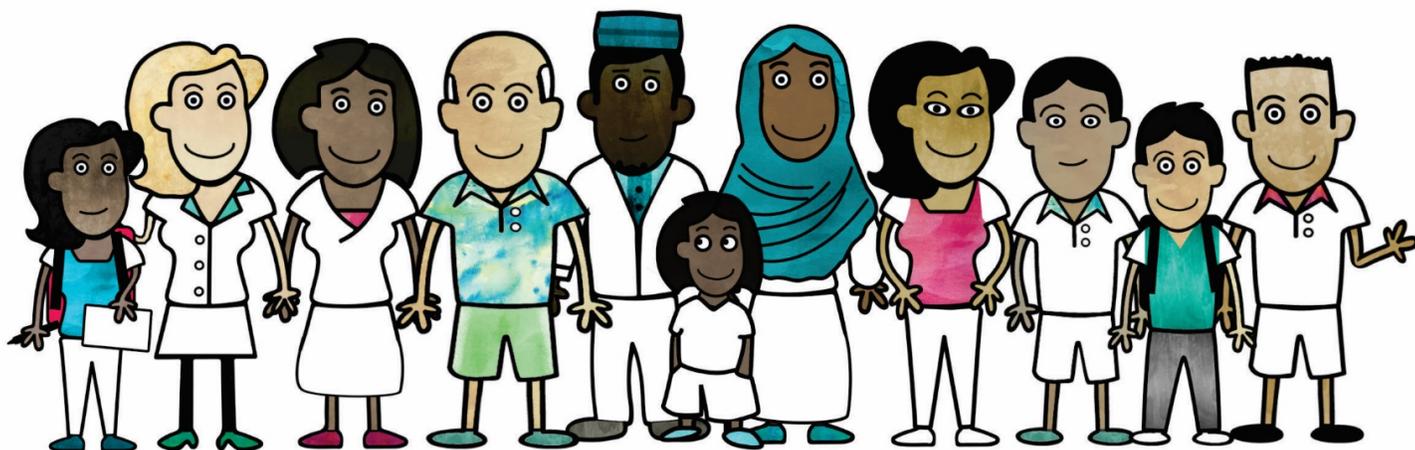


Activity Guide



have **THAT** talk



Diverse Populations

haveTHATtalk.ca

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Introduction

Welcome to the *have THAT talk* Activity Guide for Diverse Populations. This guide contains activities for the following two *have THAT talk* videos: [Are you New to Canada?](#) and [Mental Health=Health \(Diverse Populations\)](#). 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

- **Are you New to Canada?:** The content of this video recognizes the initial feelings, experiences and challenges of adjusting to a new country and some common settlement stressors. A newcomer is someone who has been in Canada for a short time, usually less than 5 years. A newcomer can be a recent immigrant or a refugee who moved from their country of origin to another country. The video focuses on preventing social isolation, recognizing and building on newcomers' strengths to cope with stressors and encouraging new Canadians to get help when they need it.
- **Mental Health=Health (Diverse Populations):** Ethno-cultural refers to groups of people that share common ancestry and cultural characteristics. There are specific cultural influences and beliefs about mental health and mental illness. People's interpretation and understanding of these concepts ultimately affect how people view mental health and mental illness. This is often the basis for many of the misconceptions and stigma surrounding this topic. The video discusses various cultural understandings and myths about stigma, mental health and mental illness, and the importance of taking care of one's mental health.

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 Resource List](#) found at www.havethattalk.ca.

Remind 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 answer to. Write the questions down and tell the participant you will try to find an 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 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).

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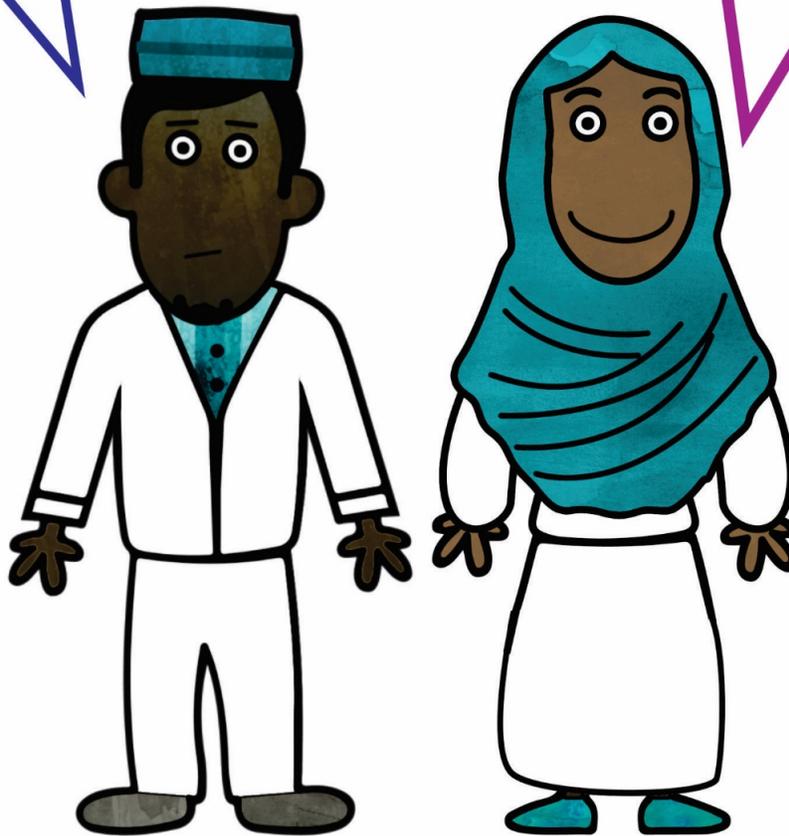
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Are You New to Canada?

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:		

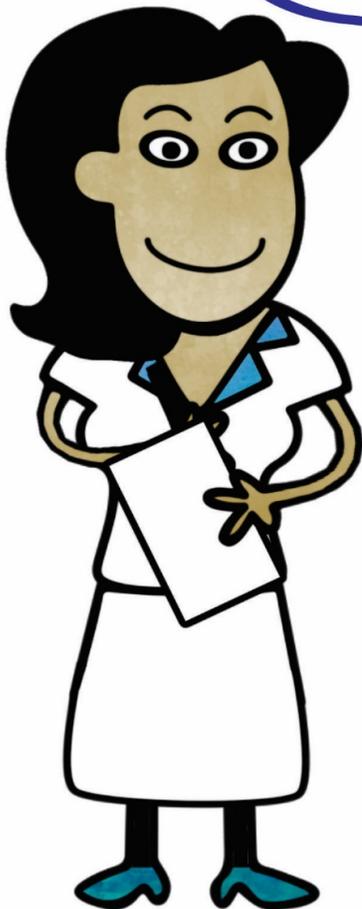
If you are feeling overwhelmed, do not hesitate to speak to your family doctor, or call a help line such as the Distress Centre at 613-238-3311.

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.

Mental Health = Health

(Diverse Populations)

Mental health is being able to feel, think, and act in ways that help us enjoy life and cope with the challenges we face.



Mental Health=Health (Diverse Populations)

Ethno-cultural refers to groups of people who share common ancestry and cultural characteristics. There are over 200 ethnic groups represented in Canada's population and Ottawa is no different¹. Ottawa has the fifth highest number of immigrants in Canadian cities and ¼ of residents are immigrants.²

There are specific cultural influences and beliefs about mental health and mental illness. People's interpretation and understanding of these concepts ultimately affect how people view mental health and mental illness. This is often the basis for many of the misconceptions and stigma surrounding this health issue. This Mental Health=Health video discusses various cultural understandings and myths about stigma, mental health and illness, and identifies factors that promote and protect mental health and build resiliency.

Key Messages

- Mental health is the capacity of each us to feel, think, and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face.
- Mental illness is a diagnosable illness and affects people of all ages, education, income levels, and cultures.
- People living with mental illness can experience positive mental health and people without mental illness can experience poor mental health. You do not need to have a mental illness to have poor mental health.
- Just as people's life experiences and circumstances change, so do their moods, thoughts, and sense of well-being.
- Many stressful situations can negatively affect our mental health, such as divorce, new relationship, new school, living in a new country, adapting to a new culture, experiencing war or injustice, experiencing loss, not speaking the language, and experiencing discrimination and racism.
- Everyone has the ability to experience good mental health. Think of your mental health in the same way you think of your physical health.
- Get help early and talk to someone you trust about your mental health challenges, like a family member, friend or professional.
- Try one thing to help you overcome your present life challenge or challenges.
- Look for ways to connect with your family, friends and neighbors, like volunteering at a cultural event in the community; bringing food for someone in need; or perhaps signing up for special interest class through the City of Ottawa.

¹Case for Diversity (2016). MHCC. *Improving Services for Immigrant, Refugee, Ethno-cultural and Racialized Populations*.

https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/sites/default/files/2016-10/case_for_diversity_oct_2016_eng.pdf

²City of Ottawa (2016). *Equity & Inclusion Lens: Immigrants*

http://www.cawi-ivtf.org/sites/default/files/immigrants_snapshot_en_2016_final_acc.pdf

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. Stigma prevents people from asking for help and receiving the support they need.

Examples of negative beliefs and practices towards people living with a mental health challenge include:

- Describing them as not being normal or using words like “psycho” or “crazy”.
- Blaming them for their mental health challenges and making them feel ashamed.
- Telling them “they just need to get over it. You could if you wanted to”.
- Being afraid of someone with a mental illness.
- Avoiding or excluding a person with a mental health challenge.

What can you do to reduce stigma?

- Try not to use hurtful and labeling words like “psycho” or “crazy”.
- Reach out to someone who you think might be struggling and encourage them to get help.
- Learn more about mental illness by checking out trusted websites like the [Canadian Mental Health Association](#), [the Mental Health Commission of Canada](#), and the [Centre for Addiction and Mental Health](#).
- Develop healthy relationships with people in your life who have mental health challenges and illnesses.
- Reach out for help from family, friends, religious/cultural leaders or professionals.
- Accept that life is not always perfect, but that you can find solutions to overcome life’s challenges.
- Find time to breathe, reflect on what you are thankful for, and pray if that is something that you practice.
- Take care of your health by eating well, being active in nature and getting plenty of sleep.

How can you help someone who wants to talk about his or her mental health?

If someone shares their mental health concerns with you, it is important for you to listen, be supportive and encourage them to get help. You do not 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

- [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: My mental health, it's good to talk about it.

Goal

- To understand what mental health is
- To understand the importance of talking about our mental health

Messages

- Mental health is the capacity of each us to feel, think, and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face.
- Mental illness is a diagnosable illness and affects people of all ages, education, income levels, and cultures.
- Everyone has the ability to experience good mental health, including people living with a mental illness. Think of your mental health the way you think of your physical health.
- We all face challenges throughout our lives, such as learning to live in a new country. It is normal to feel alone, sad and overwhelmed at these times, but it is important to get help early and talk to someone you trust about your mental health challenge. You could talk to a family member, friend or professional.

Time

20-30 minutes

Supplies

- *have THAT talk* video for [Mental Health = Health \(Diverse Populations\)](#)
- Flip chart paper and markers

Activity

1. View the *have THAT talk* video “Mental Health = Health (Diverse Populations)”
2. Write the theme “My mental health, it’s good to talk about it” on flip chart paper.
3. Ask participants to answer the question “What does good mental health mean to you?” Write their answers on the board.
4. Ask participants to break into smaller groups of two or three to write their own definition of mental health on flip chart paper.
5. Ask each small group to share their definition with the larger group. Highlight the key elements of each one and listen to the participants’ comments.
6. Divide the participants into two groups. Ask one group to write, “Ideas to help someone talk about their mental health”.
7. Ask the second group to write, “Things we do that stop people talking about their mental health”.

8. Ask each group to share their ideas with the larger group. Highlight the key elements of each one and listen to the participants' comments.
9. Provide participants with resources where they can find support in the community or a professional to talk about their mental health.

Remember

Sometimes we may have misconceptions of people who live with a mental illness, such as “they are crazy”. This is incorrect and it can lead to prejudices and false beliefs. It causes people to be ashamed or even afraid to talk about their mental health. It stops them reaching out for the help they need.

Possible answers

What does good mental health mean to you?

- Feeling good about yourself
- Balance in all aspects of your life
- Being happy, not having worries
- Having good relationships with other people
- Having a sense of belonging to a community.

Ideas to help someone talk about their mental health and things we do that stop people talking about their mental health

IDEAS TO HELP SOMEONE TALK ABOUT THEIR MENTAL HEALTH	THINGS WE DO THAT STOP PEOPLE TALKING ABOUT THEIR MENTAL HEALTH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making them feel safe and able to trust you. • Actively listening to what they say. • Not judging them. • Accepting their feelings are normal. • Having a positive relationship. • Helping them find resources or support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not listening to what they say. • Gossiping to other people. • Dismissing what they say and feel as unimportant. • Talking about people who live with mental illness as being “crazy” or “weird”. • Not wanting to spend time with them.

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

Activity 2: Reducing Stigma

Goal

- To explore how specific cultural influences and beliefs about mental health and mental illness affect people's interpretation and understanding
- To learn how to reduce stigma for people living with mental health challenges

Messages

- 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.
- Stigma prevents a person living with a mental health challenge from asking for help and prevents them receiving the support they need.
- Culture can influence our understanding, beliefs and practices about mental health in positive and negative ways.
- It is important to talk about mental health to stop stigma.

Time

- 30 minutes

Supplies

- *have THAT talk* video for [Mental Health = Health \(Diverse Populations\)](#)
- Flip chart paper and markers

Activity

1. View the *have THAT talk* video "Mental Health = Health (Diverse Populations)"
2. Read each of these statements to the group:
 - a. Mental health and mental illness are the same thing.
 - b. People with mental illnesses are violent and dangerous.
 - c. Mental illness is a curse from God.
 - d. People with mental illnesses are poor and/or less intelligent.
 - e. Mental illness is caused by a personal weakness.
 - f. Mental illnesses are rare.
 - g. People with mental illnesses are usually homeless.
3. Ask them to think about each statement and then share their responses with the group. This will help start a conversation about stigma. Share the "Facts about mental health and mental illness", found on page 30, as you discuss each statement.
4. Write on a flip chart paper the definition of stigma.

5. Ask the participants:
 - Did you learn or notice anything about these statements today?
 - Were you surprised by any of the information? If so, why?
6. Ask the participants:
 - “How does stigma affect people living with mental illness?” Write their responses on flip chart paper.
7. Everyone can help to reduce stigma. Ask participants:
 - “What could you do to reduce stigma where you live, work and play?” Write their responses on flip chart paper.

Possible Answers

How does stigma affect people living with mental illness?

- They may feel afraid, ashamed, angry, misunderstood, alone and excluded.
- Stigma makes it hard for them to reach out for help or accept help.
- Stigma can delay them getting the help and support they need

What could you do to reduce stigma where you live, work and play?

- Try not to use hurtful and labeling words like “psycho” or “crazy”.
- Reach out to someone who you think might be struggling and encourage them to get help.
- Learn more about mental illnesses by checking out trusted websites like the [Canadian Mental Health Association](#), the [Mental Health Commission of Canada](#) and the [Centre for Addiction and Mental Health](#).
- Develop healthy relationships with people in your life who have mental health challenges and illnesses.
- Share the impacts of stigma on people living with mental illness with family, friends and community.

Facts about mental health and mental illness

Mental health and mental illness ARE NOT the same thing.

Mental health is more than the absence of a mental health condition or illness. It is a positive sense of well-being. Mental health is the capacity of each and all of us to feel, think, and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face.

Mental illness is an illness that is diagnosed by a medical doctor. People living with mental illness can experience positive mental health and people without mental illness can experience poor mental health. You do not need to have a mental illness to have poor mental health.

People with mental illnesses ARE NOT violent and dangerous.

As a group, people with mental illnesses 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. Stigma can limit acceptance by family, friends and the community; limit ability to make friends and maintain relationships; and take part in social activities. People begin to internalize and believe these negative attitudes, which leads to lower self-esteem, shame and guilt.

Mental illness IS NOT a curse from God.

A doctor, diagnoses mental illness like they would diagnose physical illness. Mental illnesses affect people of all ages, education, income levels, and cultures. Culture beliefs shape our understanding of mental health and illness, and our behaviours. Some are positive, such as the importance of supporting community members who are facing life challenges. However, some cultural beliefs and practices can lead to misunderstanding and stigma. For example, some believe that mental illness is a curse and a punishment by God, or that the devil or evil spirits cause it. These beliefs can negatively affect the individual, family or community. For example, mental health stigma can affect marriages, relationships and the economic prospects for other family members.

People with mental illnesses ARE NOT poor and/or less intelligent.

Many studies show that most mentally ill people have average or above-average intelligence. Mental illness, like physical illness, can affect anyone regardless of intelligence, social class or income level.

Many people, and their families, do not get help because of the prejudice and negative attitudes around mental illness. It means they do not get help and support early.

Mental illness is NOT caused by a personal weakness.

A mental illness is not a character flaw, weakness or lack of will power. It is a diagnosable illness. People living with mental illnesses need to talk with someone they trust and have support to make healthy choices for their lives.

People living with mental illnesses can experience positive mental health and people without mental illnesses can experience poor mental health. You do not need to have a mental illness to have poor mental health. As everyone faces life challenges, we can all have changes in our mood, thoughts, and sense of well-being.

Mental illnesses ARE NOT rare.

Mental illness is not a single disease but includes many classifications such as anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, eating disorders and personality disorders.

Many things affect our mental health. For example, stressful life situations like coming to a new country, adapting to a new culture and a new way of life, experiencing trauma, war or injustice, being separated from family, not speaking the language and experiencing loss, discrimination and racism can affect our mental health.

People with mental illnesses ARE NOT usually homeless.

While many homeless people have mental health or substance use issues, not all people with mental illnesses are homeless, in fact that is not at all true. The majority of people living with mental illness have jobs, go to school, and are contributing to society in a meaningful way.

Activity 3: How resilient am I? Making a Resilience Action Plan

Goal

- To learn how resilient you are
- To plan ways for you to increase your resilience

Messages

- Resilience is our ability to work through life's challenges in a positive way. It helps us to thrive and reach our full potential even when times are tough.
- It can make the difference between feeling overwhelmed by a challenge and using the experience as a learning opportunity.
- You can learn to be resilient at any age.
- Resilience is a set of skills you can learn and build on over time.
- You can increase your resilience. This will help you cope with challenges and recover better afterwards.

Time

25 minutes (depending on the size of the group)

Supplies

- *have THAT talk* video for [Mental Health = Health \(Diverse Populations\)](#)
- Print one “How Resilient Am I?” quiz, found on page 34, and one “Resilience Action Plan”, found on page 35, for each participant
- Flip chart paper, markers and pens

Activity A: How Resilient am I?

1. View the *have THAT talk* video “Mental Health = Health (Diverse Populations)”
2. Give each participant a copy of the “How Resilient Am I” quiz.
3. Ask participants to complete the quiz and add up their score.
4. Read the scoring section under the quiz. Ask if anyone wants to share their thoughts about the quiz, such as “did anything surprise you?”

Possible Participants Answers

- Surprised by how resilient they are.
- 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 existing skills. If they are concerned, it is a good idea to promote in a respectful way that they talk to a health professional.

How Resilient Am I? Quiz

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.

RESILIENCE	AGREE	DISAGREE
When life gets tough, I will meet with people from my community or my country of origin.		
I believe I can learn from difficult times.		
When I am under stress, I will talk to someone I trust like a family member, a friend, a religious/community leader or a professional.		
When life gets busy or stressful, I will try to make time for myself, praying or reflecting on what I am thankful for.		
I cope well with change.		
I can call 211 to find programs and services available to newcomers in my city and community.		
After a stressful event, I can let go and move forward.		
I focus on the positives and the things I can control.		

Scoring

Agree: If you answered “agree” to five 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 times, it is important to keep perspective.

Disagree: If you answered “disagree” to five or more of the statements, your resilience may be low and there are opportunities to strengthen your resilience. 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 B: Making a Resilient Action Plan

1. Show participants the “Mental Health= Health” video.
2. Say to the participants “In the video there are ideas about building resilience. Do you remember any of them?” Write their answers on flip chart paper.
3. Give each participant a copy of the “Resilience Action Plan”. Ask them to think of one challenge they are facing and answer each of the questions.

Possible Answers

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

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

- Call 211 to find programs and services available to newcomers in your city and community
- Meet with people from your community or your country of origin
- Talk to someone you trust. It can be a family member, a friend, a religious/community leader or a professional

What new things can I try to help me overcome my challenge and recover?

- Practicing deep breathing and mindfulness
- Being active and listening to music
- Being thankful for the good things in my life
- Connect with the community (cooking, share a meal)

Take Time to Breathe Deeply

1. Sit comfortably, with your knees bent and your shoulders, head and neck relaxed.
2. 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.
3. Inhale through your nose. The hand below your rib cage should move out. The hand on your chest should stay as still as possible.
4. 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.
5. 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.

Resilience Action Plan

Answer the questions below and think of ideas to help build your resilience. Set a date when you will put your plan into action.

QUESTION	IDEAS
What is one challenge I am facing today?	
How do I feel? For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angry • Frustrated • Sad • Anxious • Confused • Other feelings 	
What can I do to cope with my feelings? For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get together with friends and family • Talk to health professional • Get out and be active • Breathe deeply • Meditate • Listen to music • Other ideas 	
What helped me cope or get through a challenging time in the past?	
What tools do I have in my life to help build my resilience?	
What new thing can I try to overcome my challenge and recover?	