

How to Talk About Mental Health (Youth)


haveTHAT talk



How to Talk About Your Mental Health

Why talk about your mental health?

- 32.6% of youth in Ottawa required mental health support but did not seek it (for various reasons, including stigma).¹
- The sooner someone gets help, the better their outcome.

Starting the Conversation

It is important to talk to others about your mental health. You might start by talking to someone you trust and are comfortable sharing your thoughts with. 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 this case, you can speak to a health professional, school guidance counsellor, teacher, principal, coach, a walk-in counseling clinic or call a help line.

- Technology can help us reach out to friends or learn about events in our community. It can be a great tool to make connections. Social media is a good way to plan activities and stay in touch with loved ones. However, depending on the type of technology we use and how much we use it, technology can harm our relationships and our physical and mental health.
- Sharing your struggles online can sometimes be helpful, but people can say hurtful things. Know your supports are so that you can reach out for help. Trusted resources such as [MediaSmarts](#) can help you or your family stay safe.
- Knowing how to identify a [trusted adult](#) can be life-saving. A trusted adult can help you feel listened to, respects your boundaries, and can help you find support.

Helping Others

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. Your role is to help the person get support they need.

Additional Resources

English

- [E-Learning Hub \(YouthNet\)](#)
- [Kids Help Phone](#)
- [MediaSmarts](#)
- [Tips for Talking about Mental Health](#)

French

- [Astuces pour parler de la santé mentale](#)
- [Centre d'apprentissage \(Réseau Ado\)](#)
- [Habilo Médias](#)
- [Jeunesse j'écoute](#)

¹ Ottawa Public Health (OPH). Mental Health, Addictions and Substance Use Health Community Dashboard. Ottawa, ON.
Retrieved from: <https://www.ottawapublichealth.ca/en/reports-research-and-statistics/mental-health-addictions-and-substance-use-health-in-the-community.aspx>

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. It is okay to take your time and meet again at a later date to continue the conversation.
- 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 or reach out to a different resource.
- Health service providers such as family doctors, helplines and counselling services can also provide excellent support.

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.

Activity

- View the video *"How to Talk About Your Mental Health."*
- In a large or small group, ask the participants:
 1. "How could you tell that Juan was stressed and worried?"
 2. "Why do you think Juan talked to Marco?"
 3. "How could Marco help Juan feel comfortable talking about his mental health?"
 4. What else does the group notice?

Possible Answers

- Not sleeping well, acting differently, changes in eating patterns, not acting like himself.
- 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.
- Marco can:
 - Listen.
 - Be respectful.
 - Not judge.
 - Offer to find help or go with Juan to get help.
- Marco offers to help. He does not give a list of "answers".

Everybody needs help sometimes and it is always okay to ask for it. Sometimes we can help others by being supportive and listening. Other times, we can help by connecting them to people with more training and 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.”*](#)
- Print one [*“Mental Health and Substance Use Resource List”*](#) found on ottawapublichealth.ca/MentalHealthandWellness for each participant.
- Flip chart paper and markers.

Activity

- View the video: *“How to Talk About Your Mental Health.”*
- Divide participants into groups of 2-3.
- Hand each participant the [*“Mental Health and Substance Use Resource List.”*](#)
- Write the scenarios found below on flip chart paper. You may also create your own scenarios using ideas from the group.
- Assign one scenario to each group.
- Ask participants to identify resources that would be helpful in their scenario.
- Ask participants to share their answers and add them to the flip chart papers.
- Add any other resources that did not come up in the discussion.

Scenarios

1. Your parents are separating, and you are crying several times a day.
2. Your sister is being bullied and comes to you for help.
3. You are tired all the time and can't face going to class. All you want to do is spend time on your phone.
4. Your friend has suddenly stopped caring about school and extracurricular activities. You are worried.

Possible Answers

- See community resources listed on ottawapublichealth.ca/MentalHealthandWellness.
- Other possibilities include family and friends, educators and coaches, faith leaders and health care professionals.

Activity 3: Taking Action

Goal

- To identify strategies and supports that can help you when going through challenges.

Messages

- We can all learn ways to help ourselves through challenges.
- There are many community resources in Ottawa.
- Everyone needs help from others at some point in their lives. It is important to know who can help when you are struggling. It may be one person, a group or community who supports you.

Time

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

Supplies

- Video: [“How to Talk About Your Mental Health.”](#)
- One “Who are my Helping Hands?” activity sheet for each participant.

Activity

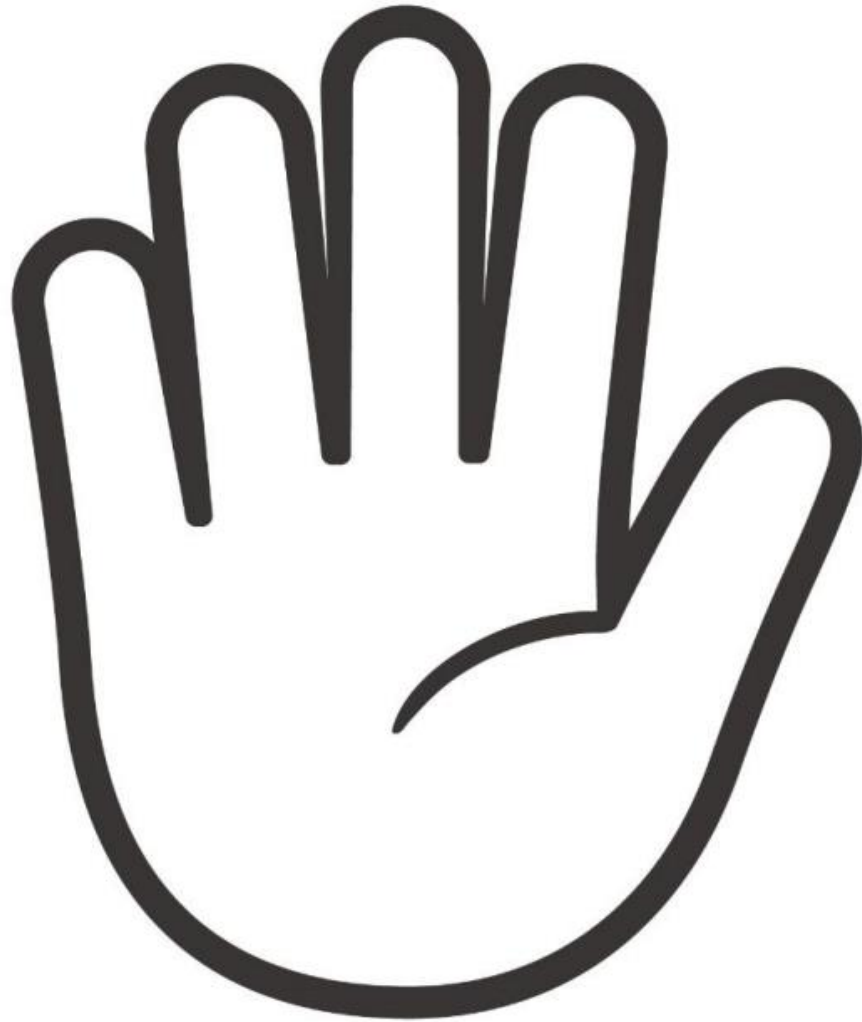
- View the video: *“How to Talk About Your Mental Health”*.
- Review the “messages” section found above with participants.
- Hand out the “Who are my Helping Hands?” work sheet.
- Ask participants to think about a person, group or community who can help when they are struggling.
- Tell participants to write their answers on each finger displayed on the worksheet.
- Ask participants to use the palm of the hand to write down personal strategies that they like and find helpful.
- When everyone has finished, ask if they would like to share what they have written.
- Encourage participants to keep these names and personal coping strategies in mind when they need help and support.
- Remind participants about the [“Mental Health-and Substance Use Resource List”](#) found on ottawapublichealth.ca/MentalHealthandWellness.

Possible Answers

Personal strategies:	• Positive self-talk • Talking to others about my feelings • Being active, getting enough sleep, and making healthy food choices • Setting aside some time for relaxation or self-care • Monitoring my screen time and substance use
-----------------------------	--

People who can help:	• Family • Friends • School supports • Health care and other professionals • Club/sport leaders • Religious/spiritual leaders • Support from community resources and organizations
-----------------------------	--

Worksheet: Who are my Helping Hands?



Adapted from: Ottawa Public Health (OPH). (n.d.). Healthy Transitions: Promoting Resilience and Mental Health in Young Adults, Grade 4: Session 1. Retrieved from: https://www.ottawapublichealth.ca/en/professionals-and-partners/resources/Documents/school-health-online/Healthy-Transitions-Grade-4-Facilitator-Guide_EN.pdf

It's good to know who to reach out to when you need support. The sooner you get help, the better.

