MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK 2026

"Encourage one another and build one another up." – 1 Thessalonians 5:11

Dear Parents & Guardians,

Each year, Mental Health Awareness Week is recognized during the first week of May. This year, the focus is on coming together and exploring how connection supports mental health and well-being. During this week, and throughout the school year, students are supported in strengthening connections with themselves, with others, and with caring adults. We invite you to review the tips and resources below as you continue to nurture connections and well-being at home. If you have questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to your child's school.

1 Everyday Connection

A child or youth's relationships with parents, guardians and other caring adults play a key role in their well-being. Spending intentional time together regularly helps nurture these relationships and builds a sense of safety and belonging. Even ten minutes at a time can make a meaningful difference. Building connection into everyday routines can make this feel more natural and achievable, such as preparing meals together, taking an evening walk, or reading together at beditme.



2 Connect Through Listening and Validation

Taking time to listen to your child helps them feel seen, heard, and understood. When children or youth share their feelings, it can be helpful to listen without rushing to solve the problem or change the feeling. Simple responses such as "That sounds hard" or "I'm glad you told me" can support emotional regulation and strengthen trust. For more ideas on how to support children and youth in this way, explore this resource: Listening & Coming Alongside Kids' Emotions.

3 Connect with Identity, Culture, and Faith

Sharing moments as a family that are rooted in culture, faith, and community can help children develop a strong sense of identity and belonging and can contribute to greater self-esteem. Enjoying special family recipes or family traditions together, sharing stories about your family or cultural background, and spending time listening to music, dancing, or praying together are meaningful ways to celebrate identity and strengthen connection.



4 Connect with Nature

Spending time in nature offers healthy ways of coping with stress, can improve mood, and supports overall well-being. Encouraging children to pause to notice simple things such as new growth, clouds in the sky, light through a window, or the sound of birds chirping can help foster a sense of calm, gratitude, and hope.

Supporting Your Own Well-Being



Taking time to notice your own needs and staying connected to sources of support can make a meaningful difference in your own well-being and in your capacity to support your family. You may find helpful ideas in this tip sheet: Caring for Yourself While Caring for Others, or through connecting with family, friends, your parish, or other trusted members of your community. If you are looking for more formal mental health support, Connex Ontario can help link you to counselling services.

How to Notice and Respond to Mental Health Challenges

It can be hard to tell whether changes in your child's behaviour or emotions are typical responses to everyday stress or possible signs of concern. Start by reflecting on these questions: Are these behaviours and emotions out of character? Are they affecting daily life? Are concerning behaviours happening more often or lasting longer? For more information, check out the tip sheets available at this link: Reaching Out for Help

Trusted Resources for Families: By Your Side Resource Hub

By Your Side is a free online resource hub for parents and guardians, developed by School Mental Health Ontario. This resource hub offers practical guidance, tools, and information to help families understand mental health, notice concerns, and support children through life's challenges in caring and informed ways. In addition to on-demand resources, free webinars are offered for parents and guardians on a range of mental health topics. Upcoming topics include *Conversations About Body Image* on May 7th and *Conversations About Anxiety* on June 5th

By Your Side Resource Hub

Webinar Registration

Connect with Support

- **There are many caring adults at school ready to support you and your child, including mental health professionals.** If you have concerns about your child's well-being, please don't hesitate to reach out to your child's teacher or principal to discuss next steps.
- **Kids Help Phone**: 24/7 counselling support. Interpreters available for over 100 languages. Children/youth can call 1-800-668-6868 or text 686868.
- **Black Youth Helpline**: Culturally relevant support for Black youth and families. Call 416-285-9944. Check website for more details and hours of operation.
- **Hope for Wellness for Indigenous Peoples**: Culturally relevant support for Indigenous people. Available 24/7. Call 1-855-242-3310 or visit website for online chat.
- **What's Up Walk-In**: In-person counselling with no appointment needed. Variety of languages available. **Click here** for locations, hours, and further details.
- **One Stop Talk**: Virtual counselling support for children/youth across Ontario ages 0-17. Check website for details and hours.



For more information or to access mental health supports for your child, please reach out to the school principal.