

A Wellness Message

Holy Spirit Catholic Schools

Coordinator of Counselling and Wellness

May 4, 2020



The Canadian Mental Health Association's Annual Mental Health Week is May 4-10, 2020

The theme of this year's Mental Health Week is **social connection #GetReal**. Connecting with other people and our communities doesn't just feel good. It's good for our mental health. Research shows that social connection and social support are factors that protect and promote good mental health. Feeling socially connected means you feel close and connected to others, and you don't have to be in physical proximity to nurture a sense of closeness and connection. Social isolation and loneliness are bad for everyone's mental health. (CMHA 2020)

https://mentalhealthweek.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/CMHA-MHW2020-Animated-Gif-Artwork.mp4?_=1

Social Distancing Survival Guide-How to Stay Connected

We are used to having built-in ways to connect. We connect at school and at work, at events and social activities, even with our neighbours in the grocery store. We have visited and we have socialized. And maybe, until now, we've seen all of that connection as simply a part of our everyday life. We can't any longer. For the time being, it's not a built-in feature of our lives. We have to go looking for connection and we have to be creative. We need to make an effort to reach out to each other. (CMHA 2020)

<https://mentalhealthweek.ca/your-social-distancing-survival-guide/>

Finding a New Normal - Alberta Health Services Guide

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/news/features/2020/Page15441.aspx>

We Can Connect Emotionally...

This is a time of uncertainty, and may provoke anxiety, not only in adults, but also in our children. If you are a parent, you may be looking for ways to help your child(ren) cope in this public health crisis (CMHA 2020). Here are some guidelines.

Be calm and reassuring.

Now is the time to *love big*. Be sure to show and tell your children that you love them. Be present and give them extra attention. The tendency might be to stay over-connected to your news sources, but limit the time you spend on your own devices. The best time to check in on the news may be after bedtime.

Take care of yourself.

Children take their emotional cues from the important adults in their lives. Your child will feel your calm, and they will also pick up on your anxiety. Expect questions and be extra patient in answering. Make sure they understand that adults all around the world are taking care of people. All the precautions being taken, like closing schools, are there to protect them from the illness. It is definitely not the child's job to worry. Give clear, child-friendly information about how to stay safe. This will give them a greater sense of control and will reduce their anxiety.

Dr. Jody Carrington reminds us that "we are wired to do the hard stuff- but we are so much better at handling that hard stuff when we are *connected*."

Build Resiliency by Learning New Skills-for Parents

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/three_ways_to_boost_your_resilience_as_a_parent



Teens Need Your Support Too!

(12 minute video clip - how to talk to your teen)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2I5GkIiL0>

How to Self-Hug with Abby Cadabby

(2 minute video clip- Sesame Street)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xa_qNH8u3OM&feature=youtu.be

Make Connections in Meaningful Ways

https://www.actionforhappiness.org/media/875760/may_2020.jpg



Create A Time Capsule

<https://s3.letsembark.ca/long-creations/2020-COVID-19-Time-Capsule-EN-CA.pdf>



Be honest and accurate.

Make sure you know the facts and that you're relying only on credible sources. Monitor what your children are reading or watching. There is a lot of misinformation out there. Be reassuring: Children often imagine situations far worse than reality. Explain that, for now, very few people in this country are sick with COVID-19 and that most people get better.

Keep to routines but don't forget to play!

In the absence of usual routines, try to create new ones. Keep to usual bedtimes, meal times and exercise. Make opportunities for children to play and relax. Do creative things with them. Work together on a creative project.

We Can Connect by Sharing a Meal...

Fuel your body with healthy foods to combat stress and help support your immune system and overall health. Creating a home that supports healthy eating habits is just as important as the foods you eat. You can be a role model for others in your household. Your healthy eating habits may encourage those around you to make healthy choices too (Canada's Food Guide).

There is great value in sharing family meals. Involve your kids in planning and preparing family meals and snacks. Mealtime is a great opportunity to bring the family together. Eating together as a family benefits everyone. It can help the whole family share and connect with one another, take time to enjoy and relax over a meal, talk about events that occurred during their day, nurture healthy eating habits, increase self-confidence, share cultural and family traditions, set the foundation for children to learn and improve food skills. (AHS 2020)

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/nutrition/if-nfs-quick-and-easy-meals.pdf>

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/nutrition/if-nfs-wake-up-to-breakfast.pdf>

We Can Connect Through Exercise...

Move your body every day to improve your family's mental, physical and social wellness. Research shows that physical activity is linked to positive mental health outcomes. Physical activity can improve mood and self-esteem, decrease stress and anxiety, and help mitigate feelings of depression and grief. It is also important for learning, concentration and social connection. Physical activity is equally important for a healthy body and can boost the immune system. During this time of physical distancing, it is important to get the whole family moving! Make movement fun and try some new creative ways to be active together. The goal is for children and youth to get 60 minutes of heart pumping physical activity each day. (Participation 2020)

Mindful Walking

<http://befitforlife.ca/resources/mindfulwalking>

Jump and Play Yard Games

<https://lethbridgecollege.ca/externalapps/bffl/jump-and-play-yard-games.pdf>

Backyard Workout

<https://lethbridgecollege.ca/externalapps/bffl/backyard-workout.pdf>

Break out the Dance Moves! (Dance like Spider-Man)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?>

Alberta Health Resources Help in Tough Times

We are blessed in Holy Spirit Schools and have many compassionate adult caregivers who want to support and help you. We have our faith and the strength of our **prayers** to help us through these challenging days. Remember that you are never alone and that you are always in the loving arms of Jesus.

Please feel free to contact your child's school in order to connect with the **Family School Liaison Counsellor** should you wish for mental health supports and guidance.

If your child already has an anxiety disorder, your child may be feeling more anxious than usual. Be especially attentive to your child's words and actions. For instance, notice if your child is having trouble sleeping or is in need of excessive reassurance. Reach out to your health care provider if your child is not coping well with worry.

For **mental health resources** and other supports, please click on the link below.

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/amh/Page16759.aspx>



Kissing the Face of God
Oil on Canvas, 2001 Morgan Weistling

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/eoskins/11543789284/in/photostream/lightbox/>