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Introduction

Welcome to the have THAT talk Activity Guide. This guide contains activities for the following five have THAT talk videos: How to Talk about Your Mental Health; Reducing Stigma; Building Resilience; Caring for yourself, the Caregiver; and Building Social Connections. You can do the activities yourself or organize a group and do them together.

We hope the videos and activities will help you:

- Be more comfortable talking about mental health
- Learn ways to improve mental health
- Know where to get help with mental health challenges

How to use this Activity Guide

Watch one of the have THAT talk videos and then work on the suggested activities.

Overview of the have THAT talk Videos

How to Talk About Your Mental Health: Talking about mental health can be hard for some people. Learn about safe ways to talk about your own mental health or illnesses and how to support others sharing their challenges with you.

Reducing Stigma: The stigma around mental illnesses can keep people from getting the help they need and keep people from supporting each other through difficult times. Everyone can help to reduce stigma in our community. Get some ideas about how we can all help decrease stigma.

Building Resilience: Being resilient is good for our mental health because it helps us recover and work through challenges in a positive way. You can learn resilience skills at any time. Check out ways to build your resilience or help others build their resilience.

Caring for Yourself, the Caregiver: Taking care of someone with a mental illness can be rewarding and challenging. It is important to take care of yourself FIRST so you can take care of others. Find ways to help you be the best caregiver you can be.

Building Social Connections: Connecting with people we care about is an important way to protect and improve our mental health. Find out ways to improve your connections or make new ones.
Tips for working with a group

Safety: Remind participants that there are professionals who they can talk to about their mental health or mental illnesses. Give them information about the Walk-in Counseling clinics, the Distress Line (613-722-6914) and give each participant a copy of the Mental Health and Substance Use Resources list found at www.haveTHATtalk.ca.

Explain to the group that there are things you can’t keep private:

- If they are hurting themselves;
- If they intend to hurt themselves;
- If someone is hurting them; or,
- If they intend to hurt someone else.

If any of these things come up, talk to the participant and decide if you should call 911, the local distress line, their health care professional or their family.

Consider taking safeTALK or ASIST training so you are prepared to help someone who may be having thoughts of suicide.

Questions: Some questions might come up that you do not have the answers for. Write the questions down and tell the participant you will try to find an answer by visiting the resources provided and get back to them.

Group Rules: Group rules can help participants feel more comfortable in the group. Ask participants if they have ideas for other ground rules.

Here are some ideas:

- Respect each other.
- Try not to interrupt when another person is talking.
- Any personal things we share are private. Do not share these things with other people.

Remember: Take care of your own Mental Health
Talking about mental health can be hard for anyone. It is important to think about your own well-being if you are doing these activities. Think of ways you can take care of yourself that will help you stay healthy and keep balance in your life.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Ottawa Public Health Information Centre at:

613-580-6744
TTY: 613-580-9656
Toll free: 1-866-426-8885

Monday to Friday from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm (closed on statutory holidays).
Did you know that 42% of Canadians were not sure if they would socialize with a friend who has a mental illness? We also know that the sooner someone gets help, the better their outcome.
How to Talk About Your Mental Health

Why talk about your mental health?
Did you know that 42% of Canadians were not sure if they would socialize with a friend who has a mental illness?¹ We know that the sooner someone gets help, the better their outcome. If someone can talk or get support to talk about their mental health, the sooner they can start getting better.

How to make it easier to talk about your mental health.
You might start by talking to a person with whom you are close, trust and are comfortable sharing your thoughts. In some communities and families, mental illnesses are not talked about - this may make it even harder to talk about how you are feeling. In that case, you can speak to a health care professional, go to a walk-in counseling clinic or call a help line.

Remember: There are some good support groups and blogs online, but not all people will be kind if you post your feelings on social media. Please be aware of this and only post online when you are ready and have good social supports.

How to help someone who wants to talk about their mental health.
If someone shares their mental health concerns with you, it’s important for you to listen, be supportive and encourage them to get help. You don’t have to know all the answers and it is not your role to fix everything. Your role is to help the person get the help they need.

Additional Resources
Resources are hyperlinked. If printing this activity guide, please review resources online.

Websites
English:
- Bell Let’s Talk
- Kids Help Phone
- Talking About Mental Illness – A Guide for Developing an Awareness Program for Youth

French:
- Bell Cause pour la cause
- Jeunesse j’écoute
- Parlons de la maladie mentale - Guide d’élaboration d’un programme de sensibilisation à l’intention des jeunes

Activity 1: Getting Started

Goal
- To learn how to talk to someone about your mental health.
- To learn what to do if someone shares their mental health challenges with you.

Messages
- When talking about your own mental health, you don’t need to say everything at once. You can ask the person if you can talk to them again.
- Some people may not respond in the way you were expecting. They may not know what to say or how to be the most supportive. You can try talking to them at another time.
- You can ALWAYS talk to a health care professional, a helpline or go to a mental health walk-in counselling clinic to talk to someone.

Time
- 20-30 minutes (depending on the size of the group)

Supplies
- Video: How to Talk About Your Mental Health
- Flip chart paper and markers

Facilitator Steps
1. Watch the video: How to Talk About Your Mental Health
2. In a large or small group, ask the participants:
   a. “How could you tell that Juan was stressed and worried?”
   b. “Why do you think Juan talked to Marco?”
   c. “How could Marco help Juan feel comfortable to talk about his mental health?”
   d. What else does the group notice?

Possible Participants’ Answers
a. Not sleeping well, acting different, not eating or eating more, acting not like himself
b. Juan trusts Marco.
   • Marco has shared things with Juan in the past.
   • They have known each other for a while.
   • Juan feels like Marco has been there for Juan in the past.
c. Marco can:
   • Listen
   • Be respectful
   • Not judge
   • Offer to find help or go with Juan to get help.
d. Marco offers to help. He does not give a list of “answers”.

For more resources: haveTHATtalk.ca
Everybody needs help sometimes and nobody has all the answers. Sometimes we can help others by being supportive and listening. Other times, we can help by connecting them to people with more training skills.
Activity 2: Knowing Your Community Resources

Goal
• To learn about mental health resources and services in Ottawa.

Messages
• It is important to know about mental health resources in Ottawa so you or someone you know can get help when needed.

Time
• 15-20 minutes (depending on the size of the group)

Supplies
• Video: How to Talk About Your Mental Health
• One Mental Health and Substance Use Resource List found at haveTHATtalk.ca - printout for each participant
• Flip chart paper and markers

Facilitator Steps
1. Watch the video: How to Talk About Your Mental Health
2. Divide the participants into groups of 2-3.
3. Hand each participant the Mental Health and Substance Use Resource List
4. Write the following scenarios on flip chart paper. One paper for each scenario (You can also create your own scenario using ideas from the group).

Scenarios
a. Your sister is concerned about her child’s mental health.
b. Your colleague at work got laid off.
c. Your friend has stopped going to class and is having a hard time getting out of bed in the morning.
d. Your father recently lost his partner.

5. Assign one scenario to each group.
6. Ask participants to identify resources that would be helpful in their scenario.
7. Ask participants to share their answers and add to the flip chart papers.
8. Add any other resources that did not come up in the discussion.

Possible Participants’ Answers
• See community resources listed on haveTHATtalk.ca
• Other possibilities include family and friends, teachers and coaches, spiritual leaders and health care professionals
There is help available for everyone.
Activity 3: Taking Action

Goal

• To identify support people and strategies that can help you when going through challenges

Messages

• We can all learn ways to help ourselves through challenges.
• There are many community mental health resources in Ottawa.
• Get to know where you and others can find help.

Time

• 10-15 minutes (depending on the size of the group)

Supplies

• Video: How to Talk About Your Mental Health
• One “Newfoundland Dog” activity sheet for each participant. (page 13)

Facilitator Steps

1. Watch the video: How to Talk About Your Mental Health
2. Say to participants: “Newfoundland dogs are often used to rescue people struggling in the water. At some point in our lives, we’ll need help from others”.
4. Say to participants “When you are struggling, there are things you can do, and people you can turn to, to help you feel better.” Ask participants to think about:
   • things they can do to deal with their struggles and feel better
   • people in their lives who can help them
5. Ask participants to fill in the activity sheet.

Possible Participants’ Answers

Things you can do for yourself:
Positive self-talk, talking to others, and positive coping skills like being active, getting enough sleep, making healthy food choices and relaxation.

People who can help:
Family, friends from school, health care professionals, club leaders and religious leaders. Support from community resources and organizations.

Remind participants about the Mental Health and Substance Use Resource List found at haveTHATtalk.ca


For more resources: haveTHATtalk.ca
It’s good to know who to reach out to when you need help. The sooner you get help, the sooner you will feel better.
Newfoundland Dog

Stigma is a set of negative beliefs and prejudices about a group of people, as well as negative behaviors towards groups of people.
Reducing Stigma

What is stigma?
Stigma is a set of negative beliefs and prejudices about a group of people, as well as negative behaviors towards groups of people. Many people face stigma because of their race, religion, gender, sexuality, economic situation and a variety of other things.

How does stigma affect people?
People living with mental illnesses often face stigma. This can occur when people do not understand mental illnesses and as a result treat people living with mental illnesses as outcasts or may even think that they are dangerous. This type of stigma can make people with mental illnesses feel ashamed, hopeless, stressed or that they are to blame for their illnesses. This makes it hard for people to reach out for help or accept help.

It’s important to remember that mental illnesses are like other health conditions. They need proper treatment and support. The sooner someone gets help, the better the outcome will be.

How can we help reduce stigma?
You can think about your own beliefs. Do you have stereotypes and prejudices about mental illnesses? Do you judge people with mental illnesses?

You can also think about the words you use in everyday conversations. Words like “crazy” or “psycho” can hurt people with mental illnesses and make them feel afraid or hopeless.

As well, you can learn more about mental health, mental illness and substance use from trusted sources like the Mind Your Mind, Canadian Mental Health Association, the Mental Health Commission of Canada, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and Bell Let’s Talk. This will help you understand more about what people living with mental health challenges and illnesses feel and give you information on how to support them.

Additional Resources
Resources are hyperlinked. If printing activity the guide, please review resources online.

Websites

English:
- Cross-cultural Mental Health and Substance Use
- Fighting the Stigma Surrounding Mental Illness
- Framework to Help Eliminate Stigma
- Myths about Mental Illness
- YouthNet

French:
- Cadre pour aider à éliminer la stigmatization
- Combattre les préjugés sur la maladie mentale
- La tête haute
- Les mythes au sujet des maladies mentales
- Réseau Ado

Videos

English:
- Promoting Mental Health Finding a Shared Language

French:
- Promouvoir la santé mentale : adopter un langage commun

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**Activity 1: How Does Stigma Affect Us All?**

**Goal**
- To understand stigma and how it affects us.

**Messages**
- Stigma is set of negative beliefs or prejudice about someone who we think is different than us. Many people face stigma because of their race, religion, sexuality, economic situation and a variety of other things.
- Stigma prevents people from reaching out and getting help.
- People who live with mental illnesses deal with stigma and may be treated differently because of negative attitudes in our society.

**Time**
- 15-20 minutes (depending on the size of the group)

**Supplies**
- Video: Reducing Stigma
- Flip chart, paper and markers

**Facilitator Steps**
1. Watch the video: Reducing Stigma
2. Ask participants to share what they saw, felt and heard.
3. Suggested questions to stimulate discussion:
   a. What is stigma?
   b. Have you experienced a time in your life when you felt different? How did it feel?
   c. What are ways that we can reduce stigma?
4. Write responses on flip charts.

**Possible Participants’ Answers**
2) Stressed and overwhelmed. Worried about what his friends will think. Does not want to be seen at the clinic.

3 a) **Stigma is:** negative attitudes, being mean to people, treating other people poorly, hurting other people.

3 b) **Feelings related to stigma could be:** isolated, overwhelmed, afraid for safety, not able to do usual activities, fear of judgement, not knowing where to get help.

3 c) **Ways to reduce stigma:** think about your biases and judgements, think about what you see and hear in the media, don’t use hurtful words, learn about mental illness and connect with people who live with mental illness, talk to others about stigma.
Words matter! Negative words like “psycho” or “crazy” hurt people with mental illness and can make them feel hopeless or ashamed.
Activity 2: Discoveries

Goal
• Learn ways to reduce stigma.
• Learn how to support people living with mental illnesses.

Messages
• Learn more about mental health, mental illnesses and substance use from a trusted source.
• Offer support to people with mental illnesses. Even small things like having a coffee together can make a big difference.
• Mental illnesses are like any health condition. They need proper treatment and support. The sooner someone gets help, the better the outcome.

Time
• 15-20 minutes (depending on the size of the group)

Supplies
• Video: Reducing Stigma
• Flip chart, paper and markers
• One “Discoveries” activity sheet for each participant

Facilitator Steps
1. Watch the video: Reducing Stigma
2. Distribute the “Discoveries” activity sheet.
3. Ask participants to complete each statement.
4. After 5-10 minutes, ask participants to share their responses.
5. Write other responses on the flip chart paper
6. Encourage other participants to write down answers that they like.

Possible Participants’ Answers
I discovered that: stigma still exists, stigma is a big problem, stigma makes people feel hopeless, stigma stops people from getting help
I noticed that: stigma can be stopped, that small things can help, that I CAN do something to reduce stigma, that everyone can help with or without a mental illness
Ways to reduce stigma: think about your biases and judgements, think about what you see and hear in the media, don’t use hurtful words, learn about mental illness and connect with people who live with mental illness, talk to others about stigma.

Small steps can have a big impact. What is one thing you can do to help reduce stigma around mental illnesses?

For more resources: haveTHATtalk.ca
What Did You Discover Today?

Thinking about stigma...

I discovered that: __________________________________________

I noticed that: __________________________________________

I plan to: __________________________________________

I will tell: __________________________________________

Date: __________________________________________

Signature (optional): __________________________________________
Activity 3: Agree or Disagree?³

Goal
• To correct common myths about mental illnesses.

Messages
• Myths about people living with mental illnesses add to stigma.
• Some people think that people living with mental illnesses are weak or dangerous.
• Some people say the stigma around mental illnesses is worse than the illness.

Time
• 15-20 minutes (depending on the size of the group)

Supplies
• Video: Reducing Stigma
• “AGREE” and “DISAGREE” signs posted at opposite sides of the room.

Facilitator Steps
1. Watch the video: Reducing Stigma
2. Read out the first statement.
3. Ask participants to walk to the agree or disagree signs according to their beliefs.
4. Discuss each statement as a group prior to proceeding to the next statement. Please reference Possible Participant Answers as a discussion guide.

Agree or Disagree Statements
a. People with mental illnesses are violent and dangerous.
b. People with mental illnesses are poor and/or less intelligent.
c. Mental illnesses are caused by a personal weakness.
d. Mental illnesses are a single, rare disorder.
e. People with mental illnesses are usually homeless.

Discussion Guide
a. As a group, mentally ill people are no more violent than any other group. In fact, they are far more likely to be the victims of violence than to be violent themselves.
b. Many studies show that most mentally ill people have average or above-average intelligence.⁴ Mental illness, like physical illness, can affect anyone regardless of intelligence, social class or income level.
c. A mental illness is not a character flaw. It is an illness, and it has nothing to do with being weak or lacking will-power. Although people with mental illness can play a big part in their own recovery, they did not choose to become ill, and they are not lazy because they cannot just ‘snap out of it.’
d. Mental illness is not a single disease but a broad classification for many disorders including: anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, personality disorders, eating disorders and organic brain disorders.
e. While many homeless people have mental health or substance use issues, not all people with mental illnesses are homeless. Many people living with mental illness have jobs, go to school, and have families.

Everyone has a right to participate fully in his or her community, including people living with mental illness.
Everyone experiences change or stress as part of daily living. Resilience is the **ability to work through** life’s difficulties, **thrive** and reach our **full potential**.
Building Resilience

What is Resilience?
Everyone experiences stress or challenges as part of life. Resilience is being able to work through life’s difficulties, thrive and reach your full potential. It is about accepting that life is not always perfect but finding ways to deal with and work through your challenges and recover afterwards.

How can you build resilience?
Building resilience is a process where you develop skills to cope with and work through challenges and recover from the challenges in a positive way afterward. Building resilience is something that you can learn at any time in your life. It is never too early or too late to learn and practice being resilient.

Some resilience skills are:
- being aware of your feelings and being able to control them appropriately
- being able to think of solutions to challenges you have
- thinking positively
- knowing what you are good at
- knowing when and how to get support from others

Resilience will not make life perfect, but it will give you the skills to work through challenges and recover positively afterwards.

Additional Resources
Resources are hyperlinked. If printing activity guide, please review resources online.

Websites
English:
- The Road to Resilience
- Reaching In, Reaching Out
- Resilience (birth to age 6)
- Resilience in Children
- How to Deal with Stress
- Emotional Intelligence

French:
- La résilience (de la naissance à six ans)
- La résilience chez les jeunes enfants
- Comment gérer le stress?
- La résilience ou l’art de rebondir!
- Intelligence émotionnelle

Videos
English:
- Mindfulness: Youth Voices
- The Single Most Important Thing You Can Do for Your Stress

French:
- Mindfulness: Youth Voices (French subtitles)
- La gestion du stress

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For more resources: haveTHATtalk.ca
Activity 1: Reacting to Problems

Goal
- To understand how negative and positive thoughts affect you (SELF-TALK).
- To understand how positive thoughts help you become more resilient.
- To understand that thoughts, feeling and actions are interconnected.

Messages
- There are many different ways of looking at the same situation
- Thoughts, feelings and actions are interconnected.
- Changing how we think can help us to overcome challenges.

Time
- 15-20 minutes (depending on the size of the group)

Supplies
- Video: Building Resilience
- One Reacting to Problems: Self-Talk Can Change a Lot worksheet for each person (page 28).
- Poster or overhead projection of Change One and You Can Change Them All sheet.
- Flip chart paper and markers

Facilitator Steps
1. Watch the video: Building Resilience
2. Divide into groups of 2-4 participants.
3. Give participants the Reacting to Situations worksheet.
4. Explain to the participants “Self-talk is the way we think about situations. These thoughts can be positive (e.g. “life isn’t perfect, but some things I can change”) or negative They are doing it on purpose). Our thoughts, feelings and actions can all affect each other. For example, our thoughts affect our feelings which affect our actions. Our actions can also change our feelings and thoughts. If we can change the way we think about a situation, we may feel and act differently
5. Give each group a sample scenario.
6. Using the scenarios, ask groups to complete the worksheet. Ensuring that they give examples of both positive and negative thoughts feelings and actions.
7. Ask each group to share their ideas with the larger group for discussion.

Potential Scenarios
- Due to work priorities, you need to work later tonight.
- You receive a call from your child’s teacher about an incident at school.
- On social media, your friends’ posts document the great time they’re having and you’re doing chores.
- You didn’t get a promotion at work again.
- You need to be in three places at once.

Adapted from: CHEO and the Child and Youth Network of Eastern Ontario. (2016) Healthy Transitions: Promoting Resilience and Mental Health in Young Adolescence
How you **think** can change how you **feel** and **act**. Positive self-talk is a skill you can practice.
Sample Worksheet Responses

Reacting to Problems: Self-Talk Can Change a Lot

Negative Self Talk Situation:

Scenario: You walk by a group of people and everyone suddenly stops talking.

**Thoughts**
- They were talking about me
- They are hiding something
- There must be something wrong with me

**Feelings**
- Angry
- Rejected
- Self-conscious, alone insecure

**Actions**
- Isolate self
- Ignore the people when you see them

Positive Self Talk Situation:

**Thoughts**
- They like my style
- Who cares? It doesn’t matter what they think.

**Feelings**
- Confident
- Unconcerned
- Calm

**Actions**
- Doesn’t bother you
- Continue your day
- Stop and ask them how they are

Activity 2: How Resilient Am I?\(^7\)

Goal
- To understand more about how resilient you are.

Messages
- Resilience is a set of skills we can learn anytime.
- You can increase your resilience. This will help you cope with challenges and recover better afterwards.

Time
- 15 minutes (depending on the size of the group)

Supplies
- Video: Building Resilience
- One “How Resilient Am I” quiz for each participant (page 30)

Facilitator Steps
1. Watch the video: Building Resilience
2. Give each participant a copy of the “How Resilient Am I” quiz (page 30).
3. Ask each participant to do the quiz and add up their score.
4. Read the scoring section under the quiz.
5. Ask if anyone wants to share their thoughts about the quiz. (Did anything surprise you?)

Possible Participants’ Answers
- Some participants will be surprised by how resilient they are. Other participants will be surprised that they are not as resilient as they thought.
- Reassure participants that this is only one quiz. It gives an indication of their resilience and helps them to start thinking about learning more resilience skills or continuing to practice already existing skills.
- If they are concerned, it is a good idea to promote in a respectful way that they talk to a health care professional.

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\(^7\) Adapted from: Ottawa Public Health; Canadian Mental Health Association; Canadian Public Health Association; Mental Illness Caregivers Association; Military Family Services. (2016). Mental Health Caregiver Guide: A guide for caregivers of persons living with mental illness or experiencing mental health challenges. ON: Ottawa Public Health.
How Resilient Am I?

Check either “AGREE” or “DISAGREE” to each statement and add up the number of checks you have for “AGREE” and “DISAGREE”. Do not feel frustrated if you have many “DISAGREE” boxes.

Build on your strengths and come back to the checklist in a few weeks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESILIENCE</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When life gets tough, I reach out to friends and family.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that I can learn from difficult times.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I am under stress, I will try to lead a normal life.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When life gets busy or stressful, I still take time for myself.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a great support network.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After a stressful event, I can let go and move forward.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I cope well with change.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I try to live in the moment and appreciate the good things in life.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTALS**

**Scoring**

**AGREE**
If you answered “AGREE” to 5 or more of the statements, your resilience is good. The higher the number of agrees, the more resilience you have and feel that even though life can have tough time, it is important to keep perspective.

**DISAGREE**
If you answered “DISAGREE” to 5 or more of the statements; your resilience may be low. The higher the number of disagrees, the less resilience you have at this time. Start working on a plan to improve your resilience. For the items you identified as “disagree”, think about ways that you can work to change this. Building your resilience is a process, and it is important to look at ways you can change the “disagrees” to “agrees” over time. It can take work and time but keep at it!
Activity 3: Make a Resilience Action Plan

Goal
• To plan ways for you to increase your resilience.

Messages
• Resilience is a set of skills you can learn and build on over time. You can start building resilience anytime.
• You can increase your resilience with practice. This will help you cope with challenges and recover positively afterwards.

Time
• 15 minutes (depending on the size of the group)

Supplies
• Video: Building Resilience
• Flip chart paper and markers
• One Resilience Action Plan for each participant (page 32)
• Pens

Facilitator Steps
1. Watch the video: Building Resilience.
2. Give one “Resilience Action Plan” to each participant (page 32).
3. Say to the participants “In the video there are ideas about building resilience. Do you remember any of them?”
4. Write answers on flip chart paper.
5. Ask participants to think of one challenge they are facing and to answer each of the questions.

Possible Participants’ Answers

What helped me in the past?
• Eating healthy, getting enough sleep and doing something that I enjoy.
• Being okay with not doing everything perfectly.
• Knowing my strengths.

What tools and support do I have in my life to help build my resilience?
• Asking friends, family or counselor for help.
• Spending time with family and friends.
• Getting help from a community support agency.

What new thing can I try to help me overcome my challenge and recover?
• Practicing deep breathing and mindfulness (found in next activity).
• Being active and listening to music.
• Thankful for the good things in my life.
• Letting my kids have challenges and supporting them as they learn to deal with their struggles.

Let participants know that the Resilience Action Plan is for them to take away and look at whenever they feel they need ideas to help with a challenge.
Resilience Action Plan

What is one challenge I am facing today?
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

How do I feel?
☐ Angry
☐ Frustrated
☐ Sad
☐ Anxious
☐ Confused
☐ Other (write down the feeling)

What can I do to help cope with my feelings?
☐ Get together with friends and family.
☐ Talk to a mental health professional.
☐ Get out and be active.
☐ Breathe deeply and meditate.
☐ Listen to music.
☐ Other (write own ideas)

What helped me cope or get through a tough time in the past?
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

What tools and support do I have in my life to help build my resilience?
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

What new thing can I try to help overcome challenges and recover?
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

I will put my plan into action on: __________________________

Adapted from: Ottawa Public Health; Canadian Mental Health Association; Canadian Public Health Association; Mental Illness Caregivers Association; Military Family Services. (2016). Mental Health Caregiver Guide: A guide for caregivers of persons living with mental illness or experiencing mental health challenges. ON: Ottawa Public Health.

Activity 4: Add To Your Resilience

Goal
- To learn two practical ways to increase your resilience: “Deep Breathing” and “Mindfulness”.

Messages
- Deep breathing and mindfulness help ease stress.⁸
- These skills can help you become more resilient.

Time
- 10-20 minutes for deep breathing and mindfulness exercise

Supplies
- Video: Building Resilience
- “Take Time to Breathe Deeply” script (below)

Facilitator Steps
1. Watch the video: Building Resilience.
2. Make the room as comfortable as possible (e.g. turn down the lights or play relaxing music)
3. Read the “Take Time to Breathe” script (below).
4. Ask participants how the activity made them feel.

Possible Participants’ Answers
- Some participants might find these activities difficult. Remind participants that it takes time and practice to learn new skills.
- Feelings after the activity participants may feel relaxed, calm, quiet, and less stressed. Other participants may not feel any different and some may feel more stressed because they couldn’t stop their thoughts from wandering. This is normal and improves with practice.

“Take Time to Breathe Deeply” Script
- Sit comfortably, with your knees bent and your shoulders, head and neck relaxed.
- Place one hand on your upper chest and the other just below your rib cage. This will allow you to feel your diaphragm move as you breathe.
- Inhale through your nose. The hand below your rib cage should move out. The hand on your chest should stay as still as possible.
- Tighten your stomach muscles, letting them fall inward as you exhale through your mouth. The hand on your upper chest should stay as still as possible.
- Practice deep breathing for about 15-30 seconds. Explain that deep breathing can be used any time they need a short break. This is a good way to take a “time out” from a situation and relax.


⁸ Madhav Goyal, MD, MPH; Sonal Singh, MD, MPH; Erica M. S. Sibinga, MD, MHS; Neda F. Gould, PhD; Anastasia Rowland-Seymour, MD; Ritu Sharma, BSc; Zackary Berger, MD, PhD; Dana Sleicher, MS, MPH; David D. Maron, MHS; Hasan M. Shihab, MBChB, MPH; Padmini D. Ranasinghe, MD, MPH; Shauna Linn, BA; Shonali Saha, MD; Eric B. Bass, MD, MPH; Jennifer A. (2014) MJAMA Intern Med. 174(3):357-368. doi:10.1001/jamainternmed.2013.13018 Published online January 6, 2014. Edition. Programs for Psychological Stress and Well-being: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis.
“Mindfulness” means bringing your thoughts to **what you** are doing when you are doing it. It focuses your mind on the things you are feeling and thinking **right now**. Mindfulness helps build resilience and reduces stress.
Taking care of yourself, the caregiver

The term “caregiver” refers to all the people in a person’s immediate circle of care, including family members and other significant people who provide unpaid support to a person in need.
Taking Care of Yourself the Caregiver

What is a Caregiver?
The term “caregiver” refers to all the people involved in a person’s immediate circle of care, including family members and other significant people who provide unpaid support to a person in need. Over half a million Canadians are caregivers to people living with mental health challenges or illnesses. Over half (55%) of these caregivers feel worried or anxious because of their responsibilities. Other things people feel when caring for someone include:

- tired (51%)
- short-tempered or irritable (36%)
- overwhelmed (35%)
- disturbed sleep (34%)\(^9\)

More Information
How to Take Care of Yourself, the Caregiver
Caregivers play a significant role in supporting the health and recovery process for people living with mental health challenges or illnesses and it is important that they take care of themselves FIRST so they can continue being a healthy caregiver.

Taking time for your own self-care needs to be planned into each day. Caregivers need many resources to help them stay well and to support them to have a rewarding relationship with the individual for whom they provide care.

Additional Resources
Resources are hyperlinked. If printing the activity guide, please review resources online.

Websites
English:


French only:

Guide des proches aidants en santé mentale
Guide de ressources : Grande région d’Ottawa

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Activity 1: All Mixed-Up

Goal

- Think about your feelings as a caregiver.

Messages

- Your caregiving experience is unique to your own situation.
- Caring for someone with mental illnesses or experiencing mental health challenges is rewarding and difficult.
- It is natural to have positive and negative feelings as a caregiver.
- Let yourself feel your emotions and try not to judge them. Think about how these feelings affect your actions and affect how you care for your loved one.

Time

- 15 minutes (depending on the size of the group)

Supplies

- Video: Caring for You, the Caregiver
- Flip chart paper, markers and pens

Facilitator Steps

2. Say to the participants "In the video, Samira feels conflicted between caring for her sister Aiyana and seeing her friends and travelling".
3. Ask participants when they have felt conflicted.
4. Break into small groups and provide each group with flip chart paper and markers.
5. Each flip chart paper should have title “negative feelings” and “positive feelings” at the top.
6. Ask participant to brainstorm “positive feelings” and “negative feelings” they may have as a caregiver. Write them on the flip chart.
7. Ask each group to share their notes and why they categorized each feeling as positive or negative.

Possible Participants’ Answers

Negative Feelings:
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Guilt
- Frustration, anger and resentment
- Hurt
- Lonely
- Grief
- Sadness

Positive Feelings:
- Personal growth
- More appreciation for health
- Stronger relationship with the person you are caring for
- Feel good about doing something to help
- Learning new skills

Facilitator tip: It is important to talk with the group about how we sometimes judge our feelings as positive or negative. In fact, “How you feel is how you feel”. It is important to acknowledge your feelings and not judge them. You need to understand your feelings, how they affect your actions and can affect how you care for your loved one.

Facilitator can refer to the Mental Health and Substance Use list found at haveTHATtalk.ca.

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11 Activities 1 to 4 are adapted from: Ottawa Public Health; Canadian Mental Health Association; Canadian Public Health Association; Mental Illness Caregivers Association; Military Family Services. (2016). Mental Health Caregiver Guide: A guide for caregivers of persons living with mental illness or experiencing mental health challenges. ON: Ottawa Public Health
It is important to **reach out** and **talk** to someone you **trust**, to a health professional or counselor about your mental health.
Activity 2: Caregiver Matter—Agree or Disagree

Goal
- To reflect on your personal beliefs that influence how you care for others and yourself

Messages
- You have to take care of yourself FIRST so that you can take care of others.
- Reach out to family, friends or your community for support.
- Talk to someone your trust, your health professional or counselor about your mental health.

Time
- 15 minutes (depending on the size of the group)

Supplies
- Video: Caring for You, the Caregiver
- List of statements below
- Wall signs for “AGREE” and “DISAGREE”
- Tape

Facilitator Steps
2. Tape an “AGREE” sign on one side of the room and a “DISAGREE” sign on the other side.
3. Read the statements below and ask the participants to stand under the sign that shows how they feel. There are no right or wrong answer and they may want to stand between the signs.
   a. I feel selfish if I sleep in or do something for myself.
   b. I am overworked and need time off but I can’t take time off.
   c. I don’t want to bother other people and ask for help. They have their own problems and lives.
   d. The person I care for is my priority.
4. Ask if anyone would like to share why they decided to stand where they are.

Possible Participants’ Answers
Notice where participants are standing:
- Being a caregiver can be both rewarding and difficult.
- Our beliefs and feelings about being a caregiver are not wrong, but they can stop us from taking care of ourselves and reaching out for help.
- We need to be aware of our beliefs and feelings and how they affect our mental health.
- Sometimes our feelings stop us from asking for help or accepting help.
Keep in mind that some participants might have feelings that are **not positive or negative** (they may be in the middle). This activity helps them reflect and explore their feelings. There are no right or wrong answers.
Activity 3: Finding Balance

Goal
• To identify ways to take care of yourself and find balance in your life

Messages
• It is important to set limits, so you have time to take care of yourself.
• There are times when you might have to say “no”. That is okay.
• Set realistic goals for yourself and the person you care for.
• Plan to do something for yourself each day that you enjoy.

Time
• 15-20 minutes (depending on the size of the group)

Supplies
• Video: Caring for You, the Caregiver.
• 2 wall signs – “set limits” and “self-care ideas”
• Flip chart paper and markers, Post-it notes and pens
• One copy of Caregiver Bill of Rights for each participant (page 43).

Facilitator Steps
2. Say to the participants “Samira is trying to find balance in her life between caring for her sister, her responsibilities at work and her personal life”.
3. Ask participants to think about the strategies in the video that helped or could help Samira manage her role as a caregiver.
4. Write answers on the flip chart paper.
5. Tape “set limits” and “self-care ideas” signs on the wall.
6. Give each participant post-it notes and a pen.
7. Ask each participant to write ideas about setting limits that have helped them and ideas of ways to take care of themselves.
8. Ask participant to post their ideas under either the “set limits” or the “self-care ideas” wall signs.
9. Ask participants to share their ideas with the larger group.

Possible Participants’ Answers
Samira could:
• Talk to her boss about flexible hours.
• Talk to a counselor.
• Join a support group.
• Plan how many hours a week she needs to balance her life, such as time to take care of herself and her sister.
• Ask her family and friends for help.
• Ask for support from community service agencies.
• Plan ahead of time for unexpected events and emergencies with her sister.
Set Limits:
• Talk honestly to the person you care for about how much time you have for them.
• Explain the other things in your life that take your time...dog, work, groceries.
• Ask the person you care for if they have ideas about other ways to save time or get support.

Self-Care:
• Go for coffee with friend
• Take a bubble bath
• Meditate in the morning before work
• Go for a walk with partner
• Call a friend
• Read
• Watch a comedy show/movie

It is important to **plan** time so you can **take care** of your own mental and physical health.
Caregiver’s Bill of Rights

I have the right to:

1. Connect with myself and my own unique experience as a caregiver. I acknowledge and confront my thoughts and behaviours when I can, but at times, I give myself permission to avoid these and do something fun and distracting.

2. Take care of myself. This is not selfish. It will give me the energy to take better care of the person I care for.

3. Get help from others even if the person I care for disagrees. I know my limits and do only what I can do.

4. Keep parts of my own life that do not include the person I care for. I have my own identity and my own life outside of caregiving.

5. Do some things just for myself, whenever I want.

6. Get angry, feel depressed, and talk about difficult feelings I experience.

7. Get consideration, affection, forgiveness, and acceptance for what I do for the person I care for and don’t let the person I care for control me by using guilt, anger or depression.

8. Take pride in what I am doing. To be proud of the courage it has taken me to meet the needs of the person I care for.

9. Make a life for myself that will help me ensure that I will continue to have a sense of purpose and happiness when the individual I care for no longer needs my help.

10. Expect and demand improvements in resources to help and support caregivers.

11. Add my own statements of rights to this list, based on my own unique situation, feelings and experiences.

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12 Adapted from: Ottawa Public Health; Canadian Mental Health Association; Canadian Public Health Association; Mental Illness Caregivers Association; Military Family Services. (2016). Mental Health Caregiver Guide: A guide for caregivers of persons living with mental illness or experiencing mental health challenges. ON: Ottawa Public Health
Activity 4: Reaching Out

Goal
• To develop a personal plan to help you identify how and where to get help

Messages
• Caregivers’ responsibilities can look different based on the needs of the person to whom you provide care.
• Learning to be a caregiver takes time. It is important to learn when to ask for help, where to get help, and to accept help when someone offers to help.

Time
• 20 to 30 minutes (depending on the size of the group)

Supplies
• Video: Caring for You, the Caregiver
• Flip chart paper and makers

Facilitator Steps
1. Watch the video: Caring for You, the Caregiver.
2. Say to participants “It is important to know your needs in order to know who can help you and how they can help you.
3. Ask participants “What comes to mind when you think of a support network?”.
4. Write on flip chart paper the 3 questions below:
   1. What do you need?
   2. Who could help you?
   3. How can they help you?
5. Give each participant a copy of the example “Creating My Support Network” and a copy of the blank version.

Possible Participants’ Answers
Ideas of a support network:
• Informal supports may be family, neighbours or friends.
• Formal supports may be doctor, social worker, counselor, community service agencies, support workers.
• Unique supports may be a specific support group, faith or spiritual group.

Facilitator tip: Go around the room to talk with each participant to answer any questions and provide ideas of resources that may provide support.

Facilitator can:
• Provide the participants with a link to the Mental Health Caregiver Guide to help them build more skills to help bring balance to their own life.
• Provide link to Resource Guide: Greater Ottawa Area and 211 to find community services
### Example of Creating my Support Network

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT HELP DO I NEED</th>
<th>WHO CAN HELP ME</th>
<th>HOW CAN THEY HELP ME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talk to someone</td>
<td>My best friend</td>
<td>Over coffee or phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help with walking the dog</td>
<td>My neighbour’s daughter</td>
<td>I will pay her $10 a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respite: (a break from my caregiving role)</td>
<td>My mother-in-law</td>
<td>She will come over one Saturday per month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning</td>
<td>My other children</td>
<td>I will make a chore chart</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Creating my Support Network

Complete this worksheet by thinking how you can strengthen your present relationships and make new connections. Answer the questions “what do you need?”, “who can help you?” and “what do you need to do to build relationships and social connections?”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT HELP DO I NEED?</th>
<th>WHO CAN HELP ME?</th>
<th>HOW CAN THEY HELP ME?</th>
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</table>
Building social connectedness

Social connections are the relationships we have with the people around us. The relationships we have at school, work, in leisure and at home affect our physical and mental health.
Building Social Connections

What are Social Connections?
Social connections are the relationships we have with the people around us. The relationships we have at school, work, in leisure and at home affect our physical and mental health. Good social connections help build our resilience, improve our physical and mental health and help us cope with the stresses of life.¹³

How to Build Stronger Connections

Prioritize
It is important to spend quality time with the people in your life who matter the most to you. Schedule or plan times when you can connect in person with these people.

Participate
Getting involved and sharing experiences makes us feel like we belong and gives us the chance to meet new people while having fun. Join a group with people who share a common interest or volunteer at a community event in your neighbourhood.

Reach out
There are times when we need extra help. When you are having a tough time, reach out for support. Try to accept help when someone offers it to you and think of ways you can help others.

Calling a friend or speaking to a trusted person can help you cope with difficulties and gives you a chance to share and learn from others. Speak to your health care professional if you need more help.

Additional Resources
Resources are hyperlinked. If printing this activity guide, please review resources online.

Websites

English:
- Be Social
- Do you have a support network? Together, we can build one
- Social Support
- Measuring Positive Mental Health in Canada: Social Support

French:
- Es-tu bien entouré? Un réseau, ça se construit!
- Être social
- Mesurer la santé mentale positive au Canada : Soutien social

Activity 1: Who Are Your Connections?

Goal
- To identify the people in your life who can support you
- To discover ways to improve the connections you have

Messages
- Not being connected affects your health as much as smoking 15 cigarettes a day and is a greater risk to you than obesity.\(^\text{14}\)
- There are times when we need a little extra help. Accept help and offer help to others. Relationships are stronger when both people help and learn from each other.
- Technology can help us reach out to friends or learn about events in our community. Use social media to plan a get-together or contact an old friend. But remember that in-person contact is the best way to create stronger connections.\(^\text{15}\)

Time
- 10-15 minutes (depending on the size of the group)

Supplies
- Video: Building Social Connections
- Flip chart paper and markers
- Print one “Make Your Connections Stronger” worksheet for each participant (page 52).

Facilitator Steps
1. Watch the video: Building Social Connections
2. Using flip chart paper, draw a stick person in the centre of the page.
3. Ask participants to name people from whom they get support at home/school/work/community.
4. Place these names around the stick person.
5. Ask participants what type of support they get from the people they identified, ex: helps with work, babysits, etc.
6. Use another color marker and add participants’ answers under the names identified.
7. Hand out one Make Your Connections Stronger worksheet for each participant.
8. Ask participants to complete the worksheet.
9. Ask if anyone wants to share some ideas about how they could support one of the important people on their list.

Possible Participants’ Answers
Who we get support from:
- Parents, children, other family relatives, friend, colleagues, support services, teacher, coach

What type of support:
- Help with homework, cleaning, cooking, driving to activities, financial support – paying for things, listening, problem solving, sounding board and someone to lean on.

Ways to strengthen/support or show appreciation for one of the support people in your life:

- Thank them
- Spend more time together
- Call/text/face time more
- Do something nice for them
- Write to them
- Tell them how you feel about them and why they are important to you

Good social connections help build our resilience, improve our physical and mental health and help us cope with the stresses of life.
Make Your Connections Stronger!

Write a list of people who support you and one type of support you get from each of them.
Example 1: Co-worker - listens to me when I am stressed.
Example 2: Neighbour helps with shoveling.

Write how you support your list of people
Example 1: Friend – I help to get the kids on the bus in the morning.
Example 2: Neighbour - I bring over vegetables from my garden.

Write how you support your list of people.
Example 1: Father – I get groceries and run errands.
Example 2: My partner – Take on more responsibilities when they are away on a business trip.

Write down one thing you can do this week to support or strengthen this relationship.
Example 1: Father – I can visit or call him this week.
Example 2: Partner – I can plan some time together.
Activity 2: Reach Out to Make Connections

Goal
• To discover ways to strengthen your existing connections or make new connections

Messages
• It can be very hard to get out of the cycle of loneliness and isolation. Barriers such as fear, lack of transportation or health issues can keep us from reaching out to others.
• The more you connect with others and take part in your communities, the easier it is for other people to reach out as well.
• The more you connect with people the better you feel mentally and physically.

Time
• 10 minutes plus time to research (if technology is available during the session and depending on the size of the group)

Supplies
• Video: Building Social Connections
• Technology, for example: Wi-Fi, computer access, smart phones, if available
• Paper and pens

Facilitator Steps
1. Watch the video: Building Social Connections
2. Say to the participants: “We are going to look for activities or volunteer opportunities you can try that will help you make more connections”.
3. Say to the participants, “Using the technology available, find an agency, volunteer opportunity or club that seems interesting to you”.
4. Ask the participants if anyone wants to share what they found (optional).

Possible Participants’ Answers
1. Person can take a course, join a team, try a fitness activity, join a special interest club, volunteer at a retirement home or community centre.
2. Where can someone start looking:
   • 211 (community organization)
   • 311 (municipal activities)
   • School
   • Place of work
   • Community Association
   • Community Center
   • Community Resource/Community Health Centre
   • Volunteer Ottawa

There are people who can help get you started including your health care professional, your local community health or resource centre, a teacher at school, an elder in your community, a neighbour you know down the street, or a local service club.