

Student Mental Health and Well-Being



TCDSB Mental Health Services provided by **Psychology, Social Work, and Guidance** personnel

“Reading” Our Kids: What are our children telling us? (source : Psychology

Foundation of Canada)

Heading “back to school” is like starting a NEW YEAR. Like any beginnings, there is excitement and anxiety all wrapped up into the same situation. As Parents and caring adults we often wonder about how to distinguish when a young person may be having trouble navigating the anxiety part of the equation. Stress is a normal part of life, and learning about it and how to make it “work” for you, is a lesson that pays dividends well into the future.

Helping children recognize four signs and symptoms of their own stress is key to helping them become confident and productive adults, according to experts at The Psychology Foundation of Canada. Back-to-school is filled with increased excitement and challenges for children and with some kids jam-packed with uncharacteristic behaviours too and adults are pivotal in working with children to adopt strategies that enable them to manage the inevitable highs and lows of a new school year.

The Psychology Foundation of Canada has been helping parents, educators and caregivers with the awareness, knowledge and skills to help children become more resilient and healthier by learning to manage their stress through their *Kids Have Stress Too!*[®] program.

Robin Alter, Co-Chair of The Psychology Foundation of Canada’s *Kids Have Stress Too!* program and practicing child psychologist. “If we don't recognize when we are stressed and then appropriately de-stress, stress can become counterproductive and overwhelming, causing a lot of physical and psychological problems over the long term. But if we learn to identify the stress response, and de-stress when we feel too stressed, we can handle stress appropriately and have satisfying, productive and exciting lives.”

We’re pleased to send you the September 2017 edition of the Student Mental Health and Well-Being Newsletter. Please feel free to share and pass it along. Talk to your school’s psychology or social work staff for more information.

The Psychology Foundation of Canada’s *Kids Have Stress Too!* program is a broad based prevention program which includes videos, lesson plans and various age-appropriate tool kits. An integral part of the program is helping to identify, and having the children themselves recognize, the signs and symptoms of stress with these four indicators:

1. **CHANGES IN YOUR BODY:** tense muscles, headaches, stomach aches, rapid heartbeat, being cold or hot, skin rash, shakiness, disturbed sleep, fatigue, illness
2. **KNOWING YOUR MIND:** poor concentration, forgetfulness, difficulty problem solving, being easily distracted, confusion, being irrational
3. **CHECKING YOUR EMOTIONS:** fear, anxiety, frustration, sadness, worry, anger, panic, being hyper-sensitive, irritable, or feeling helpless or hopeless, withdrawing and difficulty regulating emotions
4. **DEVIATIONS IN BEHAVIOURS:** whining, crying, nail-biting, day dreaming, fighting with others, being overly cautious, performing poorly in school, eating more or less than usual, bullying, having difficulty calming down, not listening, participating or cooperating, remaining quiet, or becoming detached or withdrawn.



Source of Infographic: Johns Hopkins Medical Centre

BACK-TO-SCHOOL HEALTH: 4 TIPS FOR PARENTS

Tip One: Focus on Your Child's Nutrition


17% of youth aged two to 19 in the United States are obese


40% of total daily calories for two to 18 year olds are empty calories from added sugars and solid fats

IF YOU HAVE A PICKY EATER:

Continue introducing new foods

Be a role model for a healthy diet

Don't use food as a reward



Tip Two: Know the Risks Your School-Aged Child May Face


HEAD LICE
The most common way to get head lice is by head-to-head contact that often happens during play time, sport activities and sleepovers.


SCOLIOSIS
Watch for uneven shoulders or hips, and make sure your child gets regular scoliosis checkups. Early diagnosis is key.


BULLYING
Only 17% of children seek help after being bullied. Don't miss the early signs: changes in behavior, academic problems, anxiety, depression and self-harm.


POOR VISION
Squinting, tilting the head and holding handheld devices too closely are just some of the signs your child may have a vision problem.

Tip Three: Make Sleep a Priority


Children (and adults!) lose sleep due to **OVERUSE** of digital devices


Sleep is **EQUALLY** as important as diet and exercise


Most healthy children need **EIGHT TO 10 HOURS** of sleep each night

ESTABLISH A SLEEP RITUAL:

 Put away electronic devices at least one hour before bedtime

 Avoid exercise, a warm bath or a hot shower shortly before bed

 Encourage children to read a book before bedtime

 A light snack before bed can be beneficial, but avoid caffeine.

Tip Four: Be a Partner in Your Child's Education, Health and Wellness

Start the conversation by talking to teachers about your child's:


Likes and dislikes


Strengths and struggles


Preferred learning styles


Any other issues that may affect them at school



Mental Health Initiatives 2017-18

- Support for schools in developing a mentally healthy classroom. See Supporting Minds on the Ministry's website and edugains.ca.
- Building partnerships with community agencies, families, and parishes.
- Inclusion of mental health to school SLIPs
- safeTALK suicide awareness workshops for staff available via PAL

Fostering The Family:

The TCDSB Pastoral Plan 2015-18 “ Together With one Voice: Harmonizing Our Faith Through Family, Parish, and School” 2017 focuses on the SCHOOL

Family, Parish and School – Unity in Diversity...

Though it is our goal to highlight in depth each community of faith from the educational “village” of family, parish and school every year, it is imperative for us to remember that each of these communities is not simply a discordant or isolated entity; instead, each with the richness of its diversity adds greatness to the harmony of God’s music of love. In other words, the unity of the whole (family, parish and school) does not and should not undermine the uniqueness of the individual. This relationship of unity in diversity reflects St. Paul’s notion of many parts, one body (1 Cor. 12: 12-26). This present pastoral plan challenges us as a Board to continue to encourage this ‘symphony’ and build a harmony with ‘ONE VOICE’ in order to develop, celebrate and nurture the wholeness of the human person in our beautiful but

Suggested Reading and Websites:

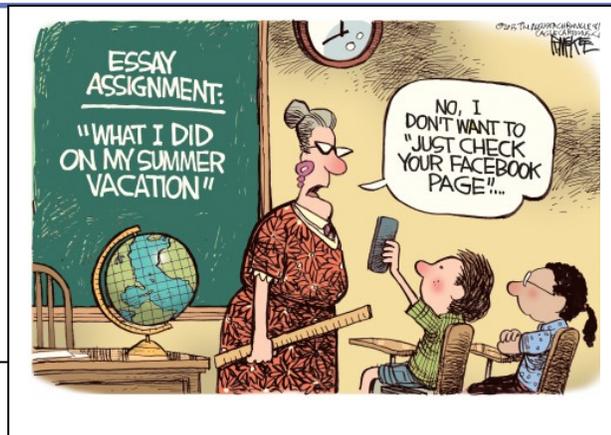
BOOKS See Parent’s Choice Canada for an excellent selection of back to school themed books for students in SK- to grade 7
http://www.parents-choice.org/article.cfm?art_id=166

Websites

www.nasponline.org

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/back-to-school-sleep-tips-for-kids-1.2748638>

Dealing with the Back-to-School Blues? Tips for Parents and Children as the Summer Comes to a Close
<https://www.tcdsb.org/ProgramsServices/SpecialEducation/psychology/Pages/default.aspx>



A Laugh A Day...

“A good sense of humor is a tool that kids can rely on throughout life...” It helps children to “see beyond the surface of things” and “not take themselves too seriously”.

Patricia Marra-Stapleton, Psychological Associate/Mental Health Lead

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