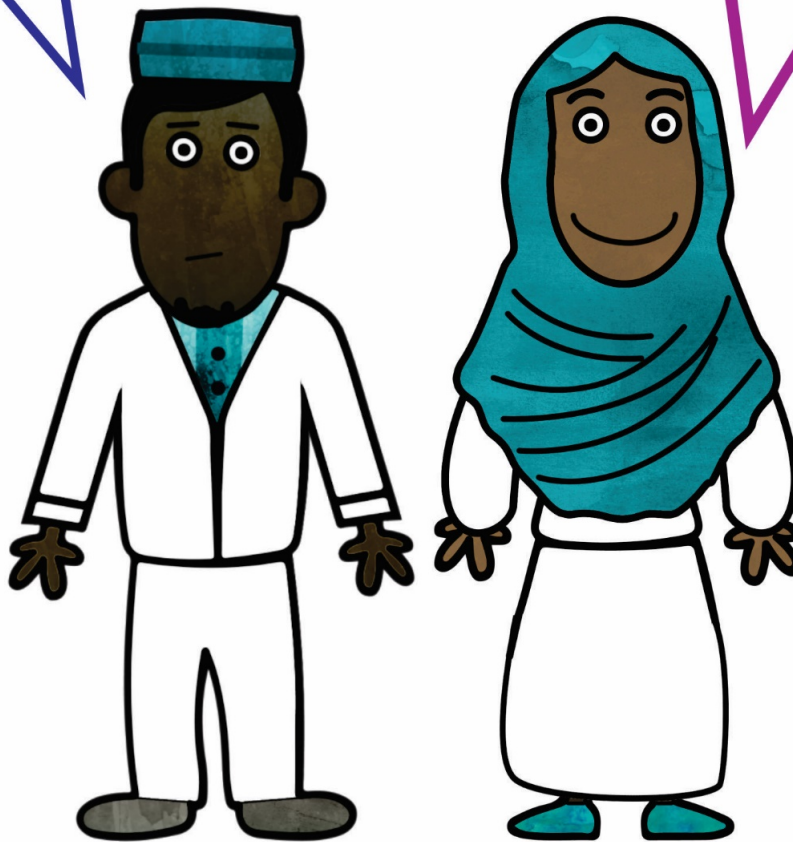


Are You New to Canada?

Welcome!

Moving to a new country can be both exciting and challenging. The process of adapting to a new country can be stressful.

While you are adjusting to your new home, here are some helpful ways to take care of yourself and your mental health.



Who is a Newcomer?

The term “newcomer” refers to someone who has been in Canada for a short time, usually less than 5 years. A newcomer can be an immigrant or a refugee who moved from their country of origin to another country. Almost 22%, or 1 in 5 Canadians were born outside of Canada.

Key Messages

Coming to a new country can be both exciting and challenging. This is because people go through many changes at the same time: a change in personal relationships and social networks; a move from one socioeconomic system to another; and a move from one culture to another. Although a chance to resettle in a safe place can be lifesaving, it can also be life changing and can be associated with both opportunities and loss.

The stress associated with resettlement can manifest itself in different ways, both physically and emotionally. Many newcomers may not have time to reflect and think about how they feel. They are coping with the challenges of finding a place to live, looking for work, deciding where to send their children to school and learning a new language. Also, culture shock, changes in family structure and social isolation are a few of the additional challenges that can cause stress and affect the mental health of newcomers.

Many people can feel lonely, scared, sad and overwhelmed, which can affect their mood, energy level and appetite. These feelings are normal and experienced by many newcomers as they adjust to their new life. It is important to:

- Recognize newcomers’ resiliency
- Normalize common feelings of loss, grief and isolation
- Provide strategies to cope and take care of one’s mental health
- Encourage people to talk about mental health challenges and get help early.

Additional Resources

- [Multi-Cultural Mental Health Resource Center](#)
- [Settlement Org](#)
- [Bell Let’s Talk](#)
- [Talking About Mental Illness](#)
- [The Facts](#)
- [have THAT talk](#)
 - Videos:
 - [Are you New to Canada?](#)
 - [Mental Health = Health \(Diverse Populations\)](#)

Activity 1: Building Social Connections

Goal

- To identify the people in your life who can support you
- To discover ways to improve the connections you have and to build new ones

Messages

- Social connections are the network of relationships we have with the people (e.g. family, friends, neighbours, professionals and colleagues) around us. We all need connections in our lives.
- We build relationships of trust and a sense of belonging in the places where we live, work and play.
- Making social connections promotes health, builds resilience, and provides resources and supports to buffer the impact of stress on our lives.
- At times, everyone needs a little extra help. Accepting help for yourself and giving help to others builds social connections, supports and resources.
- Everyone needs face-to-face contact to build strong connections with others.
- Social media is one way to connect, such as making a plan to meet a friend for a coffee or to FaceTime your family.

Time

30-40 minutes

Supplies

- *have THAT talk* video [Are You New to Canada?](#)
- Flip chart paper and markers
- Print worksheets, found on page 10 and 11, “Make Your Connections Stronger” and “Making Connections” for each participant.

Activity

1. View the *have THAT talk* video “Are you New to Canada?”
2. Draw a stick person in the centre of the flipchart paper.
3. Give markers to the participants. Ask them to write, around the stick figure, an individual or group who gives them support at home, school, and work or in their community.

Possible Answers

- Informal supports e.g. friends, neighbours, co-worker, family, sports teammate
- Formal supports e.g. doctor, social worker, settlement worker/agency, pharmacist, community health and resource centre staffs.
- Unique supports e.g. support group, religious group, community leader.

4. Ask the group to comment on the number and variety of people, groups and connections that provide support.
5. Give each participant the worksheet “Make Your Connections Stronger”, found on page 10. Ask them to complete the worksheet and share with the larger group one or two ideas on how people support them; or how they give support to others.
6. Write on flip chart paper the headings “What help do I need?”, “Who can help me?” and “How can they help me?” Give each participant the worksheet “Making Connections”, found on page 11, and ask them to complete the worksheet by thinking about how they can strengthen their present relationships and make new connections.
7. Ask them to share one or two ideas with the larger group and write them on the flipchart under each heading.

Possible Answers

WHAT HELP DO I NEED?	WHO CAN HELP ME?	HOW CAN THEY HELP ME?
I need to find a school for my child.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cousin • Settlement Worker • Neighbour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will speak with my settlement worker to learn about the different schools in my neighbourhood.
I need to spend more time with my family and friends.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family/friends • Social media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will FaceTime, text or write to my family and friends at home. • I will invite them to visit. • I will show my appreciation by thanking them and doing something nice or fun.
I need to learn English.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Settlement Worker • Sponsor • Family friend • Community phone line 211 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will call 211 to learn about different options. • I will register for an ESL class.
I want to meet new people and build relationships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious Group • Community Group • Community phone line 211 • Settlement Worker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will attend a local community or cultural event. • I will join a soccer team. • I will volunteer.
I do not understand the medication the doctor has given me.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brother • Health Navigator • Pharmacist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will speak to a pharmacist to learn about my medication.
I need to learn where I can find help in my neighbourhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Ottawa • Ottawa Public Health • 211 • Community Resource Centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will call 211 and ask for a translator to help me explain what I need to find. • I will visit my local library to find out about services and programs.

Worksheet: 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: Mom - listens to me when I am upset.

Example 2: Neighbour - helps me with shoveling snow.

Write how you support your list of people.

Example 1: Mom - I help with meals and cleaning.

Example 2: Neighbour - I bring over vegetables from my garden.

Write down one thing you can do this week to support or strengthen this relationship.

Example 1: Grandfather – I will visit or call him this week.

Example 2: Partner - I will help with the household chores.

Worksheet: Making Connections

Complete this worksheet by thinking about how you can strengthen your present relationships and make new connections. Answer the questions “What help do I need?”, “Who can help me?”, and “How can they help me?”

WHAT HELP DO I NEED?	WHO CAN HELP ME?	HOW CAN THEY HELP ME?

Activity 2: Your Body and Your Emotions

Goal

- To recognize the physical effects of emotions

Messages

- When you feel emotions, your body reacts. It is up to you to interpret what it is telling you.
- The stronger the emotion, the more your body reacts. It is important to pay attention to the signs your body is giving you.
- Your emotions teach you a lot about yourself, your expectations, needs, beliefs, and values.
- Emotions are a normal part of life that can lead to either positive or negative thoughts, attitudes and behaviours.
- Get to know yourself and you will find it easier to identify your feelings and express them in positive ways.
- Talk to someone you trust about your feelings. It will help them get to know and understand you better, and learn how they can support you.

Time

30-40 minutes

Supplies

- *have THAT talk* video [Are You New to Canada?](#)
- Flip chart paper, markers and pens
- Print one copy of “Your Body, Your emotions”, found on page 14, for each participant.

Activity

1. View the *have THAT talk* video “Are you New to Canada?”
2. Tell participants that, just like stress, any emotion you feel is felt in the body. Ask them to give examples of physical signs of stress. Listen to their answers and write them on the flip chart paper.
3. Give each participant the worksheet “Your Body, Your emotions”, found on page 14, to complete. Ask the participants to identify physical reactions to the different emotions.
4. In a large group, ask participants “When you compare how your body reacts to different emotions, what do you notice?”

Possible answers

- Some emotions cause physical reactions, such as having sweaty hands when nervous, when in love or when afraid.
- The intensity of the emotion affects the physical reaction to different degrees.
- Your body is telling you about your emotions. It is important to learn to listen to your body and your emotions so you can choose how best to manage your emotions. For example, when you feel anxious you can choose positive behaviours, such as talking to a friend, meditating/praying or going for a walk.

Remember

Your emotions are linked to your mental health. Not everyone knows how to talk about his or her mental health. Cultural beliefs and practices, and life experiences shape how you talk about mental health. Physical signs can be one way to start to talk about emotional well-being.

Adapted with permission from, *My Life, It's Cool To Talk About It: Educational Activities Guide*, Canadian Mental Health Association: Montreal Branch, 2013.

Worksheet: Your Body, Your Emotions

Your body sends you signals when you feel an emotion. Look at the emotions below and write the different physical signs you notice when you feel the following emotions. For example, when you feel stress you may have:

- Headaches
- Muscle tension or other physical pain or discomfort
- Stomach problems
- Nausea, diarrhea or vomiting
- Rapid heart rate
- High blood pressure
- Fatigue

YOUR EMOTIONS	YOUR BODY
ANGRY	
AFRAID	
HAPPY	
SHY	
IN LOVE	
SAD	

Activity 3: Stress...What is it about?

Goal

- To learn to recognize stress and what causes it

Messages

- Stress is our body's reaction to the demands made on it and can include **physical** and **emotional** reactions as well as affect the way you **think and behave**. Stress can be positive or negative.
- **Positive stress** is a challenge that you are able to cope with and manage in positive ways. Examples include preparing for a new baby or a new job.
- **Negative stress** is a challenge that overwhelms you. You may feel unable to cope and your resources may be limited, making it difficult to manage the situation in positive ways. Examples might be the death of a loved one or moving to a new country.
- It is important to acknowledge your stress, talk to someone you trust and seek help to get the support you need.

Time

40-50 minutes

Supplies

- *have THAT talk* video for [Are You New to Canada?](#)
- Flip chart paper, markers and pens

Activity

1. View the *have THAT talk* video "Are you New to Canada?"
2. Ask participants to work in groups of two or three to write a definition of stress and share their definitions with the larger group. Write on a flip chart the above definition of stress.
3. Write on a flip chart four headings: "Physical", "Thoughts", "Feelings", and "Behaviours".
4. Ask the group to identify symptoms of stress and write their responses under each of the headings.

Possible answers

PHYSICAL	THOUGHTS	FEELINGS	BEHAVIOURS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headaches • Muscle tension or other physical pain or discomfort • Stomach problems • Nausea, diarrhea or vomiting • Rapid heart rate • High blood pressure • Fatigue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty concentrating or thinking • Memory problems • Negativity or lack of self-confidence • Constant worrying • Difficulty making decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moodiness • Irritability or angry • Low morale • Anxious • Hopeless or helpless • Depressed • Unhappy or guilty • Agitated or unable to relax 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in eating or sleeping patterns • Social withdrawal • Nervous habits such as nail biting, teeth grinding or foot tapping • Increased use of caffeine, cigarettes, alcohol or other drugs • Neglect of family or work responsibilities • Decline in performance or productivity.

(reference: CAMH. Stress. Retrieved Dec 13/2018 <https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-illness-and-addiction-index/stress>)

5. In a large group, ask the participants to think about moving to Canada or to a new city. What were the causes of stress for them in this situation? Listen to two or three of their answers and identify the category in which each belongs – the environment, work/school, relationships, life event or internal.

Possible answers

ENVIRONMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Street noise • Unsafe neighbourhood • Limited access to services and resources • Learning a new culture and language
WORK/SCHOOL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starting a new job or school • Being unemployed or not working in your profession • Meeting a deadline • Taking an exam
RELATIONSHIPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separation from family and friends • Conflict between parents and children • Break up or divorce • Limited social connections and support
LIFE EVENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving to a new country or city • Getting married • Death of a loved one • Caring for a family member
INTERNAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative self-talk, such as “I fail at everything I do”. • Physical changes, such as puberty or illness or disability • Unrealistic expectations

Remember

Many factors affect stress, such as:

- Intensity and duration of the stress
- Resilience of the individual
- Access to resources and support

In addition, cultural beliefs and practices influence a person’s experience and response to stress and their understanding of mental health. For example, some cultures may identify physical symptoms rather than how they feel, such as referring to physical pain; or use other words to describe their feelings, such as “heaviness of heart” instead of “depression”.

Discussion point

Moving to a new country can be exciting. At the same time, adjusting to a new climate, culture and language, finding a job, a place to live and making new friends can be difficult. Settling into a new country is even more challenging when you have come from an unsafe part of the world. It is important to acknowledge your stress, talk to someone you trust and seek help to get you the support you need.

Adapted with permission from, *My Life, It's Cool To Talk About It: Educational Activities Guide*, Canadian Mental Health Association: Montreal Branch, 2013.

Activity 4: Stress: Planning and findings solutions

Goal

- To learn new ways to cope and manage stress

Messages

- Take care of your health today and in times of stress.
- Talk to someone you trust, such as family, friends, professional, or spiritual/community leader.
- Plan time to relax and have fun.
- Build your social connections and supports.
- Be positive, accept and learn from your mistakes, and problem solve ideas to change your situation.
- Call 211 to find services and programs in your community or neighbourhood.

Time

30-40 minutes

Supplies

- *have THAT talk* video for [Are You New to Canada?](#)
- Flip chart paper, markers and pens
- Print one copy of the “Personal Action Plan”, found on page 21, for each participant

Activity

1. View the *have THAT talk* video “Are you New to Canada?”
2. Ask each participant to think of a stressful situation they have experienced, such as starting a new job, taking an exam or moving to a new home.
 - Ask each participant to complete the “Personal Action Plan”, found on page 21, following the questions and thinking how these actions will benefit themselves and others.
3. Ask participants to share one or two ideas they had identified to manage stress with the larger group.

Possible answers

- Take care of your health e.g. eat well, go for a walk, get enough sleep.
- Talk to someone you trust e.g. family, friends, professional, spiritual/community leader.
- Plan time to relax and have fun e.g. read a book, meditate, or enjoy a hobby.

- Build social connections and supports e.g. meet a friend for coffee, FaceTime your family, or attend a local community event.
- Be positive, accept and learn from your mistakes, and problem solve ideas e.g take a language class, meet with your boss to plan your work and deadlines, plan your time and prioritize what you want to get done, learn to say no, or ask family/friends to help you with the care of a loved one.
- Access services and programs e.g. call 211, go to the library or community resource centre.


Discussion

It is important to acknowledge that stress is a normal part of life and how you feel is normal too. Taking steps to reduce and manage stress takes time. Developing patterns of healthy behaviours takes practice. Everyone makes mistakes – it is okay. Learn from your mistakes and try a new idea to meet your goals to manage stress.

Adapted with permission from, *My Life, It's Cool To Talk About It: Educational Activities Guide*, Canadian Mental Health Association: Montreal Branch, 2013.

Personal Action Plan

Identify one stressful situation, answer the questions below, and think about the benefits of your actions.

	1) WHAT STEPS CAN I TAKE TO MANAGE MY STRESS? 2) WHAT HELPED ME IN THE PAST WITH STRESS? 3) WHAT SUPPORT AND RESOURCES DO I NEED TO MEET MY GOALS?	HOW WILL THESE STEPS BENEFIT OTHERS OR MYSELF?
Today I will:		
Next week I will:		
Next month I will:		
If I need support with my plan, I will talk to:		

If you are feeling overwhelmed, do not hesitate to speak to your family doctor, or call a help line such as the Distress Centre at 613-238-3311.

For general health information, you can also phone the Ottawa Public Health at 613-580-6744 or visit www.ottawapublichealth.ca/mentalhealthresources for a list of local mental health and substance use resources.