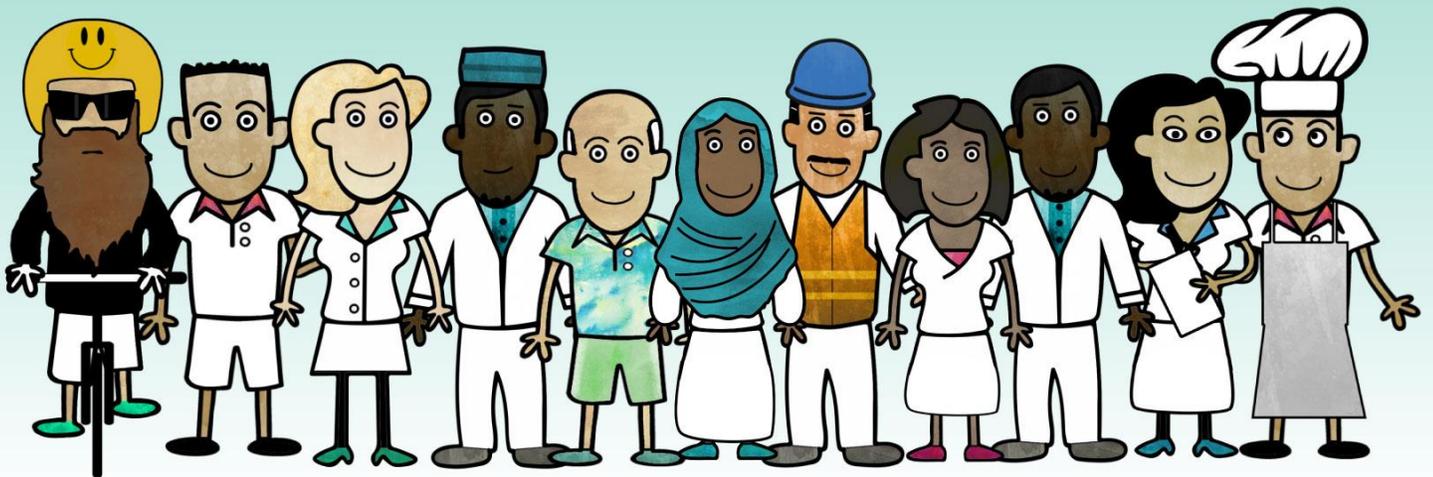


Are You New to Canada?

have**THAT** talk



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 20%, or 1 in 5 Canadians were born outside of Canada.¹

Key Messages

Coming to a new country can be exciting but challenging. People experience many other changes at the same time. There are changes in personal relationships, social networks, financial situation and culture. A chance to resettle in a new or safer place can be lifesaving, and life changing. It can be associated with both opportunities and loss.

The stress of a big move can show up physically and emotionally. Newcomers might not have time to think about how they feel. They may be busy with finding a place to live, looking for work, deciding where to send their kids to school, and learning a new language. They might be dealing with culture shock, changes in family structure, and social isolation. This can all lead to stress and affect their mental health.

Many people can feel lonely, scared, sad and overwhelmed, which can impact 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 the strength, skills and experience of newcomers.
- 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

English

- [Multicultural Mental Health Resource Centre](#)
- [Settlement.org](#)
- [Fast Facts about Mental Illness](#)
- [Mental Health and Wellness Resource Page](#)

Videos

- [Are you New to Canada?](#)
- [Mental Health = Health](#)

French

- [Centre de ressources multiculturelles en santé mentale](#)
- [Etablissement.Org](#)
- [Faits saillants sur la santé mentale et la maladie mentale](#)
- [Services et ressources de santé mentale, dépendances et de santé liée à l'utilisation de substances](#)

¹Government of Canada (GOC). (2023). *The Canadian People*. Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/new-immigrants/learn-about-canada/canadians.html>

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 around us. These connections include family, friends, neighbours, professionals and colleagues. We all need connections in our lives.
- Relationships help build 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. It can decrease the impact of stress on our lives.
- At times, everyone needs a little extra help. Accepting help and offering help to others can help build social connections.
- The Internet can help build connections. It can be used to make plans to meet friends, video-chat with your family, or find community resources. Social media can also be isolating. It can negatively affect how we feel about ourselves and make us feel more alone.

Time

- 30-40 minutes.

Supplies

- Video: [“Are you New to Canada?”](#)
- Flip chart paper and markers.
- Print one *“Make Your Connections Stronger”* and *“Making Connections”* worksheet for each participant.

Activity

- View the video: *“Are you New to Canada?”*
- Draw a stick person in the centre of the flip chart paper.
- Ask participants to name the individuals or groups in their lives that support them at home, their community, school and work.
- Write their answers around the stick person.
- Allow time for the group to discuss the number and variety of people, groups and connections that provide support. Use the key messages section above to help facilitate the conversation.
- Ask each participant to fill out the *“Make Your Connections Stronger”* worksheet. Have them share one or two ideas on how people support them, or how they give support to others.

- Give each participant the “*Making Connections*” worksheet and ask them to complete it while thinking about how they can strengthen their current relationships and make new connections.
- Write the following headings on a flip chart paper: “What help do I need?” “Who can help me?” and “How can they help me?”
- Ask them to share one or two ideas and write them on the flipchart under each heading.

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 staff).
- Unique supports (e.g., support group, religious group, community leader).

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 video chat, 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 receive from each person.

Example 1: Neighbour – watches my pets when I am away from home.

Example 2: Friend – Gives me advice when I am stressed or having a hard time.

Write how you can support your list of people.

Example 1: Neighbour - I can shovel their snow in the winter.

Example 2: Friend – I can sit with my friends and listen to them when they are upset.

Name one relationship that is really important to you.

Example 1: Grandfather.

Example 2: Siblings.

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

Example 1: Grandfather - visit or call him this week.

Example 2: Siblings - Set up a game night and bake their favourite snacks.

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

- Video: [“Are You New to Canada?”](#)
- Flip chart paper, markers and pens.
- Print one copy of “*Your Body, Your emotions*” for each participant.

Activity

- View the video: “*Are you New to Canada?*”
- Draw a stick person on a flip chart paper.
- Ask participants to list the physical signs of stress they experience. Listen to their answers and write them around the stick person.
- Give each participant one “*Your Body, Your emotions*” worksheet to complete. Ask the participants to identify their own physical reactions to the different emotions listed on the sheet.
- Allow time for the group to discuss the variations in each response.

Possible answers

- Some emotions cause physical reactions. For example, your hands might feel sweaty when you are nervous, in love or afraid.

- Often, when you have intense emotions, your physical reactions may feel stronger.
- Understanding and identifying your physical reactions can help you manage your emotions. For example, when you are angry, you can be aware of the physical changes occurring in your body. This can help you select a coping skill earlier which can help you feel better quicker.

Remember

Not everyone knows how to talk about their mental health. Cultural beliefs, practices, and life experiences shape how you talk about mental health. It is important to talk about mental health even when it is difficult. Talking about mental health decreases stigma and helps people get support.

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

When you experience different emotions, your brain sends signals to your body so it can respond appropriately. Look at the emotions below and write down the ways your body responds to each one. For example, when you are stressed, 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? ²

Goal

- To learn to recognize stress and what causes it.

Messages

- Stress is the body's reaction to the demands or challenges you experience and can include physical and emotional responses. It can also affect the way you think and behave. Stress can be positive or negative.
- Positive stress occurs when you are faced with challenges that you are able to cope with and move past. For example, preparing for a new baby or job.
- Negative stress is when the challenges you are experiencing overwhelm you. You may feel unable to cope and your resources may be limited, making it difficult to manage the situation in positive ways. For example, 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

- Video: ["Are You New to Canada?"](#)
- Flip chart paper, markers and pens.

Activity

- View the video: *"Are you New to Canada?"*
- Ask participants to work in groups of two or three to come up with a definition of stress which they will share with the larger group.
- Write their answers on a flip chart paper and discuss. Use the "messages" section above to help facilitate the conversation if needed.
- Under their definitions of stress, write the following terms: "Physical" "Thoughts" "Feelings" and "Behaviours". Ask the group to identify different signs of stress and write their responses under each heading.
- On another flip chart paper, write the following terms: "Environment" "Work/School" "Relationships" "Life Events" and "Internal".
- In a large group, ask the participants to think about moving to a new country. What might cause stress in these situations? Listen to their answers. Identify if the responses belong in the environmental, work/school, relationships, life events or internal category.

Possible Answers

- “Stress is when my body no longer feels balanced.”
- “Stress is how my body responds to threats or danger in my life.”
- “Stress is what helps me meet deadlines at work, but it can be bad when it is too much.”

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 (nail biting, teeth grinding, foot tapping, etc.) • Increased use of caffeine, cigarettes, alcohol or other drugs • Neglect of family or work responsibilities • Decline in performance or productivity

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>"I fail at everything I do"</i>. • Physical changes, such as puberty or illness or disability • Unrealistic expectations

Remember

Many factors affect stress, such as:

- The intensity and duration of the stress.
- Resilience of the individual.
- Access to resources and support.

Moving to a new country can be exciting. At the same time, adjusting to a new climate, culture, 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 the support you need.

Cultural beliefs and practices affect a person's experiences. It also affects how a person responds to stress and understands mental health. Some cultures may use different words to talk about mental health. For example, some might say "heaviness of the heart" instead of "depression."

²The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). (n.d.). *Stress*. Retrieved from: <https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-illness-and-addiction-index/stress>

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 with and manage stress.

Messages

- Talk to someone you trust, such as family, friends, professionals, or spiritual/community leaders if you ever need help.
- Plan time to relax, have fun, and practice self-care.
- Build your social connections and supports.
- Try to think more positively by accepting and learning from your mistakes and thinking of ideas to change your situation.
- Call 211 to find services and programs in your community or neighbourhood.

Time

- 30-40 minutes.

Supplies

- Video: [“Are You New to Canada?”](#)
- Flip chart paper, markers and pens.
- Print one copy of the *“Personal Action Plan”* for each participant.

Activity

- View the video: *“Are you New to Canada?”*
- 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 participants to share one or two ideas they have identified to manage stress.
- Write their responses on a flip chart paper.
- Ask participants to think about how these actions will benefit themselves and others in the future.
- Have participants fill out the *“Personal Action Plan”* and discuss their answers 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, professionals, spiritual/community leaders).
- Plan time to relax and have fun (e.g., read a book, meditate, or enjoy a hobby).
- Build social connections and support. (e.g., you can meet a friend for coffee, video chat with your family, or attend a local community event).

- Be positive. Accept your mistakes and learn from them. Think of ways to solve your problems. (e.g., take a language class, meet with your boss to plan your work, learn to say no, or ask family/friends to help you care for a loved one).
- Access services and programs (e.g., call 211, go to the library or community resource centre).

Remember

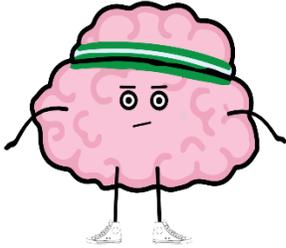
It is important to acknowledge that stress is a normal part of life. The way it makes you feel can be normal too. If your feelings intensify or become unsafe, it is important to talk to a professional for help. Taking steps to reduce and manage stress takes time.

Developing patterns of healthy behaviours takes practice. Everyone makes mistakes – it is okay. Learn from your mistakes and try new ideas to meet your goals and manage stress.

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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 has helped me cope with stress in the past? 3) What supports and resources do I need to help me manage my stress?	How will these steps benefit me, or others?
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 concerned about your mental health or someone else, please speak to your health professional or check out these resources:

- [Mental Health, Addictions and Substance Use Health Resource List](#)
- If you are in crisis, contact the [Mental Health Crisis Line](#) (24 hours a day/7 days a week) at 613-722-6914 or if outside Ottawa toll-free at 1-866-996-0991.
- If you have a youth in crisis, contact the [Youth Services 24/7 Crisis Line](#) (24 hours a day/7 days a week) at 613-260-2360 or if outside Ottawa toll-free at 1-877-377-7775.
- If you (or your child) are experiencing thoughts of suicide or harming yourself, call 9-1-1.