

Mind your health

Mental health is a part of our overall health. It can determine how we think, what we feel and how we behave. Our mental health can have a great impact on our relationships, self-esteem and ability to learn new things. Mental health issues can happen to anyone regardless of age or circumstance.

Did you know that one in five students struggle with mental health? This is why it is so important to talk to your children about mental health and be able to recognize signs of poor mental health.

What are signs of poor mental health?

- Avoiding friends and family
- Rebelling against authority
- Not doing things they used to enjoy
- Frequent mood swings
- Getting significantly lower marks in school

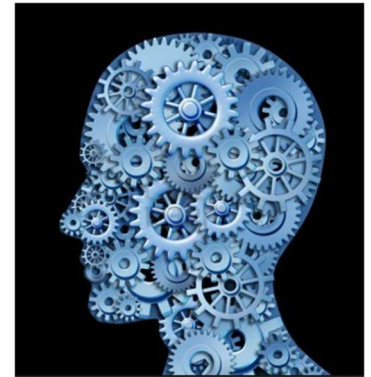
What can you do as a parent to help your children develop good mental health?

- Encourage children to talk about their feelings
- Respect their feelings
- Stay positive and avoid being judgmental
- Take children to their family doctor to explore concerns

Your child can speak over the phone or chat online with a counselor from Kids Help Phone at 1-800-668-6868 or kidshelpphone.ca

For more information visit publichealthgreybruce.on.ca/Your-Environment/Healthy-Schools

This material is provided by Grey Bruce Health Unit.



Coping with stress

Stress affects everyone regardless of age and is a normal part of everyday life. Limited amounts of stress can actually motivate us to achieve our goals, but excessive stress can have overwhelming and debilitating effects on our lives. This is why it is so important to have the right tools to positively cope with life's stressors.

Tips to help parents and children positively cope with stress:

- Spend time with your children and try to understand how they are feeling
- Do activities as a family; physical activity is an excellent way to burn off stress
- Give children a chance to calm down; teach them different breathing and relaxation exercises
- Implement a bedtime routine to help children wind down at the end of the day
- Ensure children get the recommended amount of sleep based on their age; tired children get stressed easier

Other great tips to cope with stress:

- Talk to a friend or trusted adult
- Deep breathing
- Physical activity
- Play with a pet
- Get creative; play music, paint, draw or dance
- Stay on top of schoolwork and prioritize workloads
- Ask for help



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Healthy friendships and relationships

Feeling connected and close to others is an important part of good mental health. Friendships and relationships are a big part of a child's educational experience and can greatly impact how students feel and behave in school.

Healthy friendships and relationships:

- Make challenging times more manageable for your child
- Increase your child's resiliency
- Promote your child's social skill development as well as teaches him or her how to positively relate to others
- Builds your child's confidence, self-esteem and sense of belonging



How can parents help children develop healthy relationships?

- Model healthy relationships at home
- Encourage your child to participate in group activities and hobbies
- Provide opportunities for social interactions outside of school
- Encourage diversity by inviting your child to get to know children from different backgrounds
- Be open and non-judgmental when talking to your child about friendships

Having a positive social support system is important in maintaining positive mental health, which contributes to overall wellbeing.

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Take five – breathing exercise

Deep breathing is one of the best ways to manage emotions and cope with stress. Deep breathing exercises can quickly change a stressful response into a relaxation response.

Try this breathing exercise with your child:

1. Start with one hand – stretch your fingers out like a star
2. With your other hand use your pointer finger to trace the hand that is stretched out
3. Trace your hand – slowly slide up one side and down the other side of each finger
4. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth
5. Now put the last two steps together – breathe in through your nose as you trace up one finger and breathe out through your mouth as you trace down. Keep going until you have finished tracing your hand.



This simple relaxation tool can be performed by anyone, anywhere and at any time.

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