

Coping Through COVID

Mental Health and Well-Being Webinar Thursday February 11, 2021

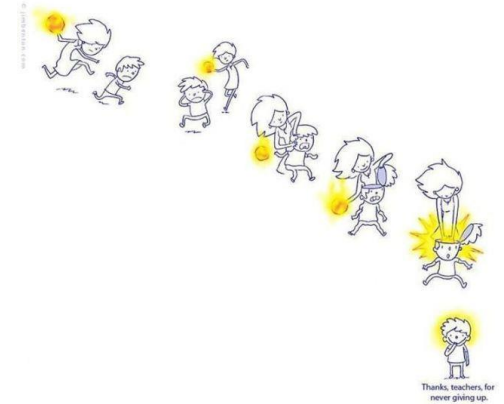
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We are hearing...



- *"Exhausted, overwhelmed, and anxious."*
- *"I'm feeling fearful and fatigued."*
- *"Frustrated and dismayed."*
- *"I cannot work the way I want to."*
- *"I feel too tired to play with my kids...I feel like I am failing"*
- *"I feel alone and I am worried about the future"*
- *"How do I make sure my kids are doing okay? How do I make sure I am doing okay?"*

What is Mental Health?

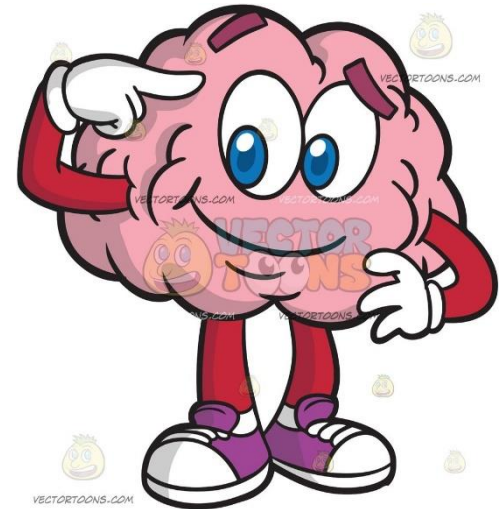
“Mental health is not just the absence of mental disorder. It is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the *normal* stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.”

WHO-italics, underline added retrieved from:

Stigma of Mental Health....

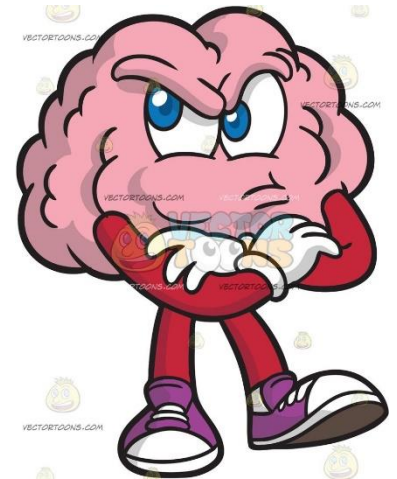
Mental health is...

- **IMPORTANT**
- **LINKED TO ALL 8 DEMENTIONS**
- **ON A CONTINUUM**
- **WORTH MAKING TIME FOR**
- **PART OF BEING HUMAN**
- **SOMETHING WE NEED TO LOOK AFTER**
- **POSITIVE & NEGATIVE**
- **CHANGEABLE**
- **COMPLEX**
- **REAL**



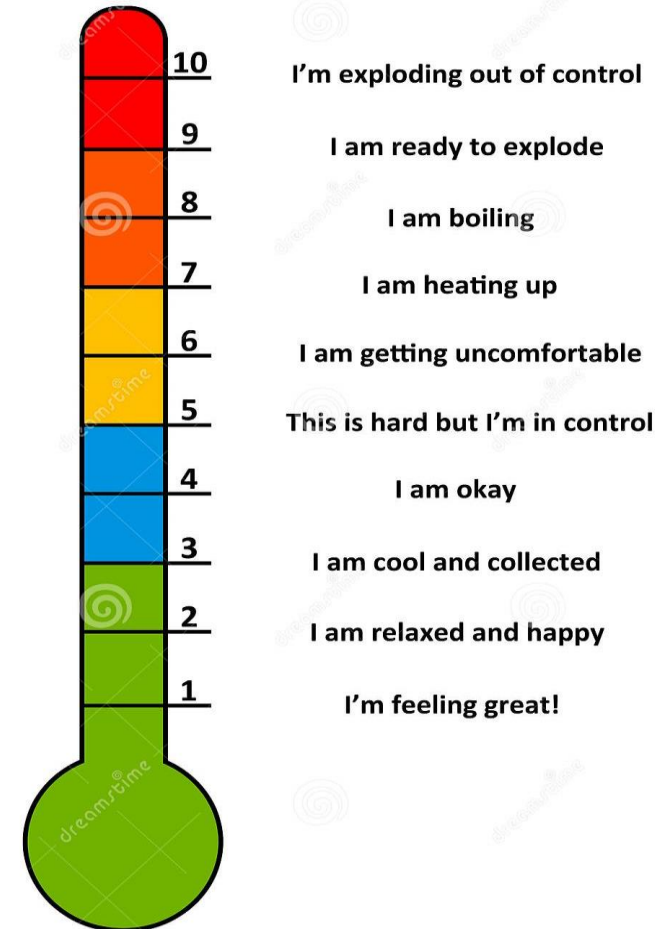
Mental Health is not...

- A SIGN OF WEAKNESS
- DOES NOT MEAN YOU ARE 'MAD'
- SHAMEFUL
- SOMETHING YOU DECIDE TO HAVE
- SOMETHING YOU THINK ABOUT ONLY WHEN YOU FEEL BROKEN
- FEELING GOOD ALL THE TIME
- SOMETHING YOU CAN SNAP OUT OF
- SIMPLE
- FAKE

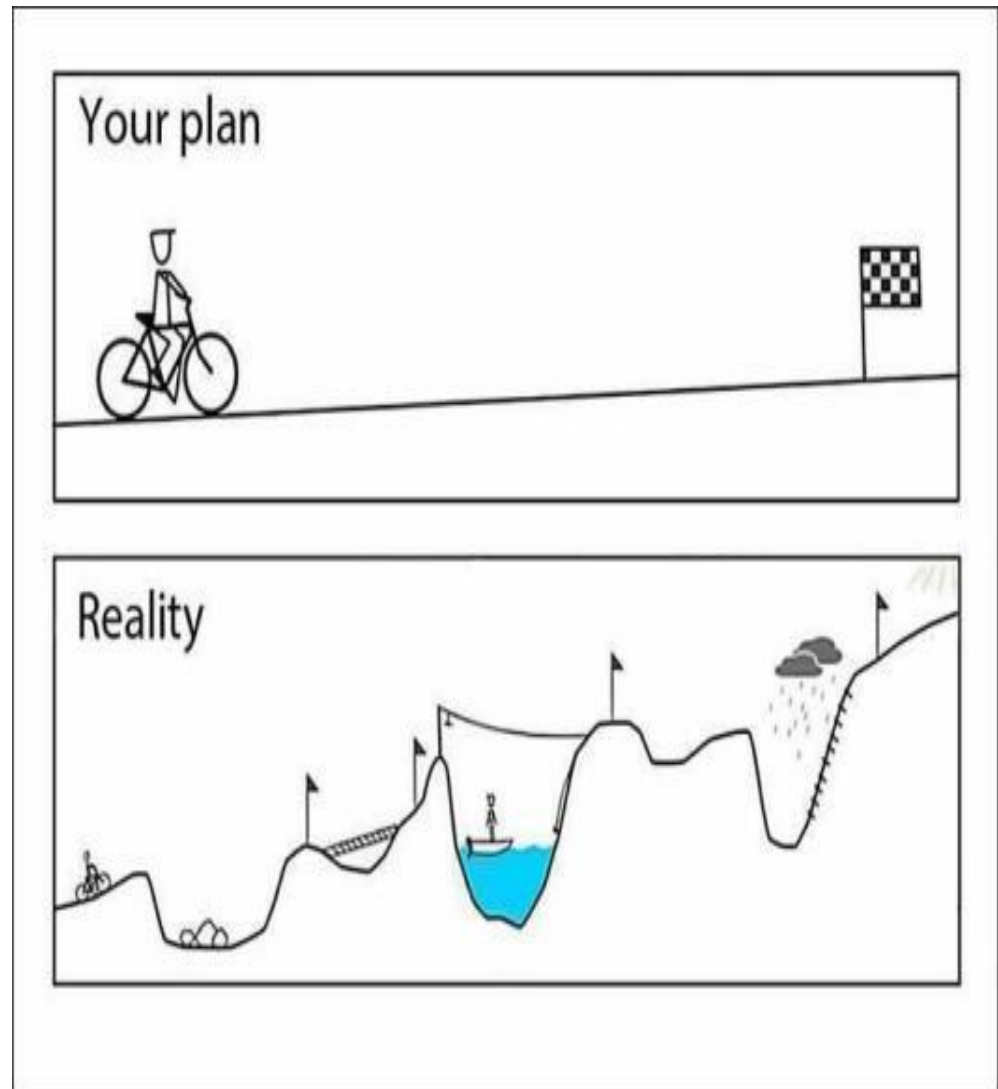


- Children **need to express their emotions**
- **Developing strategies** to cope with the up/downs of life
- Children with Special Needs express a **range of emotions in various ways**—and you/the teacher/the support staff know generally what is the baseline
- Children with Special Needs mental wellness is **sometimes difficult to identify as symptoms** can often become conflated with diagnoses such as autism and ADHD.

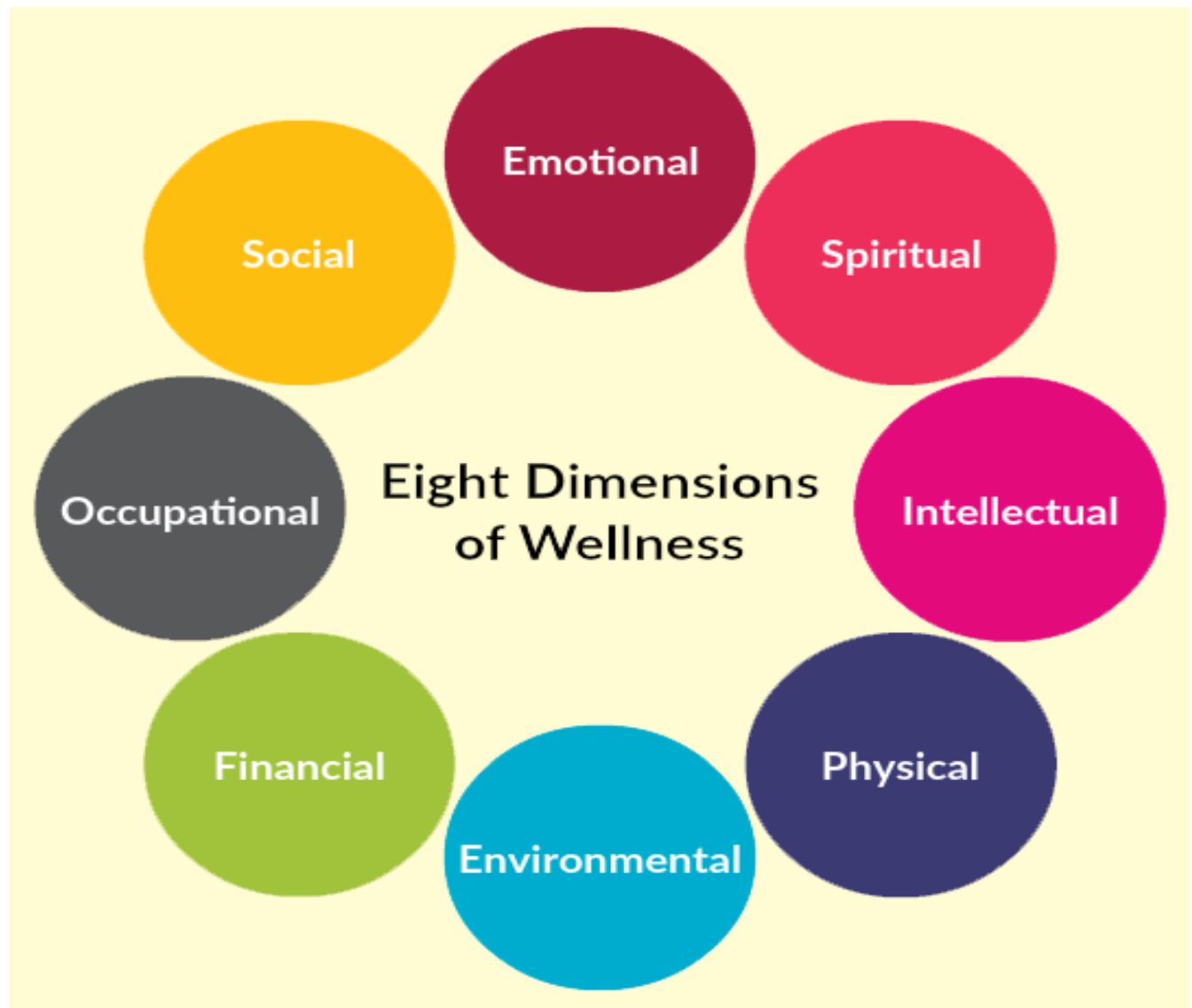
Feelings thermometer



**Well-Being is
how we
respond to
lives' up and
downs; and
includes...**



**Areas of
Well Being
that
intersect &
layer...**



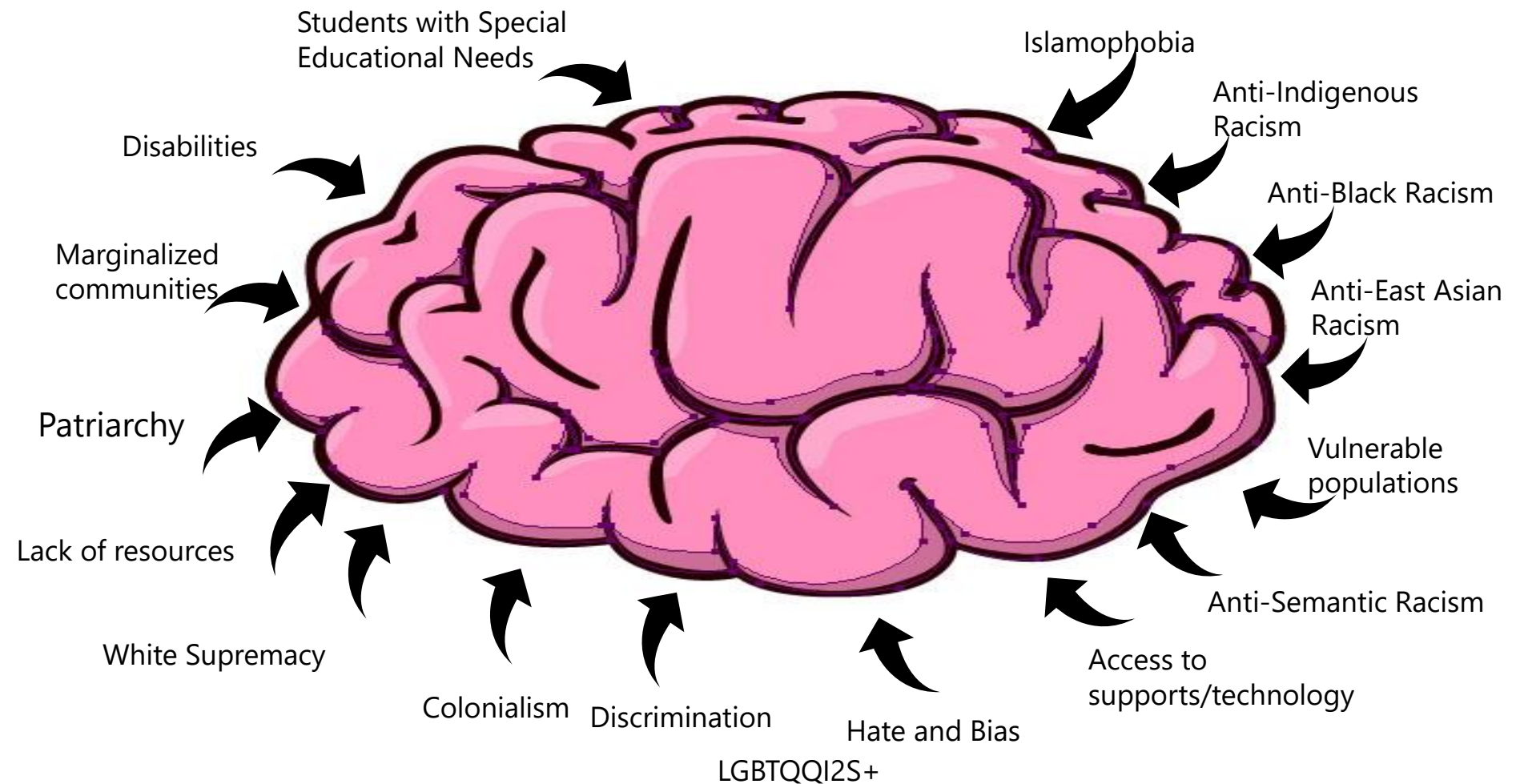
Few examples of COVID-19 realizations...

- ☐ Impact of Chronic Stress/anxiety
- ☐ Impact of Social inequities; racism
- ☐ Coping with Virtual Learning
- ☐ Grief with loss of 'regular' life/coping strategies (parks, activities, rituals)
- ☐ Maintaining same/high expectations
- ☐ Less time to take care of our/our family's' wellness
- ☐ Higher demands--juggling work, home and personal relationships
- ☐ Challenging--images, news, social media & staying hopeful
- ☐ Difficulty limiting screen time (you and children)
- ☐ Concerns of future--work, school learning gaps, relationships
- ☐ Isolation, loneliness, lack of socialization/connection to family, friends, community supports/resources

...Inequities

- Issues related to inequities have a negative impact on mental health and well being

Social inequities impact on stress...



Statement: Inequities Amplified by COVID-19 19 Crisis. Retrieved from <https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/eng/content/statement-inequality-amplified-covid-19-crisis>

Social Issues Impact On Mental Health

- ☐ Discrimination, hate and violence
- ☐ Social Exclusion
- ☐ Lack of access to economic resources

Discrimination, Hate and Violence

Hate crimes targeting Jews represented 19 per cent of all hate crimes, more than any other group. Those cases were closely followed by hate crimes targeting Blacks and Muslims. Anti-east Asian racism.(2)

The novel coronavirus pandemic has fueled racism, including violent attacks against East Asians in Canada, said Amy Go (1)

“Experiencing systemic discrimination and microaggressions are social stressors that increase the risk of negative physical and mental health including anxiety, depression, suicide or suicidal thoughts.... Asante Haughton (3)

(1) retrieved from: <https://globalnews.ca/news/6858850/these-asian-canadians-are-concerned-as-hate-crimes-spike-in-the-coronavirus-pandemic/>

(2) retrieved from: <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/a-disturbing-new-normal-how-jewish-canadians-are-reacting-to-spate-of-anti-semitic-violence>

(3) retrieved from: <https://globalnews.ca/news/6492868/anti-black-racism-mental-health-campaign-toronto/>

Social Exclusion

**“A large part of what I was experiencing in terms of my depression and suicidality when I was growing up was a result of identity issues, like I just did not know where I fit in the world.”
Asante Haughton (3)**

Black, Indigenous, and racialized students are at an increased risk of suicide due to the negative impacts of systemic oppression, colonialism, racism and the social determinants of health. (2)

LGBTQ people reported more stress, for example, than the average Canadian and less satisfaction with their lives as a whole, and were more likely to know someone who needed medical treatment or had COVID-19 symptoms.(1)

(1) retrieved from: <https://www.nationalobserver.com/2020/09/24/news/pandemic-hit-lgbtq-canadians-differently-researchers-want-know-why>

(2) Dr. Amy Cheung (Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre) Bridges, 2008

(3) retrieved from: <https://globalnews.ca/news/6492868/anti-black-racism-mental-health-campaign-toronto/>

Lack of Access to Economic Resources

People with serious mental illness face many barriers over their lifetime, including stigma and discrimination, which may prevent them from securing adequate education and employment.(2)

In particular, LGBTQ people who are Black, Indigenous, or people of colour report being the most worried about being able to pay their rent or their mortgage. (1)

Lack of sufficient primary health care and community mental health services, shortages of affordable housing, and inadequate income support further alienate marginalized people from life in the community. (3)

(1) retrieved from: <https://www.nationalobserver.com/2020/09/24/news/pandemic-hit-lgbtq-canadians-differently-researchers-want-know-why>

(2) <https://ontario.cmha.ca/documents/poverty-and-mental-illness/>

(3) <https://ontario.cmha.ca/documents/poverty-and-mental-illness/>

Complex Layers-Oppressions

- **Inequities impact our mental health and well-being in complex, layered, in direct and non-direct ways.**

Chronic Stress---COVID-19

- **Some stress is normal and needed to obtain goals, move forward and have balanced positive mental health**
- **Chronic levels of stress impact our brain—our emotions, capacity to cope**
- **To counter stress—brain releases stress hormones...**

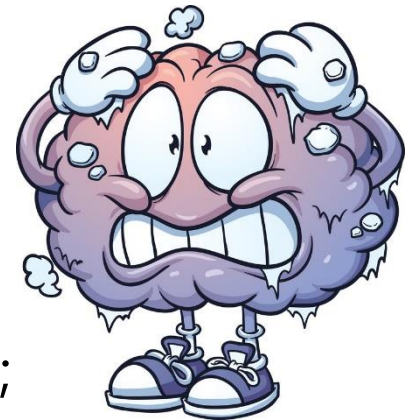
**Individual and social stresses impact the brain
increasing STRESS**

IMPACTS OUR...

- Creativity, flexibility, attention to priorities, making informed choices, managing routines

RESULTS IN...

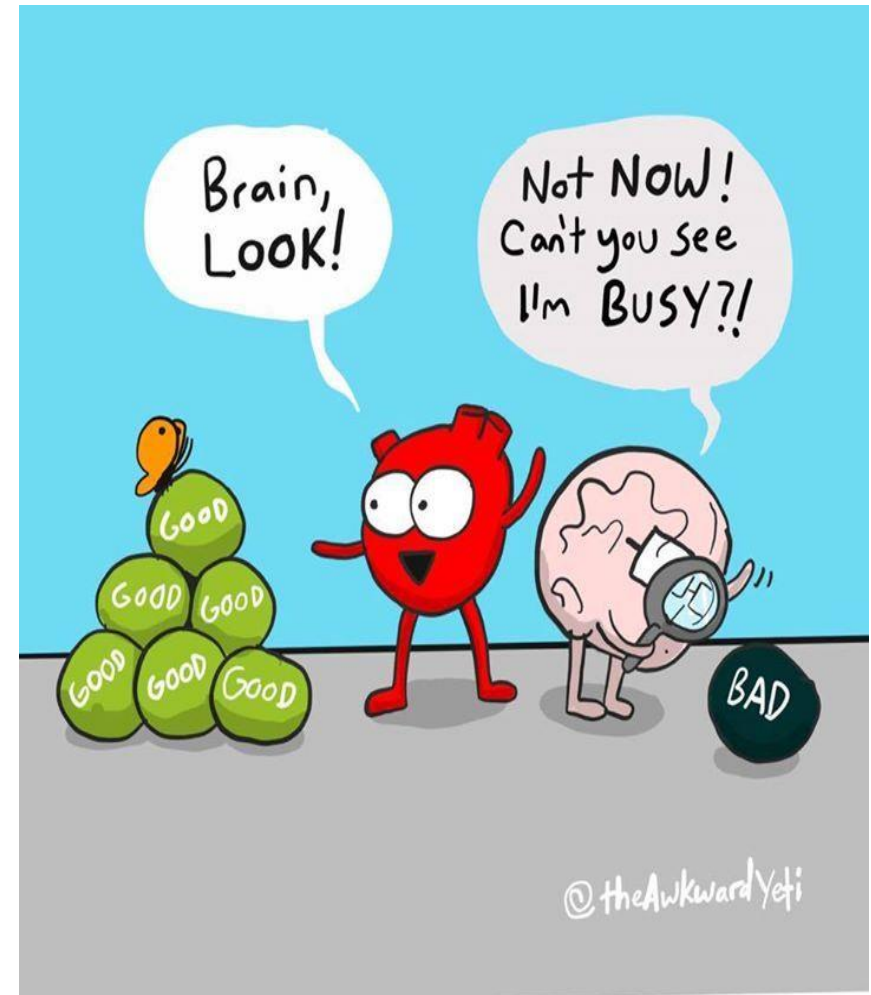
- Demands of our well being increase
- Poor decision making; bankrupt your resilience;
- Impact on our body, mind and emotions....



AND

WHERE WE BECOME...

- REACTIVE
- IMPULSIVE
- EASILY EXHAUSTIVE
- COUNTER PRODUCTIVE
- ON GUARD
- UNABLE TO SEE THE 'GOOD'



Serious outcomes...

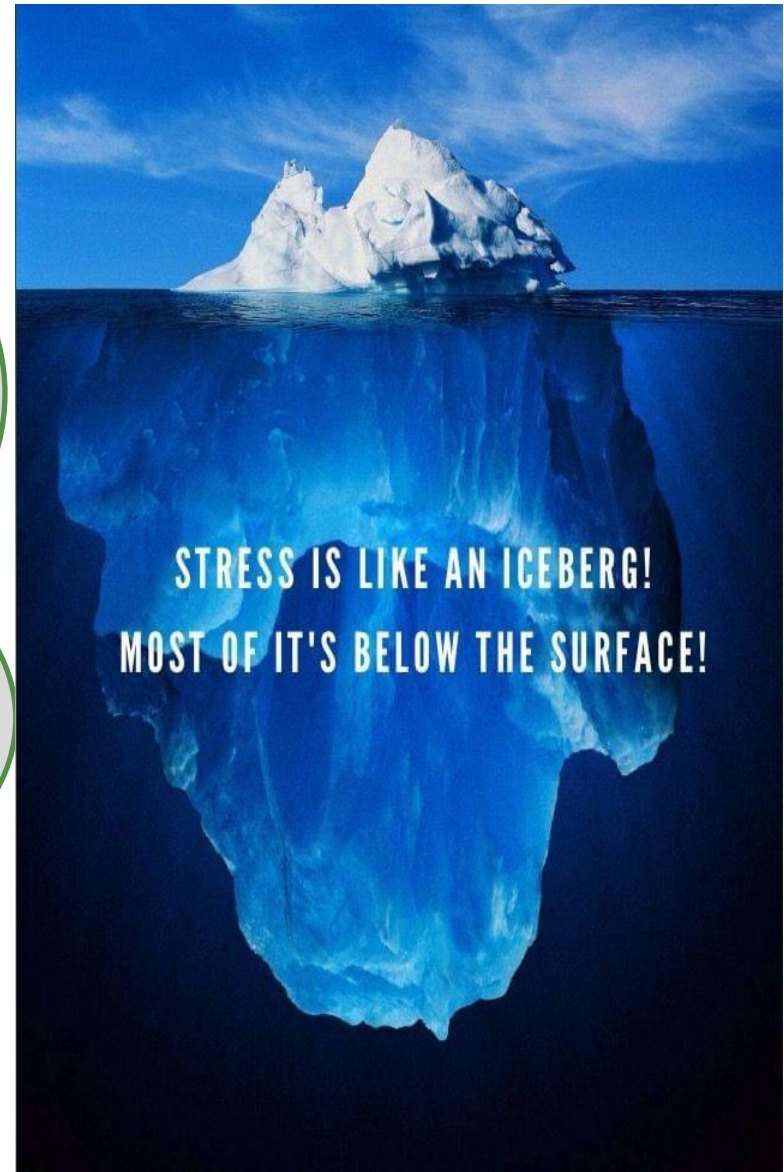
**Restlessness
Sleep**

**Forgetting
things**

**Irritability
& moody**

**Overwhelmed
& isolated**

**Low mood
Sadness**



‘Look fors’ may indicate MH concern for younger children

- ✓ Frequent changing mood/emotions
- ✓ Easily hurt feelings, crying, anger
- ✓ Ongoing temper tantrums, throwing things, hitting people
- ✓ Ongoing sadness and lack of interest in things they normally enjoy
- ✓ Withdrawals from friends and family
- ✓ Increased need for contact and reassurance

- ✓ Little motivation for schoolwork/activities
- ✓ Difficulty concentrating
- ✓ Low frustration/tolerance and irritable
- ✓ Increased physical symptoms (headache, stomach ache)
- ✓ Decreased energy, problems with sleep or appetite changes
- ✓ Frequent talking about doom, pessimism; not able to see positive

<https://smho-smso.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Supporting-Mental-Health-and-Wellness-during-the-Return-to-School-Tip-Sheet-EN.pdf>

'Look fors' may indicate MH concern for Teens

- ✓ Outburst anger or distress
- ✓ Frequent irritability
- ✓ Excessive worries and fears about the safety of family, friends and self
- ✓ Increased defiance and opposition
- ✓ School refusal
- ✓ Substance use/abuse

- ✓ Withdrawal from family/friends
- ✓ Ongoing negative remarks about self
- ✓ Interest in activities from younger years
- ✓ Declined grades, low motivation and sleeping
- ✓ Changes in eating, sleeping;
- ✓ Frequent talking about death, dying; giving possessions away; self harm

'Look fors': not usual

- Unusually withdrawn
- Hyperactive and lacking concentration
- Expressing sadness
- Unusually anxious
- Experiencing disturbed sleep or sleeping more than usual
- Self harming
- Expressing anger or fear
- Asking unusual questions
- Eating more or less than usual
- Less able to focus
- Restless and fidgeting
- Experiencing frequent tummy aches or headaches?

[https://www.hollandbloorview.ca/our-services/family-workshops-resources/covid-19-tip-sheets-and-resources'](https://www.hollandbloorview.ca/our-services/family-workshops-resources/covid-19-tip-sheets-and-resources)
<https://www.scope.org.uk/advice-and-support/>

Strengthening Coping for Children/Youth

- **Thought Re-Direction/Stopping**
- **Thought Re-Framing**
- **Thought Re-Challenging**
- **Pausing**

What We CANNOT Control

What We CAN Control

Washing my hands/
wearing a mask

Positive attitude, thoughts and
beliefs

Gratitude for what I have
Doing enjoyable things; learning
new things

Being hopeful

Having a healthy routine

Maintaining social connections

Doing my school work

Do my part staying indoors

Being kind/compassion to others

What will
happen to
our World?

People are
losing jobs

Sad news
on TV

What will
happen in
the future?

When will
this end?

Other
people's
behaviour
s

How
others feel
about
you?

I cannot see
my family

People are
suffering/sa
d

Cannot go
outside

Other
people's
health

Thought RE-DIRECTION/STOPPING

Focus on something unrelated to the worry

- replay a happy memory
- focus on something you're looking forward
- replay a favorite movie scene in your mind
- picture your favorite calm place



Positive action

- Write in a gratitude journal
- Move your body! Do your favorite exercise
- Get creative! Paint, draw, doodle, or color
- Write a story or letter

Retrieved from: <https://www.counselorkeri.com/2019/05/12/help-kids-deal-with-worry/>

THOUGHT STOPPING strategies for kids



Say, "Stop!" in your mind



Snap your fingers



Imagine a big red stop sign



Picture your worry as
a bug. Squash it!



Picture your worry as
a balloon. Pop it!



Get up and move!



Sing a song



Replay a memory

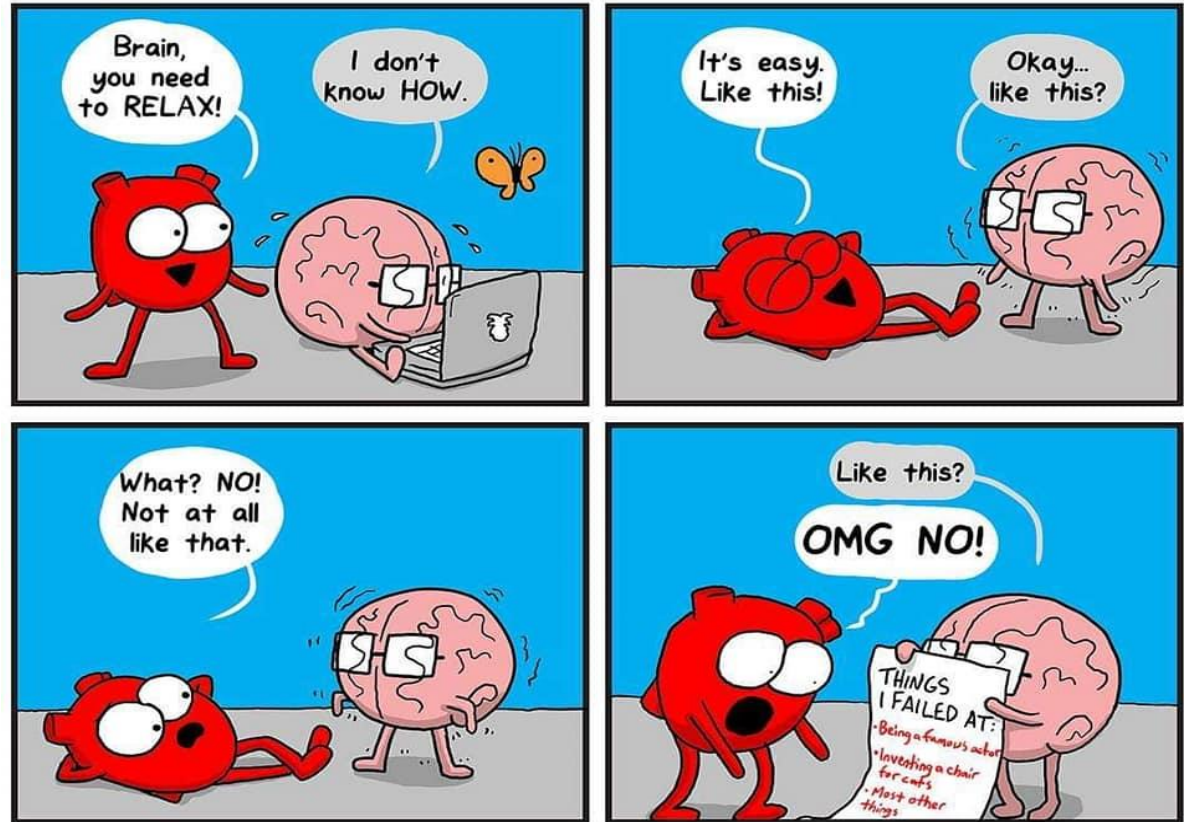


Set a timer

Thought RE-FRAMING






Power of:

- ☐ "yet..."
- ☐ "at this time..."
- ☐ "right now..."



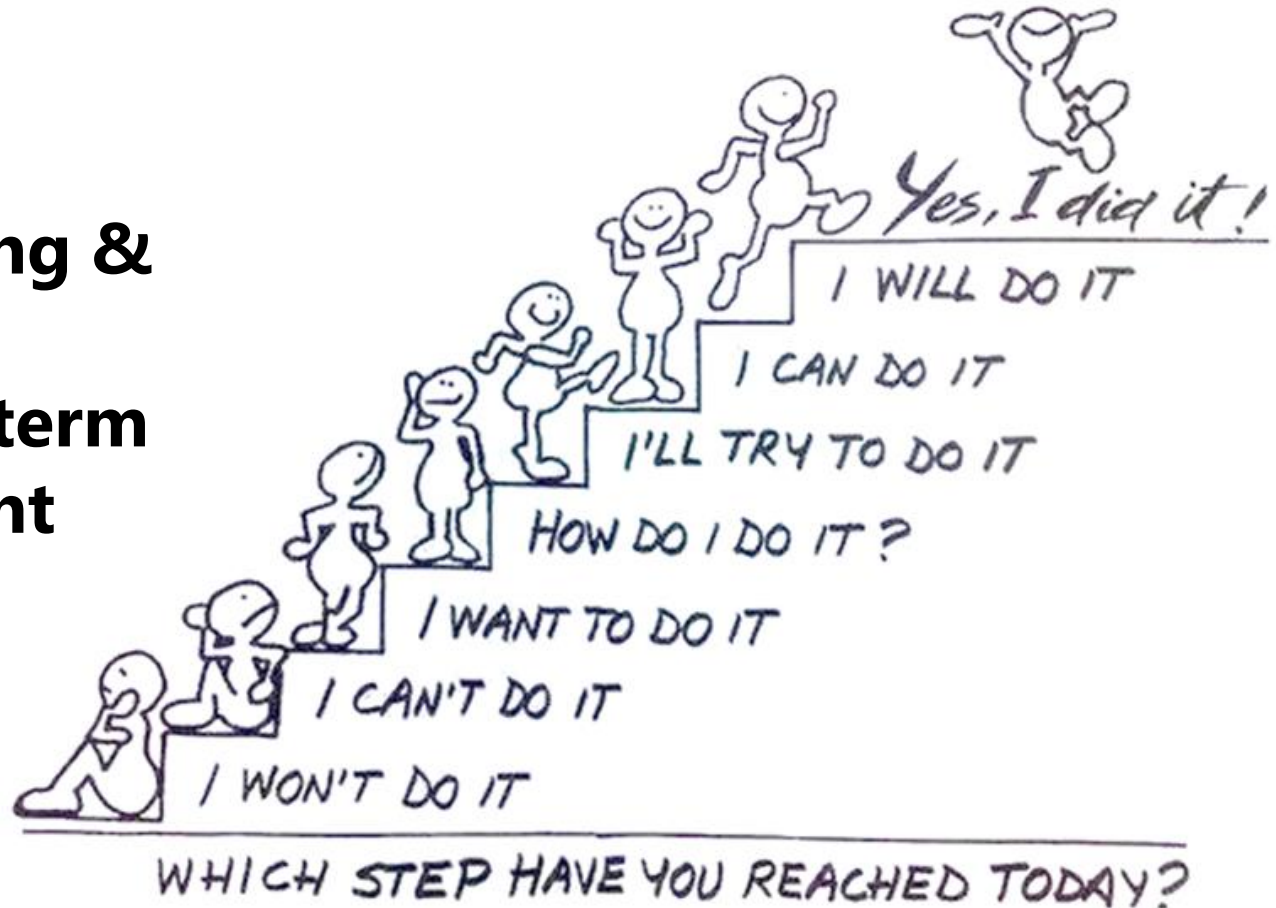
theAwkwardYeti.com

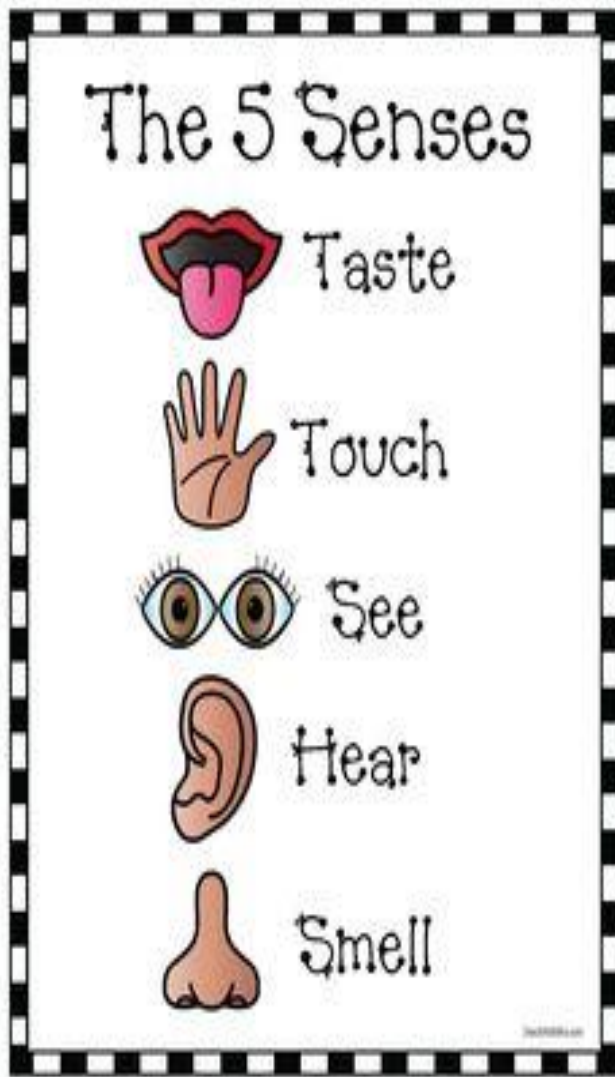
Fixed Mindset vs. Growth Mindset

Instead of <i>"I'm not good at this"</i>		<i>"I can figure this out."</i>
Instead of <i>"I give up"</i>		<i>"I am going to try a different."</i>
Instead of <i>"This is too hard"</i>		<i>"This might take some time to solve."</i>
Instead of <i>"I made a mistake"</i>		<i>"Mistakes lead to learning."</i>
Instead of <i>"I can't do this"</i>		<i>"I am going to train my brain to do something new."</i>

Thought RE-CHALLENGING

**Small
steps...pacing &
keeping
short/long term
goals in sight**





Four square breathing

breathe in



School
Mental Health
Ontario

Santé mentale
en milieu scolaire
Ontario

GROUNDING

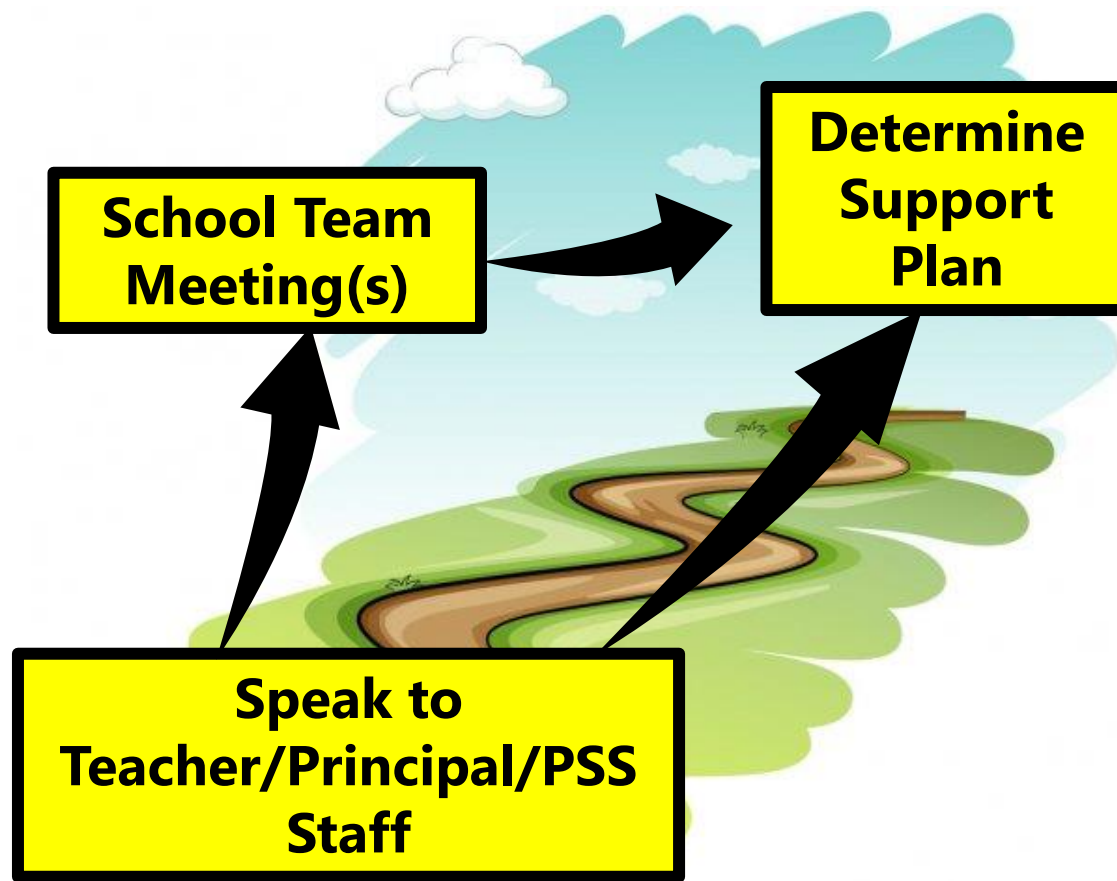
- What are five things you see around you?
- Four things you can touch or feel with your body (e.g., the chair on my back, feet on the floor, fingers on the table)?
- Three things you hear (e.g., a car, the clock, the humming of the vent)?
- Two things you smell or taste (or like to smell and taste)?
- And ask them to take one mindful breath

Supporting Mental Health for Children with Special Educational Needs

Choice making-enhances feelings of control/independence	Give them options; express what they want/need
Support emotional expression early	Using pictures, signs and other communication aids.
Set up a worry/problem box	Start a worry box with your child, especially if they have high anxiety levels
Express emotions	<p>Express and release their emotions in ways that suit them – whether that's through art, music, movement, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Self-talk can often help a child with special educational needs process their feelings effectively.
Acknowledge and label feelings	Identify feelings as they arise. For example, if your child cries, tell them you understand they are sad and back this up with any communication aids you are using.

Write down worries	Visual cues; pictures, feel—use material to support senses/calm/slowing down
Channel energy	<p>Many children with special educational needs have their own unique way of coping.</p> <p>What works for them. (E.g.) through sport or banging a drum.</p>
Try different coping strategies	<p>Teach strategies for coping with difficult situations, such as deep breathing, counting to 10 or down from 10.</p> <p>Break cards are useful for allowing children with special educational needs to leave a situation they find uncomfortable; they can use the card to tell people they want to leave.</p>
Encourage friendships	Having friends and close social relationships is important for all children. Loneliness is often a large factor in mental ill-health.
Play to promote mental and emotional wellbeing	<p>Partnership for Children is an independent charity which provides free resources for parents and teachers to help young children cope with difficult situations Bereavement, bullying or divorce and separation.</p> <p>Try some of their suggested games with your child to help them deal with change, loss, conflict resolution and friendship issues</p>

Pathway to School Support



Professional Support Services (PSS)

- ☐ Child & Youth Services
- ☐ Occupational/Physical Therapists
- ☐ Psychological Services
- ☐ Social Work Services
- ☐ Speech-Language Pathology Services

How can I support my child....

Concerns:

How do I prepare my child for back to school? The 'open-close' of school has been so difficult for them?

First--Take Care of...You....

- ✓ Accept life is different RIGHT NOW
- ✓ **NEW expectations**
- ✓ Recognize the flow of grief/loss
- ✓ Experiment with changes in thinking with "...and"



- ✓ Focus on maintaining and strengthening relationships
- ✓ **Build your coping by trying new/doing old things that fill your souls**

- ✓ **Nourish (physically & mentally)**
- ✓ **Sleep**
- ✓ **Reflect**
- ✓ **Be Gentle (you & others)**
- ✓ **Committed (prioritize well-being)**
- ✓ **Stay Active**
- ✓ **Connect (peers/family/networks)**

✓ **Pause**



☐ **Positive sticky reminders**

☐ **3 things you are grateful for;**

☐ **Laugh**

☐ **Embrace growth mindset-journaling; bubblegum; music**

☐ **"Letting it go"**

☐ **"What do I have control over?"**

You will soon understand that **work** is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back. But the other four Balls – **Family, Health, Friends and Spirit** – are made of glass. If you drop one of these; they will be irrevocably scuffed, marked, nicked, damaged or even shattered. They will never be the same. You must understand that and strive for it.”



go to
www.fridaysvideo.com



Back to School

1. Organize

- Practice mask wearing/hand washing
- Role play/talk about 'what if's'
- What can you control?

2. Talk about the Return to School

- School website
- Check in daily
- Drive by the school/route
- Plan after school family activities/debriefing

3. Pay Attention to Transition Stress/Anxiety

4. Introduce Familiar Routines

Concerns:

My 12 year old son is refusing to participate in online schooling but he wants to stay on his cell phone and game for hours.

Supports:

Connect & Content & Context

- ❑ **Break** from the computer screen—tell the teacher
- ❑ **Compassionate with boundaries**—I know you want to play although not during dinner time...
- ❑ **Brainstorm alternatives** with your child/youth—activities menu/reading menu/cooking menu
- ❑ Keep '**screen**' **schedule** and stick to it

Be compassionate to
YOURSELVES—

****** children/youth have great capacity for resilience—

****** something did not work first time—stay the route



Concerns

My child is has been diagnosed with Autism and I am worried about all these transitions—I have noticed they are withdrawn...I am worried.

Supports

1. Practising routines
2. Develop a written routine
3. Review past visual strategies
4. Write a social story
5. Create a sensory-safe space
6. Share helpful strategies with the teacher
7. Consider fatigue with transition
8. Encourage communication

<https://www.autismparentingmagazine.com/transition-back-to-school-with-autism/>

Concerns:

My teen has no motivation to do her school work. I am worried she is falling behind and just wants to watch Netflix shows and talk to her friends.

Supports:

- ❑ Speak to the teacher to gather the **realistic expectations**
- ❑ **Learn** about the academic supports available
- ❑ Flexibility as we may need to alter our expectations during COVID—need to establish **NEW expectations** for academics
- ❑ Keep wellbeing and mental health in the **forefront.**

Concerns:

- My 8 year old has always been such a social child—now I am worried they will have trouble making friends and I am worried they are feeling lonely.

Supports:

- ☐ **Create connections** with family, friends, neighbours, peers and classes
 - ☐ Schedule these in with people so you can look forward to a virtual get together/phone get together
- ☐ Dedicate even a small amount of **time** in your day for one-on-one time with your child/ren.
- ☐ **School virtual socialization**; Teacher check in's as a Caring Adult
- ☐ **Scheduled time** with the teacher/write down questions/inquiries
- ☐ Strengthen positivity by encouraging them to see what 'gifts' they received in their day-**Gratitude**
- ☐ Outside in a safe space with peers (physical distancing)
- ☐ Virtual volunteerism for others (making cards, crafts)
- ☐ Chores around the home as a team

Concerns:

- My 6 year old told me last night that the other kids in the neighbourhood do not want to be near them—as they think she has COVID by going to school.

Supports:

- What can you control?
- **Compassion**—others are dealing with challenges and how difficult things are in different ways
- Developing **'Community Care'**: caregivers/community about working together and helping their children normalize their fears.
- We cannot take on how other people are dealing with stress, worry, their health—can only worry about what we can control
- Give some suggestions to them on how they can not worry so much? (*ex. Thought Stopping Strategies*)

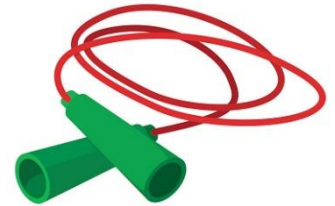
Concerns:

- I am worried my kids are not getting enough physical activity—they are not involved in any of their activities anymore because of COVID.

Supports:

Make it an event!!!

- *Scheduled*
- *Everyone gets to pick an activity*
- *Creative in your home/out of the home*
- *Every hour/commercial—do something!*
- *Peer group virtual dancing, singing, concerts*
- *Stretching incorporated in the mornings/before bed/throughout the day*



Q: I don't have the time???

**A: YOU must make the time—give yourself
PERMISSION to make time for
yourself/loved ones**

Caregivers & Parent Office Hours

- **Beginning February 16th, 2021**
- **Drop in TUESDAYS 10AM-11AM & THURSDAYS 7PM-8PM**
- **Come and ask questions about how to support your child or teen's mental health and wellbeing with Professional Support Services staff**
- ***(social workers, psychologists, child and youth services, speech-language pathologists & occupational/physical therapists)***

Mental Health Supports/Resources

- ❑ Everyday Mental Health strategies for classroom (students) <https://smho-smso.ca/emhc/>
- ❑ Jack.org <https://jack.org/Home>
- ❑ TDSB-Mental Health/Wellbeing supports: <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/In-Person-Learning/Resources-During-Covid-19>
- ❑ Student Mental Health Action Kit <https://smho-smso.ca/covid-19/educators/>
- ❑ Supporting Mentally Healthy Conversations about Anti-Black Racism for Students <https://smho-smso.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Conversations-Anti-Black-Racism.pdf>
- ❑ Kids Help Phone Line [Kids Help Phone](#) at 1-800-668-6868 or texting CONNECT to 686868
- ❑ <https://shaylasvoice.com/>
- ❑ **Mental Health TO** at 1-866-585-6486 for free phone or video mental health counselling for infants, children, youth and families (What's Up Walk-In Clinic <https://www.whatsupwalkin.ca/service-providers/>)4
- ❑ <https://www.hollandbloorview.ca/our-services/family-workshops-resources/covid-19-tip-sheets-and-resources>



THANK YOU