

PROMOTING POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS

Starting the conversation

- Remind your child they can share anything with you and assure them you will not judge or be upset with them
- Begin by talking about any changes you have noticed in their behaviour, and any comments or observations from their teachers, friends or family
- Tell them you are interested to hear about how they may be feeling
- Pause to give your child a chance to think about what was said before they answer
- Manage your own emotions, and do not give up, even if your child pushes you away; remind them you are there for them, and allow them time before you bring it up again
- If your child shares something that worries you, tell them you are happy they shared this with you, and you will help them; reassure them you will find the appropriate professional if needed and support them through the process

Build positive coping skills

- Spend time with your child and try to understand how they are feeling
- Do activities as a family; physical activity is an excellent way to burn off stress
- Give your child a chance to calm down; teach them different coping exercises to relax such as deep breathing or [take five breathing](#)
- Implement a bedtime routine to help your child wind down at the end of the day
- Ensure your child gets the recommended amount of sleep based on their age; tired children get stressed easier
- Try [activities at home to assist coping with stress](#) (e.g., deep breathing, gratitude, kindness jar)
- Work with your child to recognize the signs of excessive stress
- Encourage your child to build coping skills including talking to friends and trusted adults, staying active, being creative, playing with pets, listening to music, asking for help



Ensure a good night's sleep

- Set up a regular routine and bedtime to prepare the mind and body for sleep
- Encourage your child to be physically active daily
- Avoid caffeine (e.g., pop, energy drinks, chocolate) especially after mid-afternoon

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- Avoid napping (if needed, limit naps to 30 minutes and do not nap in the evening)
- Limit the use of electronics (cellphones, TV) and turn off bright lights one hour before bedtime
- Ages 6 to 12 years require 9 to 12 hours of sleep
- Teens require 8 to 10 hours of sleep



Help build resiliency

- Actively listen and be present when your child is talking with you; make time to connect with them, such as eating a meal, sharing a laugh, or doing a fun activity together
- Encourage your child to share their feelings and respect their emotions; role model healthy ways of managing stress and help your child label and describe their feelings
- Develop confidence, skills, and self-esteem by participating in opportunities that build on your child's interests and strengths, such as helping with chores, organized activities and setting goals
- Role model positive thinking by practicing daily gratitude; offer positive and realistic ways to look at challenges

Support the development of positive 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 your child to get to know children from diverse backgrounds and abilities
- Be open and non-judgmental when talking to your child about their friendships

Manage screen time

Healthy screen use can be encouraged by following the [4 M's of Digital Wellbeing](#):

- **Manage** screen use through plans, rules, and limits
- **Meaningful** screen use – time spent online should serve a purpose
- **Model** healthy screen use such as screen-free mealtimes to enjoy eating and connecting with one another — you are the best example!
- **Monitor** for signs of problematic screen use and appropriate content



Resources

- Strong Minds Strong Kids [Promoting resiliency by buffering the impacts of stress](#)
- [School Mental Health Ontario](#)
- [Kids Help Phone: Get Better Sleep with These Tips](#)
- [Canadian Pediatric Society: Teens and Sleep](#)
- [ScreenTimeNetwork.org Dear Parents - Screen Use Conversation Resource \(screentimenetwork.org\)](#)
- [Find mental health support | ontario.ca](#)