



## REMEMBER

- Mental health care starts before difficulties arise. Talk with teens about habits, skills, and perspectives that promote wellbeing everyday.
- Regular mental health "check ups" can be part of a supportive relationship with a youth creating a safety net to catch them before challenges overcome them.
- Encourage youth in treatment to stick with support services such as counselling, medication prescribed by a doctor/psychiatrist, or a support group. You can also speak hope into their situation, reminding them that many people have made it through what they are going through - they aren't the only one.
- Positive parent involvement makes a huge difference. Connect the parent to resources and support such as [mentalhealthliteracy.org](http://mentalhealthliteracy.org)
- Help young people understand that what they feel is not the determiner of what is true about their lives. Introduce them to Lamentations 3:19-23 where Jeremiah expresses his difficult negative feelings then reminds himself of what is still true about God in the middle of them.



## RECOGNIZE

- Mental health is a moveable point on a continuum. Good mental health involves thinking, acting and feeling in ways that allow someone to approach life and its challenges with strength and hope. Poor mental health means that for a space of time it is difficult to meet the demands of everyday life with clear thinking and positive feelings. Everyone lives on this continuum.
- Around 40% of high school students report experiencing poor mental health from sadness or hopelessness. Reasons vary but trauma, rising stress, brain development/hormonal changes, low resilience and social media can all play a part.
- Mental illness is different than mental health. It is a diagnosed health issue that affects thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. It causes significant distress and difficulty functioning in everyday life when left untreated.
- The most common diagnoses in teens are anxiety disorders, depression, ADD/ADHD, substance use disorder, & eating disorders. Young people aged 15 to 24 are more likely to experience mental illness than any other age group.
- It can sometimes be difficult to know if changes in a teen's behaviour are part of adolescent development or something more serious. If a teen is having difficulty coping with life and also suffers from things such as sleep difficulties, little interest in what used to bring them joy, loss of appetite, isolation, and personality shifts, it's time to consider professional support.
- Connecting youth with supportive adults and building their resilience are the most powerful forces for pushing back against poor mental health.



## RESPOND

- **Educate yourself.** Especially around anxiety, depression, and substance use disorder. Become aware of the information and help that is available.
- **Develop a net of support.** The amount of care required by mental health concerns is often too heavy for one helper to manage alone. Together is better.
- **Start the Conversation.** Young people hear a lot about mental health but may not accurately transfer the information into their life. Tell them if you are concerned about them and why. Ask what they think. Chances are, they're already feeling fearful or embarrassed about the feelings they have. Talking together frees them to do something about it.
- **Explore online information.** Looking at factual info together helps the teen to recognize that they aren't the only one. Change is possible and help is available.
- **Warn them.** Getting professional help can involve lots of waiting. Look together at options for care (i.e. counsellor, support group, mental health services from the government, medication). Suggest moving multiple directions at once because there's rarely one answer.
- **Open doors.** Look for meaningful ways for the young person to contribute in the middle of their difficulties. Helping them focus outside of themselves can build perspective and purpose and help them recognize that they are more than their difficulties.
- **Make a list together of the things they can do to offer positive support to themselves.** Help them learn ways of managing emotions by directing their thoughts to the concrete environment in front of them rather than the thoughts and feelings within them. (Research "grounding techniques" for ideas.) Strongly encourage regular sleep, exercise and healthy food. Connect them to a 24 hour crisis line that they can call when things are overwhelming.
  - Youth can access a 24-hour crisis support anywhere in Canada by texting the word "connect" to 686868.

**Remember that if the inability to manage life overtakes them, the E.R. at the hospital always has a psychiatrist on call.**



## RESOURCES

[heretohelp.bc.ca/skills](http://heretohelp.bc.ca/skills) - Toolkits and training to equip you to walk with youth through a variety of mental health challenges.

[crisistextline.ca](http://crisistextline.ca) - Info about a 24/7 crisis text line from Youth Help Phone. Teens can text CONNECT to 686868 to start a conversation with trained crisis responders.

"**Booster Buddy**" is a mental health app developed by teens and young adults. It teaches coping skills for a variety of mental health challenges, helps manage meds, and supports them on the journey. Download for free in your app store.



**MENTAL HEALTH**

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