Understanding that **help is available and it works!**
- For more information on Children's' Mental Health Week please see www.kidsmentalhealth.ca

One in five Ontario children and youth has a mental health problem - That is about 500,000 kids. Disorders range from anxiety, depression and conduct disorder to attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, eating disorders, schizophrenia, and bi-polar disorder. Left untreated, mental health disorders can lead to school failure, family conflicts, drug abuse, violence, and even suicide. The good news is that **help is available and treatment works!**

TCDSB is pleased to share the enclosed **Children's Mental Health Awareness Toolkit** with your school. The tool kit contains:

- Daily PA announcements
- Daily Classroom activities (elementary and secondary options are provided).
- Handout templates

5 classroom activities coincide which each day of the week. We have linked our daily activities to some of the health topics found in the Health and Physical Education Curriculum. Our 5 strategies and activities are:

- Be Mindful
- Reach Out
- Pray
- Exercise & Eat Healthy
- Get Enough Sleep

We encourage principals to share this toolkit with classroom teachers in support of Children's Mental Health Awareness week. The toolkit would be of **particular interest** to Health and Physical Education, Religion, Anthropology, Psychology, Special High Skills Major Teachers, as well as Stop the Stigma Staff Mentors! Feel free to share your school's success on twitter.

#TCDSBMHW2019! 

With sincere thanks,

On behalf of the TCDSB Mental Health Steering Committee

Marie Josée Gendron, Ph.D., C.Psych. - Chief of Mental Health Strategy and Staff Well-Being, TCDSB
Melissa Hanlon MSW, RSW – Mental Health Leader, TCDSB

Children's Mental Health Awareness Week

May 6th to 12th, 2019

ToolKit, Contents and Instructions

TCDSB is pleased to share the enclosed **Children's Mental Health Awareness Toolkit** with your school.

The tool kit contains:

- Daily PA announcements
- Daily classroom activities (elementary and secondary options are provided)
- Handout templates

5 classroom activities coincide with each day of the week. We have linked our daily activities to some of the health topics found in the Health and Physical Education Curriculum.

Our 5 activities are:

Be Mindful	Monday, May 6, 2019
Reach out	Tuesday, May 7, 2019
Pray	Wednesday, May 8, 2019
Exercise & Eat Healthy	Thursday, May 9, 2019
Get enough Sleep	Friday, May 10, 2019

Each Daily Activity Includes:

- *An Introduction Message*, which is identical to the daily PA announcement that is intended for inclusion in your school's morning announcements. You may wish to re-read the announcement as an introduction to the activity, as it explains the day's theme.
- *Suggested Activity for Elementary or Secondary Classrooms*. There is a suggested activity for both elementary and secondary teachers. Each activity gives prompts, instructions, and includes list of materials and required handout templates (where applicable/required) and/or on-line resources or web-links.
- *Suggested Script for Elementary or Secondary Teachers*. The suggested script is provided to assist teachers in introducing the daily activity. This is a suggested script, but is optional. Some will prefer to paraphrase; this is fine.

Feel free to share your school's successes/pictures on twitter.

#TCDSBMHW2019!







Introduction/PA Announcement

“Mindfulness is a way of being and thinking. When we are mindful, we focus our attention on what is happening in our body, our mind and in our environment in the moment. With mindfulness, we live in the present, focus on what is happening right now” (Mindfulness Ambassador Council Guidebook TCDSB).

Today, think about being present in the moment and being aware of your breathing. Being mindful helps us physically and emotionally & improves our mental well-being.

Suggested activities for elementary classroom:

Safari

Materials: *handout #1*

This is a classic mindfulness exercise packaged in a fun, easy and engaging format for kids. An average everyday walk will become an exciting adventure! This exercise will bring out a state of awareness and will promote “grounding” in the present.

- Discuss what it means to be mindful (i.e. focusing our attention, the concept of noticing). You may also want to review the 5 senses as ways we “notice.”
- Tell the students that you will be going on a safari in the schoolyard. Challenge them to take note of as many birds, bugs, creepy-crawlies, and any other animals as they can. Tell them they will need to use all of their senses to find them. They may hear a bird chirp, for example, before they see it. Ask them to look for anything that walks, crawls, swims, or flies.
- If you wish, use handout #1 to reference the activity.
- Alternative/Supplemental Idea: Have students focus in on one sense only (i.e. hearing). They could sit in the yard with eyes closed and identify all the nature sounds they can hear (www.positivepsychology.com/).

Go on a SAFARI

Go outside on an exciting adventure, try picking up a small rock or touching a plant or flower.



Notice the bugs or the birds. Take a moment to kneel down and touch the earth.

Walk mindfully paying close attention to everything. Make sure you walk in silence because you want to notice all those little details.



The Mindful Jar

Materials: mason jar, glitter glue (or dry glitter & liquid glue)

This activity can teach children about how **strong emotions** can take hold, and how to find peace when these strong emotions come up. The exercise not only helps children learn about how their emotions can cloud their thoughts, it also facilitates the practice of mindfulness while focusing on the swirling glitter in the jar.

- Get a clear jar, like a mason jar, and fill it almost all the way with water. Next, add a big spoonful of glitter glue or glue and dry glitter to the jar. Put the lid back on the jar and shake it to make the glitter swirl.
- Use the following script or take inspiration from it to form your own mini-lesson:

Suggested script for elementary teachers:

"Imagine that the glitter is like your thoughts when you're stressed, mad or upset. See how they whirl around and make it really hard to see clearly? That is why it is so easy to make silly decisions when you are upset – because you are not thinking clearly. Don't worry, this is normal and it happens in all of us (yep, grownups too)."



[Now put the jar down in front of them.]

Now watch what happens when you are still for a couple of moments. Keep watching. See how the glitter starts to settle and the water clears? Your mind works the same way. When you're calm for a little while, your thoughts start to settle and you start to see things much clearer" (Karen Young, 2017).

Suggested activity for secondary classroom:

Quiet Mindfulness

Materials: none

When you are trying to teach students about what mindfulness is and how it can benefit them, it is best to start with a few simple **guidelines**:

1. Make sure they are ready to give mindfulness a try; if they are full of energy and itching to be active, it may not be the best time for practicing mindfulness for the first time.
2. Explain what mindfulness is and what it is not; give examples of what might be similar to mindfulness (i.e., introspection, chasing thoughts down the "rabbit hole"), but is not truly mindfulness.
3. Say it in an age appropriate way; put it in words they will understand but take care not to make them feel like you are talking down to them.
4. Offer to practice mindfulness with them; sometimes having a model makes all the difference.
5. Assure them that it's okay to get off track, and share with them how to gently guide themselves back to mindfulness.
6. Afterwards, finish the practice by doing something they enjoy with them to ensure they have a positive experience.

Suggested script for secondary teachers:

Start by settling into a comfortable position and allow your eyes to close or keep them open with a softened gaze. Begin by taking several long slow deep breaths breathing in fully and exhaling fully. Breathe in through your nose and out through your nose or mouth. Allow your breath to find its own natural rhythm. Bring your full attention to noticing each in-breath as it enters your nostrils, travels down to your lungs and causes your belly to expand. In addition, notice each out-breath as your belly contracts and air moves up through the lungs back up through the nostrils or mouth. Invite your full attention to flow with your breath.

Notice how the inhale is different from the exhale. You may experience the air as cool as it enters your nose and warm as you exhale. As you turn more deeply inward, begin to let go of noises around you. If you are distracted by sounds in the room, simply notice them and then bring your intention back to your breath. Simply breathe as you breathe, not striving to change anything about your breath. Don't try to control your breath in any way. Observe and accept your experience in this moment without judgment, paying attention to each inhale and exhale.

If your mind wanders to thoughts, plans or problems, simply notice your mind wandering. Watch the thought as it enters your awareness as neutrally as possible. Then practice letting go of the thought as if it were a leaf floating down a stream. In your mind, place each thought that arises on a leaf and watch as it floats out of sight down the stream. Then bring your attention back to your breath. Your breath is an anchor you can return to repeatedly when you become distracted by thoughts.

Notice when your mind has wandered. Observe the types of thoughts that hook or distract you. Noticing is the richest part of learning. With this knowledge, you can strengthen your ability to detach from thoughts and mindfully focus your awareness back on the qualities of your breath. Practice coming home to the breath with your full attention. Watching the gentle rise of your stomach on the in-breath and the relaxing, letting go on the out-breath. Allow yourself to be completely with your breath as it flows in and out.

You might become distracted by pain or discomfort in the body or twitching or itching sensations that draw your attention away from the breath. You may also notice feelings arising, perhaps sadness or happiness, frustration or contentment. Acknowledge whatever comes up including thoughts or stories about your experience. Simply notice where your mind went without judging it, pushing it away, clinging to it or wishing it were different and simply refocus your mind and guide your attention back to your breath.

Breathe in and breathe out. Follow the air all the way in and all the way out. Mindfully be present moment by moment with your breath. If your mind wanders away from your breath, just notice without judging it – be it a thought, emotion, or sensation that hooks your attention and gently guide your awareness back to your breathing.

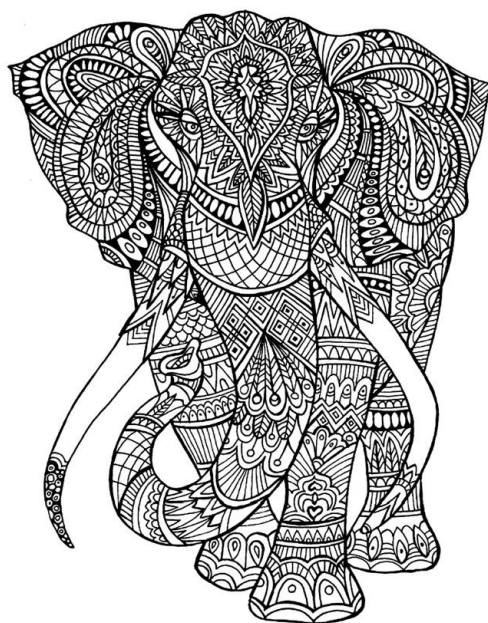
As this practice comes to an end, slowly allow your attention to expand and notice your entire body and then beyond your body to the room you are in.

When you're ready, open your eyes and come back fully alert and awake. The breath is always with you as a refocusing tool to bring you back to the present moment. Set your intention to use this practice throughout your day to help cultivate and strengthen attention (Script written by Shilagh Mirgain, PhD, for UW Cultivating Well-Being: A Neuroscientific Approach).

Adult Colouring

Materials: *coloured pencils; colouring pages - free printables found here:* <https://www.justcolor.net/>

Many youth and adults use adult coloring books to relieve stress. These coloring pages are more complex than the ones kids use and they require more concentration and focus. Consider making colouring pages available for the first few minutes of class.





Introduction/PA Announcement

One in 5 people experience mental illness. We all have mental health. Learning how to build mental health will help us to build our overall health. TCDSB has many supports and resources available. In partnership with families, the community and our Catholic education system we are committed to supporting all our students. Relationships and belonging are important to our health. Did you know that at school you can get support from your teacher, principal, vice principal, guidance counsellor and CYW? As well, additional supports, such as school social workers and school psychology staff are available. There are many caring adults in our schools and community ready to help.

Suggested activity for elementary classroom:

A Tangled Web of Support We Weave

Materials: Ball of yarn

For Supplemental Activity: string in multiple colours, glue sticks, construction paper, paper hearts (pre-cut if working with young children)

Optional: *The Invisible String Storybook* by Patrice Karst

The premise of *The Invisible String* is that we are all connected by an invisible string. Even though it is invisible, you can feel it with your heart. Everyone has an invisible string, and it can reach anywhere; no one is ever alone, even when their loved one is not physically present (summary by: barnesandnoble.com).

- If you have access to the book, read it first, and discuss the concept of support people and how we rely on each other. Highlight the concept of caring adults in addition to discussing caring friends, peers, etc. If you are not using the book, you can simply start this activity with a class discussion around community and the idea of relying on each other.
- To begin the activity, explain that when a particular student is holding the ball of yarn, he/she will identify something that they have done to support someone else. Alternatively the student can identify something they witnessed someone else do to support another person (i.e. "At recess I saw someone help another student up when he fell down"). Encourage them to refrain from using names to avoid potential embarrassment of a classmate.
- Once the student has spoken, he/she will hold the end of the string and toss the ball of yarn to any classmate. The next student does the same and it continues until each student is holding a piece of yarn and a giant "web" has formed in the classroom.
- While the web is still intact, review the concept of community and how we all support each other. Refer to the visual web to outline all the connections we have to each other. Highlight that although a particular student may not be best friends with everyone in the room, we are all connected as part of the same community and we should all support each other. Ensure that as the teacher you also participate; it is important to highlight the role of caring adults, especially when troubles become overwhelming for students.
- Alternative/Supplemental Idea - The Invisible String Intervention:
<https://static.spacecrafted.com/a5101f2d38a94cebbb5611a7005ceb53/r/dfa68582559340c8bf0a5ef00eb115e1/1/IS%20Intervention,%20Ashley%20Fussell,%20LPC-MHSP.pdf>

- If you have access to the book, read and discuss first
- Take Construction paper and glue paper heart in the middle. Have students write their name on and decorate/colour their hearts to represent them.
- Have students write names of all the people in their world that they love and want to be connected to.
- Glue various pieces of string from the heart to the person's name they wrote down

Suggested activity for secondary classroom:

Juggling Responsibilities Exercise

Materials: 5 balloons, 1 sharpie marker, 5 sticky notes

This exercise reinforces the benefits of reaching out to caring adults for help when we feel overwhelmed with all our responsibilities. Often teens can feel overwhelmed and neglect to “reach out” for help, or are unable to recognize those around them as “supports”. This exercise is aimed at helping students identify supports, and the importance of calling upon those supports when feeling overwhelmed.

Suggested script for secondary teachers:

This exercise reinforces the benefits of reaching out to caring adults for help when we feel overwhelmed with all our responsibilities.

- Encourage the students to identify their roles and responsibilities, e.g. student, friend, son or daughter, teammate, part time employee, sibling, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, chores etc.
- Blow up the 5 balloons and write the roles and responsibilities on the balloons (at least one role or responsibility per balloon is suggested).
- Ask for one student to try and juggle all 5 of the balloons in the air.
- Relate this exercise to juggling roles and responsibilities in life.
- Then ask the students, who can help them in life and at school with their roles and responsibilities? Write the titles of the people on the board, e.g. parent, teacher, principal, CYW, social worker, guidance teacher, etc.
- Ask 5 students to volunteer to be one of the people listed on the board. Write their title on a sticky note and place it on their back.
- Then invite each of the 5 students, one at a time to help the initial student to keep the balloons afloat. Each time you invite another person see how much longer they are able to keep the balloons in the air. If you want, ask someone to keep time and compare the times.
- At the very end you should have all 6 students trying to juggle the balloons together.
- Debrief: Ask the students how they felt about this exercise. Talk about how we all have responsibilities and roles and sometimes we feel overwhelmed but if we get help it is much easier.

Adapted from Helping Teens Learn Self-Regulation, Brad Chaplin, Youth Light Inc.





Introduction/PA Announcement

"God is a source of comfort, strength and love for us. Through prayer we enter into a deeper relationship with God and gain a sense of attachment to Him. Many studies have shown that individuals who pray to a loving and protecting God with whom they have a meaningful relationship are less likely to experience anxiety and stress. Prayer offers emotional comfort and reduces stress." Praying helps to improve our mental well-being.

*www.spiritualityhealth.com; www.psychcentral.com
www.psychologytoday.com;*

Suggested activity for elementary classroom:

A Letter to God

Material: handout #2

Prayer is a powerful connection to our Catholic faith as well as a significant protective factor in building resilience.

- Encourage the students to see prayer as yet another valuable tool in building their faith as well as their sense of well-being.
- Utilize the enclosed Handout # 2 to encourage the students to write down what they would say to God. Encourage the students to take it home to use at a later time or simply have them destroy it, so that it remains private.

Suggested script for elementary teachers:

- *Each day at school in our Catholic faith we start our day with traditional prayer.*
- *As God is always listening to us, think about just talking to God.*
- *Prayer can happen at any time during the day and when needed (e.g. on the bus, walking to school, before a test, when you wake up or when you go to bed, when you're anxious/stressed or feeling sad, or when we are giving thanks).*
- *Prayer can help us in supporting our faith as well as our sense of well-being. How do you feel after you "talk to" or pray to God?*

Suggested activity for secondary classroom:

Group Discussion about the Benefits of Prayer

Materials: none

Prayer is a powerful connection to our Catholic faith as well as a significant protective factor in building resilience.

- Encourage the students to think about the value and power of faith and prayer, and to see prayer as a tool in building their faith as well as their sense of well-being.
- Facilitate a group discussion by asking the following questions: “When do people talk/pray to God or ask for guidance? What does prayer mean to you? What are the benefits of prayer? How can praying support your mental health? How do you feel after you “talk to” or pray to God?
- Discuss the value of starting our school day, as a Catholic community, with traditional prayer.

[illegible]

16



Exercise &
Eat Healthy



Introduction/PA Announcement

There is strong relationship between eating healthy and staying active to having good mental health and well-being. According to Health Canada children and youth require at least 60 mins of moderate-vigorous physical activity daily. Physical activity and a balanced diet is essential to one's growth and development.

Suggested activity for elementary classroom:

Eat Well and Be Active www.hc-sc.gc.ca

Materials: handout #3

This activity is aimed at helping students understand the physical and mental health benefits to eating well and being active. Often students understand the physical aspects of eating well and being healthy; we want students to become equally familiar with the mental health benefits of these practices!

Suggested script for elementary teachers:

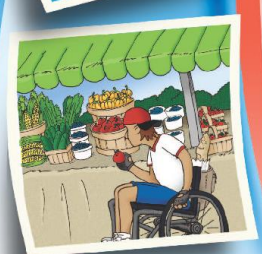
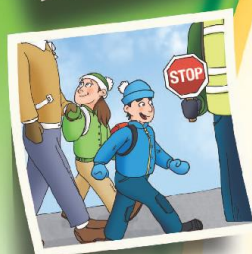
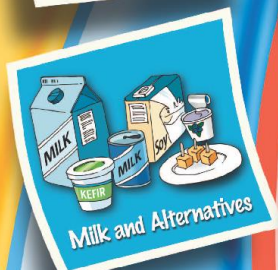
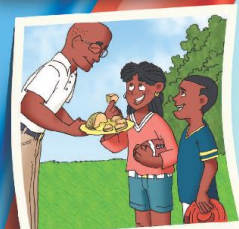
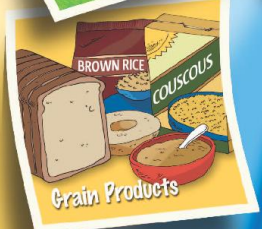
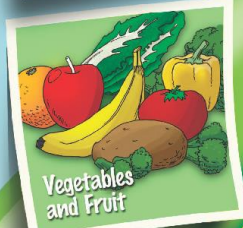
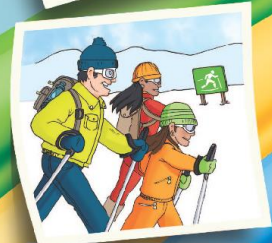
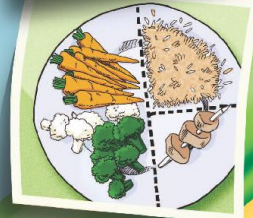
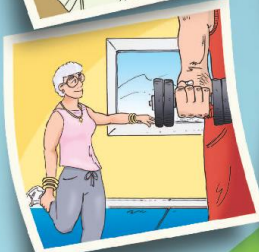
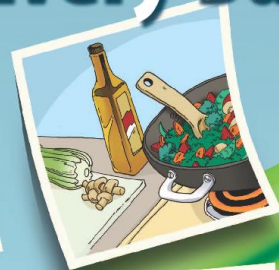
- *There are many benefits of eating well and being physically active. Such as, - having fun with your friends and family and having more energy overall.*
- *There is much evidence to suggest that eating healthy and engaging in healthy physical activity can improve our mental health.*
- *We are going to perform a group activity today that will help us understand this connection.*
- *Take a look at the images on the Eat Well and Be Active Every Day poster (sample poster included, also available on line at www.hc-sc.gc.ca for free).*
- *Let's brainstorm how you might think the people in the images are feeling. For example: happy, healthy, friendly, energized, etc. What sorts of activities are the people doing in the images that would make them feel this way?*
- *Let's build a list of benefits or reasons for eating well and being active (obtain a list of ideas from class and write those ideas on a flip chart).*
- *Supplemental Idea: For those who wish to add a bit of physical activity, we suggest you check out this **Brain Gym** video. Brain Gym benefits the mind and body. Through exercise, these easy movements help the two sides of our brain work better together*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O5ChXC-rHLE>



Government
of Canada

Gouvernement
du Canada

Eat Well and Be Active Every Day



Find related educational tools at: www.health.gc.ca/eatwell-beactive

Canada

Suggested activity for secondary school teachers:

Eating well and being active

Materials: handout #4

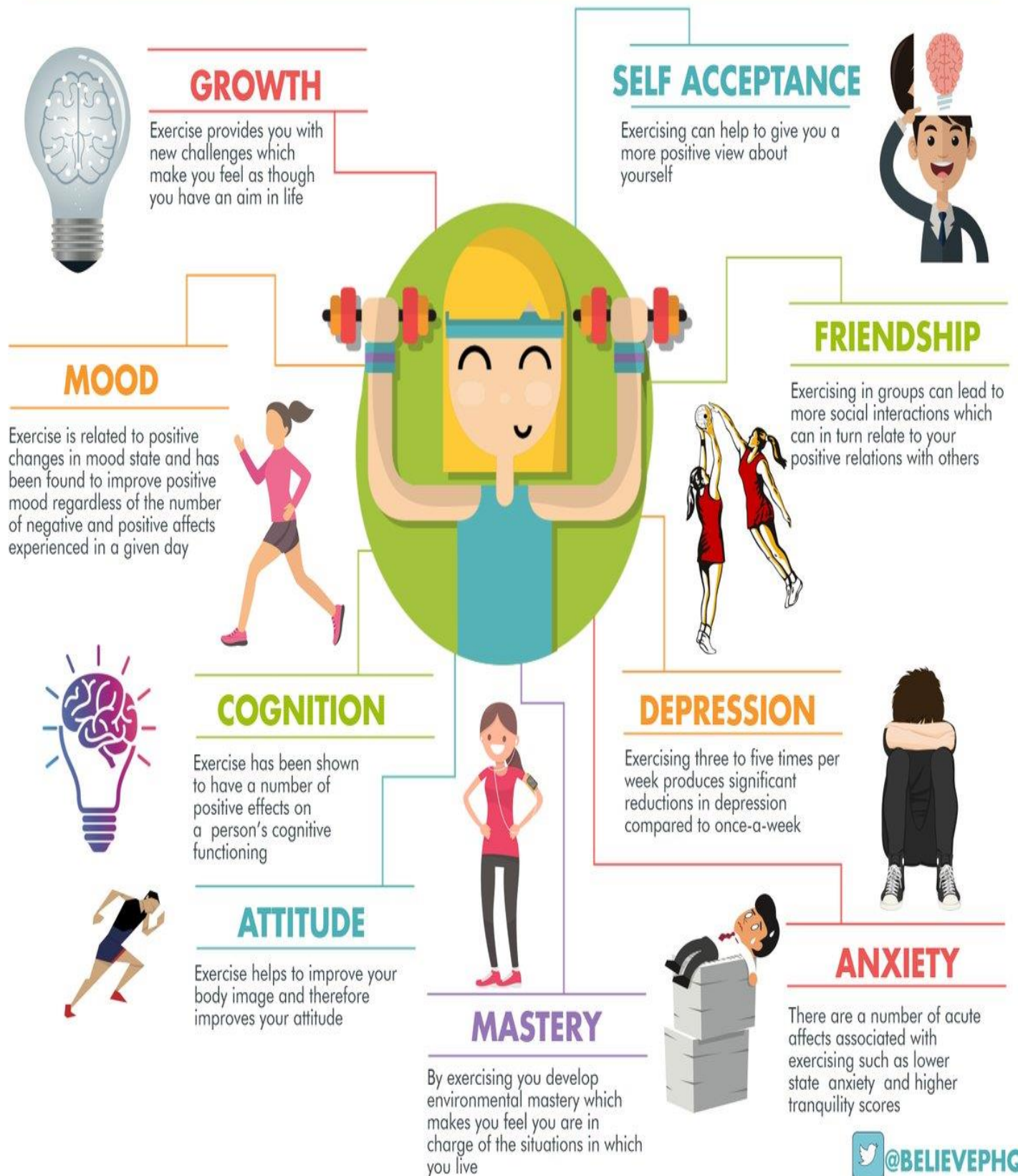
www.hc-sc.gc.ca – Canada's Food Guide-Health Canada

This activity is aimed at helping students understand the physical and mental health benefits to eating well and being active. Often students understand the physical aspects of eating well and being healthy; we want students to become equally familiar with the mental health benefits of these practices!

Suggested script for secondary teachers:

- *There are many benefits of eating well and being physically active - such as having fun with your friends and family, having more energy, fighting disease, having more energy, and maintaining independence as we get older.*
- *There is much evidence to suggest that eating healthy and engaging in healthy physical activity can improve our mental health.*
- *We are going to perform a group activity today that will help us understand this connection.*
- *Ask each student to interview another student on a new or interesting healthy eating and physical activity experience (e.g., a new food or interesting physical activity they have recently tried).*
- *Share these experiences with the group - why was it a good experience? What elements made it a good experience?*
- *List these experiences on a blackboard/flipchart as a list of benefits of eating well and being physically active.*
- *Supplemental Idea: For those who wish to add a bit of physical activity, we suggest you peruse the web to find upbeat music videos that encourage dancing! Encourage students to follow the moves on screen and challenge one-half of the class against the second half in a "dance off". Point out that we all smile when we dance, and socialize, and get physically active. Each boosts our mood and well-being. (Ensure students have enough room in the classroom to avoid bumping into each other- have fun!)*
- *Supplemental Idea: Have a Look at HANDOUT #3 "The Effect of Exercise on psychological well-Being" and circulate to the class, engage in a "did you know" discussion.*

THE EFFECT OF EXERCISE ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING



A stylized, blue, human-like figure with its arms raised in a 'V' shape. The figure has a thick green outline and a solid blue fill. It is positioned centrally on the page, with the text 'Get Enough Sleep' overlaid on its torso.

Get Enough
Sleep



Get Enough Sleep

Introduction/PA Announcement

Sleep plays a vital role in good health and our mental well-being. Having a proper sleep routine is essential to brain development and our emotional state.

We need sleep to keep us healthy, active and able to perform our best. When we are well rested we perform better in school. This helps our mood and we can solve problems more effectively. It is recommended that “kids ages 5-12 need an average 10-12 hours of sleep, and teens and adults require approximately 10 hours per night.” (Stats Canada)

So think about how much sleep you are getting and what you can do to improve your sleep routine.

Suggested activity for elementary classroom:

Relaxation technique

The aim of this activity is to help students to better understand the value of proper sleep in supporting their physical and mental health. The students will be encouraged to learn relaxation techniques as a method to help them “prepare” for a better night’s sleep.

Suggested script for elementary teachers:

- *Sleep plays an important part in our mental health and well-being.*
- *Sleep is the bodies’ opportunity to re-charge and prepare for the day ahead.*
- *Research indicates that the brain actually “works” during sleep to make sense of our learning and memories.*
- *It can be difficult for us to fall asleep when we are restless, anxious, or worried.*
- *Relaxation helps our bodies get ready to fall asleep. Here is a relaxation technique you can try at home to help you get ready to fall asleep.*
- *In the classroom while students are seated ask them to tense and clench their whole body for a count of 5 seconds. Then ask them to release the tension for another 5 counts. Repeat up to 5 times. You can use visuals such as a scarf or ragdoll (for relaxed feeling) and a robot (for tense feeling) to assist students with this exercise.*
- *Ask the students to share how they felt after holding in all the tension and after they released it. Encourage students to try this technique when winding down for bedtime.*

Suggested activity for secondary classroom:

Sleep Hygiene

Materials: *handout #5*

These 12 tips from the Harvard School of Medicine help teens to try new sleep hygiene (readiness) habits and help to debunk some commonly held myths. Consider reading the tips in small groups and have each student choose 2 tips to keep track of over the next week. Following a brief tracking period, the group can reconvene to compare progress and trouble shoot improvement.

Suggested script for secondary teachers:

Sleep plays an important part in our mental health and well-being. Sleep is the bodies' opportunity to re-charge and prepare for the day ahead. Research indicates that the brain actually works during "sleep" to make sense of our learning and memories. Technology has the potential to prevent us from getting enough sleep.

Falling asleep may seem like an impossible dream when you're awake at 3 a.m., but good sleep is more under your control than you might think. Following healthy sleep habits can make the difference between restlessness and restful slumber. Researchers have identified a variety of practices and habits—known as "sleep hygiene"—that can help anyone maximize the hours they spend sleeping, even those whose sleep is affected by insomnia, jet lag, or shift work.

Sleep hygiene may sound unimaginative, but it just may be the best way to get the sleep you need in this 24/7 age. Here are some simple tips for making the sleep of your dreams a nightly reality:

SLEEP TIPS FOR TEENAGERS

1. **Avoid Caffeine, Nicotine, and Other Chemicals that Interfere with Sleep**

- ✓ Caffeinated products decrease a person's quality of sleep.
- ✓ As any coffee lover knows, caffeine is a stimulant that can keep you awake. So avoid caffeine (found in coffee, tea, chocolate, cola, and some pain relievers) for four to six hours before bedtime. Similarly, smokers should refrain from using tobacco products too close to bedtime.

2. **Turn Your Bedroom into a Sleep-Inducing Environment**

- ✓ A quiet, dark, and cool environment can help promote sound slumber. Why do you think bats congregate in caves for their daytime sleep? To achieve such an environment, lower the volume of outside noise with earplugs or a "white noise" appliance. Use heavy curtains, blackout shades, or an eye mask to block light. Keep the temperature comfortably cool—between 60 and 75°F—and the room well ventilated. And make sure your bedroom is equipped with a comfortable mattress and pillows (remember that most mattresses wear out after ten years).

Also, if a pet regularly wakes you during the night, you may want to consider keeping it out of your bedroom.

It may help to limit your bedroom activities to sleep only. Keeping computers, TVs, and work materials out of the room will strengthen the mental association between your bedroom and sleep.

3. **Establish a Soothing Pre-Sleep Routine**

- ✓ Light reading before bed is a good way to prepare yourself for sleep.
- ✓ Ease the transition from wake time to sleep time with a period of relaxing activities an hour or so before bed. Take a bath (the rise then fall in body temperature promotes drowsiness), read a book, watch television, or practice relaxation exercises.
- ✓ Avoid stressful, stimulating activities (i.e. doing work, discussing emotional issues). Physically and psychologically stressful activities can cause the body to secrete the stress hormone cortisol, which is associated with increased alertness. If you tend to take your problems to bed, try writing them down—and then putting them aside.

4. **Go to Sleep When You're Truly Tired**

- ✓ Struggling to fall asleep just leads to frustration. If you're not asleep after 20 minutes, get out of bed, go to another room, and do something relaxing, like reading or listening to music until you are tired enough to sleep.

5. **Don't Be a Nighttime Clock-Watcher**

- ✓ Staring at a clock in your bedroom, either when you are trying to fall asleep or when you wake in the middle of the night, can actually increase stress, making it harder to fall asleep. Turn your clock's face away from you. If you wake up in the middle of the night and can't get back to sleep in about 20 minutes, get up and engage in a quiet, restful activity such as reading or listening to music. And keep the lights dim; bright light can stimulate your internal clock. When your eyelids are drooping and you are ready to sleep, return to bed.

6. Use Light to Your Advantage

- ✓ Natural light keeps your internal clock on a healthy sleep-wake cycle. Let in the light first thing in the morning and get outside for a sun break during the day.

7. Keep Your Internal Clock Set with a Consistent Sleep Schedule

- ✓ Having a regular sleep schedule helps to ensure better quality and consistent sleep.
- ✓ Going to bed and waking up at the same time each day sets the body's "internal clock" to expect sleep at a certain time night after night. Try to stick as closely as possible to your routine on weekends to avoid a Monday morning sleep hangover. Waking up at the same time each day is the very best way to set your clock, and even if you did not sleep well the night before, the extra sleep drive will help you consolidate sleep the following night.

8. Nap Early—Or Not at All

- ✓ Many people make naps a regular part of their day. However, for those who find falling asleep or staying asleep through the night problematic, afternoon napping may be one of the culprits. This is because late-day naps decrease sleep drive. If you must nap, it's better to keep it short and before 5 p.m.

9. Lighten Up on Evening Meals

- ✓ Eating a pepperoni pizza at 10 p.m. may be a recipe for insomnia. Finish dinner several hours before bedtime and avoid foods that cause indigestion. If you get hungry at night, snack on foods that (in your experience) won't disturb your sleep, perhaps dairy foods and carbohydrates.

10. Balance Fluid Intake

- ✓ Drink enough fluid at night to keep from waking up thirsty—but not so much and so close to bedtime that you will be awakened by the need for a trip to the bathroom.

11. Exercise Early

- ✓ Exercise helps promote restful sleep if it is done several hours before you go to bed.
- ✓ Exercise can help you fall asleep faster and sleep more soundly—as long as it's done at the right time. Exercise stimulates the body to secrete the stress hormone cortisol, which helps activate the alerting mechanism in the brain. This is fine, unless you're trying to fall asleep. Try to finish exercising at least three hours before bed or work out earlier in the day.

12. Follow Through

- ✓ Some of these tips will be easier to include in your daily and nightly routine than others. However, if you stick with them, your chances of achieving restful sleep will improve. That said not all sleep problems are so easily treated and could signify the presence of a sleep disorder such as apnea, restless leg syndrome, narcolepsy, or another clinical sleep problem. If your sleep difficulties don't improve through good sleep hygiene, you may want to consult your physician or a sleep specialist.



Suggested PA Announcements

Monday, May 6, 2019



Today we are launching Mental Health Awareness Week. Each day this week a strategy will be read on the announcements to help improve our mental health. Today's strategy is: Mindfulness.

"Mindfulness is a way of being and thinking. When we are mindful, we focus our attention on what is happening in our body, our mind and in our environment in the moment. With mindfulness, we live in the present, focus on what is happening right now" (Mindfulness Ambassador Council Guidebook TCDSB).

Today, think about being present in the moment and being aware of your breathing. Being mindful helps us physically and emotionally & improves our mental well-being.

Tuesday, May 7, 2019



The second strategy for Mental Health Awareness week is: Reaching Out.

One in 5 people experience mental illness. We all have mental health. Learning how to build mental health will help us to build our overall health. TCDSB has many supports and resources available. In partnership with families, the community, and our Catholic education system we are committed to supporting all our students. Relationships and belonging are important to our health. Did you know that at school you can get support from your teacher, principal, vice principal, guidance counsellor and CYW? As well, additional supports, such as our school's social worker and psychology staff are available. There are many caring adults in our schools and community ready to help.

Wednesday, May 8, 2019



Today is our third day of Mental Health Awareness week. Our strategy for today is: Prayer.

"God is a source of comfort, strength and love for us. Through prayer we enter into a deeper relationship with God and gain a sense of attachment to Him. Many studies have shown that individuals who pray to a loving and protecting God with whom they have a meaningful relationship are less likely to experience anxiety and stress. Prayer offers emotional comfort and reduces stress." Praying helps to improve our mental well-being.

www.spiritualityhealth.com; www.psychcentral.com

www.psychologytoday.com

Thursday, May 9, 2019



Today is day four of Mental Health Awareness week. The strategy we are highlighting today is: Exercise and Healthy Eating.

There is strong relationship between eating healthy and staying active to having good mental health and well-being. According to Health Canada, children and youth require at-least 60 mins of moderate-vigorous physical activity daily. Physical activity and a balanced diet is essential to one's growth and development.

Friday, May 10, 2019



Today is our last day of Mental Health Awareness Week. Today's strategy is: Getting Enough Sleep.

Sleep plays a vital role in good health and our mental well-being. Having a proper sleep routine is essential to brain development and our emotional state.

We need sleep to keep us healthy, active and able to perform our best. When we are well rested we perform better in school. This helps our mood and we can solve problems more effectively. It is recommended that "kids ages 5-12 need an average 10-12 hours of sleep, and teens and adults require approximately 10 hours per night" (Stats Canada).

Think about how much sleep you are getting and what you can do to improve your sleep routine.

We wish you all good Mental Health! If you participated in any of the activities for Mental Health Week we hope that you had a good time!

Acknowledgements:

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