Introduction

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

We hope the videos and activities will help you to assist youth to:

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

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

Overview of the have THAT talk videos

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

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

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

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

Tips for working with a group

It is important to develop a safety plan for participants who may disclose concerning information as part of this program.

It may be helpful to identify participants who may need extra support and/or monitoring to a trusted adult like the school guidance counselor, principal, social worker or psychologist. Ensure that educators have a contact person should there be any student concerns.

Remind participants that there are professionals who they can talk to about their mental health or mental illnesses. Provide them with information about school resources, the Youth Services Bureau walk-in clinic and the Crisis Line (613-260-2360).
Explain to the group that there are things you cannot 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.

Have a process in place if a participant discloses any of the above. This may include notifying a specific staff person, administration and parents and accessing emergency services, if required. Consider taking safeTALK or ASIST training so you are prepared to help someone who may be having thoughts of suicide.

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

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

Here are some ideas:

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

**Remember: Take care of your own mental health**

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

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Ottawa Public Health Information Centre at:
613-580-6744
TTY: 613-580-9656
Toll free: 1-866-426-8885
Monday to Friday from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm (closed on statutory holidays).
Did you know that 42% of Canadians were not sure if they would socialize with a friend who has a mental illness?

We also know that the sooner someone gets help, the better their outcome.
How to Talk About Your Mental Health

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

How to make it easier to talk about your mental health
You might start by talking to a person with whom you are close, trust and are comfortable sharing your thoughts. In some communities and families, mental illnesses are not talked about.

This may make it even harder to talk about how you are feeling. In that case, you can speak to a health care professional, go to a Walk-In Counseling Clinic or call a help line, school guidance counsellor, teacher, principal or coach.

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

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

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

Websites
English:
Bell Let’s Talk
Kids Help Phone
Talking About Mental Illness a guide for developing an awareness program for youth

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

Activity 1: Getting Started

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

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

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

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

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

Possible Participants’ Answers
a. Not sleeping well, acting different, not eating or eating more, acting not like himself
b. Juan trusts Marco.
   - Marco has shared things with Juan in the past.
   - They have known each other for a while.
   - Juan feels like Marco has been there for Juan in the past.

c. Marco can:
   - Listen
   - Be respectful
   - Not judge
   - Offer to find help or go with Juan to get help.

d. Marco offers to help. He does not give a list of “answers”.

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

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

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

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

Supplies
• Video: How to Talk About Your Mental Health
• One Mental Health and Addictions Resource List printout for each participant or access to haveTHATtalk.ca resources page
• Flip chart paper and markers

Facilitator Steps
Small and Large Group Activity
1. Watch the video: How to Talk About Your Mental Health.
2. Divide the participants into groups of 2-3.
3. Remind participants about the school supports available to them (educators, Guidance, coaches), club leaders, mentors, religious leaders.
4. Write the following scenarios on flip chart paper. (You can also create your own scenario using ideas from the group).
   Scenarios
   a. Your friend’s parents are separating and he/she is crying several times a day.
   b. Your sister is being bullied and comes to you for help.
   c. Your friend has stopped going to class and is having a hard time getting out of bed in the morning.
   d. Your friend has suddenly stopped caring about school and extra-curricular activities. You are worried.
5. Assign one scenario to each small group.
6. Ask participants to identify some resources that would be helpful in their scenario.
7. Ask participants to share their answers and add to the flip chart papers.
8. Add resources that did not come up in the discussion.

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

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

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

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

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

Facilitator Steps

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

Possible Participants’ Answers

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

People who can help:
Family, friends from school and outside school, health care professionals, counselors, teachers, guidance counsellor, coaches, club leaders and religious leaders. Support from community resources and organizations.
It’s good to know who to reach out to when you need help. The sooner you get help, the sooner you will feel better.
Newfoundland Dog

List the things you can do and the people in your life who can help you when things get rough.

Adults in my school and community:

Friends I trust:

Family members I can talk to:

ME!
I can help myself feel better by:
Reducing Stigma

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Websites
English:  
- YouthNet
- Stigma and Discrimination Around Mental Health and Substance Uses Problems
- Fighting the Stigma Surrounding Mental Illness
- Stigma and Discrimination in Mental Illness

French:  
- Réseau Ado
- Combattre les préjugés sur la maladie mentale
- Cadre pour aider à éliminer la stigmatisation
- Stigmatisation et discrimination en matière de santé mentale

Videos
English:  
- Promoting Mental Health Finding a Shared Language

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

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Activity 1: How Does Stigma Affect Us All?

Goal
• To understand stigma and how it affects us

Messages
Stigma is set of negative beliefs or prejudice about someone who we think is different than us. Many people face stigma because of their race, their religion, sexuality, economic situation and a variety of other things.

• Stigma prevents people from reaching out and getting help.
• People who live with mental illnesses deal with stigma and may be treated differently because of negative attitudes in our society.

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

Supplies
• Video: Reducing Stigma
• Flip chart paper and markers

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

Possible Participants’ Answers
3a) Stigma is: negative attitudes, being mean to people, treating other people poorly, hurting other people.
3b) Feelings related to stigma could be: isolated, overwhelmed, afraid for safety, not able to do usual activities, fear of judgement, not knowing where to get help.
3c) Ways to reduce stigma: think about your biases and judgements, think about what you see and hear in the media, don’t use hurtful words, learn about mental illness and connect with people who live with mental illness, talk to others about stigma.

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Words matter!
Negative words like “psycho” or “crazy” hurt people with mental illnesses and can make them feel hopeless and ashamed.
Activity 2: Discoveries

Goal
- To learn ways to reduce stigma
- To learn how to support people living with mental illnesses

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

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

Supplies
- Video: Reducing Stigma
- Flip chart, paper and markers
- One “Discoveries” activity sheet for each participant (page 19)

Facilitator Steps:
Self-Reflection/Group Discussion
1. Watch the video: Reducing Stigma
2. Distribute the “Discoveries” activity sheet (page 19).
3. Ask participants to complete each statement.
4. After 5-10 minutes, ask participants to share their responses.
5. Write other responses on the flip chart paper
6. Encourage other participants to write down answers that they like.

Possible Participants’ Answers
I discovered that:
Stigma still exists, stigma is a big problem, stigma makes people feel hopeless, stigma stops people from getting help

I noticed that:
Stigma can be stopped, that small things can help, that I CAN do something to reduce stigma, that everyone can help with or without a mental illness

Ways to reduce stigma:
Think about your biases and judgements, think about what you see and hear in the media, don’t use hurtful words, learn about mental illness and connect with people who live with mental illness, talk to others about stigma.
What Did You Discover Today?

Thinking about stigma...

I discovered that: ____________________________

I noticed that: ____________________________

I plan to: ____________________________

I will tell: ____________________________

Date: ____________________________

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

Goal
- To correct common myths about mental illnesses

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

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

Supplies
- Video: Reducing Stigma
- “Agree” and “Disagree” signs posted at opposite sides of the room.

Facilitator Steps
1. Watch the video: Reducing Stigma
2. Read out the first statement.
3. Ask participants to walk to the “Agree” or “Disagree” signs according to their beliefs.
4. Discuss each statement as a group prior to proceeding to the next statement. “Agree” or “Disagree” Statements
   a. People with mental illnesses are violent and dangerous.
   b. People with mental illnesses are poor and/or less intelligent.
   c. Mental illnesses are caused by a personal weakness.
   d. Mental illnesses are a single, rare disorder.
   e. People with mental illnesses are usually homeless.

Possible Participants’ Answers
a. As a group, mentally ill people are no more violent than any other group. In fact, they are far more likely to be the victims of violence than to be violent themselves.

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

c. A mental illness is not a character flaw. It is an illness, and it has nothing to do with being weak or lacking will-power. Although people with mental illness can play a big part in their own recovery, they did not choose to become ill, and they are not lazy because they cannot just ‘snap out of it.’

d. Mental illness is not a single disease but a broad classification for many disorders including anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, personality disorders, eating disorders and organic brain disorders.

e. While many homeless people have mental health or addiction issues, not all people with mental illnesses are homeless. Many people living with mental illness go to school, have jobs, and have families.

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

What is Resilience?
Everyone experiences stress or challenges as part of life. Resilience is being able to work through life’s difficulties, thrive and reach your full potential\(^5\). It is about accepting that life is not always perfect but finding ways to deal with and work through your challenges and recover afterwards.

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

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

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

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

Websites
English:
The Road to Resilience
How to Deal With Stress

French:
Comment gérer le stress?
La résilience ou l’art de rebondir!

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

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

Activity 1: Reacting to Problems

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

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

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

Supplies
- Video: Building Resilience
- One Reacting to problems: Self Talk can change a-lot worksheet for each person (page 28).
- Flip chart paper and markers

Facilitator Steps
1. Watch the video: Building Resilience
2. Divide the class into groups of 2-4 participants.
3. Give participants the Reacting to Problems worksheet.
4. Explain that “Self-talk is the way we think about situations. For example, these thoughts can be positive “life isn’t perfect, but some things I can change” or negative “they are doing it on purpose”. See the diagram “Change one and you can change them all” on page 26. Our thoughts, feelings and actions can all affect each other. Our thoughts affect our feelings, which affect our actions. Our actions can also change our feelings and thoughts. If we can change the way we think about a situation, we may feel and act differently.
5. Give each group a sample scenario.
6. Using the scenarios, ask groups to complete the worksheet. Ensuring that they give examples of both positive and negative thoughts feelings and actions.
7. Ask each group to share their ideas with the larger group for discussion.

Sample Scenarios
- You’ve been posting to social media and your best friend hasn’t been ‘liking’ your posts.
- Your parents won’t let you go to a party with friends on a Sunday night.
- You didn’t make the basketball team.
- You received a poor grade on a project that you worked hard on.
- You walk by a group of students in the hallway and everyone suddenly stops talking.

How you **think** can change how you **feel** and **act**. Positive self-talk is a skill you can practice.
change one and you can change them all.

Thoughts can change...
Feelings can change...
Actions can change...

...the easiest of the 3 to change.

Sample Worksheet Responses

Reacting to Problems:
self-talk can change a lot

Negative Self Talk Situation:

Scenario: You walk by a group of students in the hallway and everyone suddenly stops talking.

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

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

Actions:
- Become angry at them
- Isolate self
- Skip school
- Ignore them when you see them

Positive Self Talk Situation:

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

Feelings:
- Confident
- Indifferent
- Calm

Actions:
- Don’t think about it
- Continue your day
- Stop and ask them how they are

Reacting to problems: self-talk can change a lot

Negative Self Talk Situation:

Positive Self Talk Situation:

Activity 2: How Resilient Am I?

Goal

- To understand more about how resilient you are

Messages

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

Time

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

Supplies

- Video: Building Resilience
- One “How Resilient Am I” quiz for each participant (found on next page)

Facilitator Steps

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

Possible Participants’ Answers

- Some participants will be surprised by how resilient they are. Other participants will be surprised that they are not as resilient as they thought.

- Reassure participants that this is only one quiz. It gives an indication of their resilience and helps them to start thinking about learning more resilience skills or continuing to practice already existing skills.

- If they are concerned, it is a good idea to promote in a respectful way that they talk to a health care professional
How Resilient Am I?
Check either “AGREE” or “DISAGREE” to each statement and add up the number of checks you have for “AGREE” and “DISAGREE”. Do not feel frustrated if you have many “DISAGREE” boxes. Build on your strengths and come back to the checklist in a few weeks.

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

Scoring

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

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

Adapted from: Ottawa Public Health; Canadian Mental Health Association; Canadian Public Health Association; Mental Illness Caregivers Association; Military Family Services. (2016). Mental Health Caregiver Guide: A guide for caregivers of persons living with mental illness or experiencing mental health challenges. ON: Ottawa Public Health.
Activity 3: Make a Resilience Action Plan

Goal
• To plan ways for you to increase your resilience

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

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

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

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

Possible Participants’ Answers

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

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

What new thing can I try to help me overcome my challenge and recover?
• Practicing deep breathing and mindfulness (found in next activity)
• Being active and listening to music
• Thinking for the good things in my life

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

What is one challenge I am facing today?

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

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

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

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

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

I will put my plan into action on: __________________________

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

Activity 4: Add To Your Resilience

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

Messages
- Deep breathing and mindfulness help ease stress\(^6\).
- These skills can help you become more resilient.

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

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

Facilitator Steps

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

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

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


\(^6\) Madhav Goyal, MD, MPH; Sonal Singh, MD, MPH; Erica M. S. Sibinga, MD, MHS; Neda F. Gould, PhD; Anastasia Rowland-Seymour, MD; Ritu Sharma, BSc; Zackary Berger, MD, PhD; Dana Sleicher, MS, MPH; David D. Maron, MHS; Hasan M. Shihab, MBChB, MPH; Padmini D. Ranasinghe, MD, MPH; Shauna Linn, BA; Shonali Saha, MD; Eric B. Bass, MD, MPH; Jennifer A. (2014) MJAMA Intern Med. 174(3):357-368. doi:10.1001/jamainternmed.2013.13018 Published online January 6, 2014.editation. Programs for Psychological Stress and Well-being: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis.
“Mindfulness” means bringing your thoughts to **what you** are doing **when** you are doing it. It focuses your mind on the things you are feeling and thinking **right now**. Mindfulness helps build resilience and reduces stress.
Social connections are the relationships we have with the people around us. The relationships we have at school, work, in leisure and at home affect our physical and mental health.
Building Social Connections

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

Social connections can strengthen your immune system, lower blood pressure, help you recover from illness faster and can even lengthen your life.

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

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

Reach out
There are times when we need extra help. When you are having a tough time, reach out for support. Try to accept help when someone offers it to you and think of ways you can help others. Calling a friend or speaking to a trusted person can help you cope with difficulties and gives you a chance to share and learn from others. Speak to your health care professional if you need more help.

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

Websites
English:
Social Support
Be Social
Measuring Positive Mental Health in Canada

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

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Activity 1: Who Are Your Connections?

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

Messages
- Not being connected affects your health as much as smoking 15 cigarettes a day and is a greater risk to you than obesity. 10 11
- There are times when we need a little extra help. Accept help and offer help to others. Relationships are stronger when both people help and learn from each other.
- Technology can help us reach out to friends or learn about events in our community. Use social media to plan a get-together or contact an old friend. But remember that in-person contact is the best way to create stronger connections.12

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

Supplies
- Video: Building Social Connections
- Flip chart paper and markers
- Print one Make Your Connections Stronger! worksheet for each participant (page 38).

Facilitator Steps
Group Discussion:
1. Watch the video: Building Social Connections
2. Using flip chart paper, draw a stick person in the centre of the page.
3. Ask participants to name people from whom they get support at home/school/ work/community.
4. Place these names around the stick person.
5. Ask participants what type of support they get from the people they identified, ex: helps with homework, listens to them
6. Use another color marker and add participants’ answers under the names identified.
7. Hand out one “Make Your Connections Stronger” worksheet for each participant (page 38).
8. Ask participants to complete the worksheet.
9. Ask if anyone wants to share ideas about how they could support one of the important people on their list.

Possible Participants’ Answers
Who we get support from:
- Parents, other family relatives, friends, colleagues, support services, teachers, coaches

What type of support:
- Help with homework, cleaning, cooking, driving to activities, financial support, listening, problem solving

Ways to strengthen/support or show appreciation for one of the support people in your life:
Thank them • Spend more time together • Call/text/face time more • Do something nice for them • Write to them • Tell them how you feel about them and why they are important to you.

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 stressed
Example 2: Friends- help with homework

Write how you support your list of people.
Example 1: Mom - I help with meals and cleaning Example 2: Neighbour- Help I help my friend take care of his brother after school.

Name one relationship that is really important to you.
Example 1: Grandfather
Example 2: Sibling

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: Sibling - Help them with their chores when they are really busy.
Good social connections help build our resilience, improve our physical and mental health and help us cope with the stresses of life.
Activity 2: Reach Out to Make Connections

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

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

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

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

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

Possible Participants’ Answers
1. A person can:
   - Take a course, join a team, try a fitness activity, join a special interest club, volunteer at a retirement home or community centre.

2. Where someone can start looking:
   - School
   - Extracurricular - sports, clubs
   - Student council
   - Peer support
   - Place of work
   - Sports Association
   - Youth Centres
   - Community Resource/Community Health Centre
   - Volunteer Ottawa

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