

# TCDSB Student Mental Health Newsletter



Summer 2019



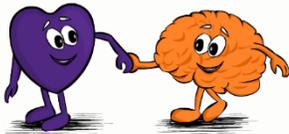
## Transition to Summer Mode

The end of the school year can trigger mixed emotions for many students. Some may be excited for the warm weather, freedom, or specific summer plans. On the other hand, change (even good change) can be difficult. All kids do better with structure and routine, but some students (e.g. those who live with anxiety or ADHD) are especially reliant on the predictability that school provides. To help ensure a positive transition into (and out of) summer, keep the following tips in mind:

- Maintain a schedule, especially with curfews and bedtime.
- Support your child/youth in keeping school friendships.
- Be in the moment and ease up on talk about next school year.
- Set boundaries (e.g. around use of electronics).
- Create opportunities for continued learning (e.g. plant a garden, encourage reading and journaling).



As summer holidays begin, take some time to reflect on the school year with your child/youth. Talk about progress on goals that were set, celebrate successes, and discuss challenges. Talk about hopes and plans for the summer. The TCDSB Mental Health Team wishes all families a safe and rejuvenating summer!



## Get Moving for Mental Health!

Most people are aware that regular physical activity helps keep our bodies strong and physically healthy. But did you know it also plays a significant role in maintaining positive mental health? When we exercise, brain chemicals called endorphins are released, resulting in improved mood, increased energy, and improved sleep. There is evidence that exercise also reduces anxiety and may even protect children and youth from the onset of depression. When children and youth participate in physical activity that is a shared experience with peers (such as a sports team), there are additional benefits. The experience of working with peers towards a common goal can create a sense of belonging even for those who otherwise struggle with making friends. Some children/youth may even experience improvement in symptoms of social anxiety (*Source: AboutKidsHealth.ca*).

Children and youth aged 5-17 should accumulate at least 60 minutes of *moderate to vigorous* physical activity per day (Canadian 24-hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth). Use the template provided at this link to track total physical activity: [http://www.csep.ca/CMFiles/Guidelines/CSEP\\_Guidelines\\_Blank-Log\\_5-17\\_en.pdf](http://www.csep.ca/CMFiles/Guidelines/CSEP_Guidelines_Blank-Log_5-17_en.pdf)

## Summer Movement Ideas for Children/Youth

- Walking, biking, or skateboarding instead of taking transit or driving
- Participation in neighbourhood pick-up games (e.g. basketball, hockey)
- Martial arts programs
- Swimming
- Engage your child/youth in activities you like to do (e.g. tennis, gardening)
- Find out about neighbourhood fitness classes that are age appropriate
- Participation in neighbourhood or school sports teams

Check out this link to free and lower cost recreation options in the City of Toronto:  
<https://www.toronto.ca/explore-enjoy/recreation/free-lower-cost-recreation-options/>



## The Power of Relationship

We all want our children/youth to develop resiliency (the ability to “bounce back” from change, stress, or adversity). Research has demonstrated that the most important factor that supports resiliency is the existence of at least one nurturing relationship with a caring adult. Parenting is a tough job and we can easily feel disconnected, especially when we find ourselves busier than usual or consumed by daily tasks. It can help to build in some simple daily habits of connection that won't add much time to your day.

- Aim for **several physical connections daily**. Create a daily hello and goodbye ritual (e.g. hug, high five, secret handshake); tousle hair as you pass by your child playing or reading; try a shoulder rub before bed).
- **Laugh and play** together. Joke around, be silly, use humour to lighten the mood.
- **Eat meals together**. Turn technology off, ask questions about your child/youth's day.
- Start new **family traditions**. Games night, Friday night movies, making dinner together.
- Schedule **one-on-one time**. Just 15 minutes every day can strengthen your connection.
- **Welcome emotions**. Try to understand from your child/youth's point of view how they are feeling; repeat back to them what they are expressing; resist the urge to tell them they shouldn't feel that way.
- **Bedtime chats**. Allow your child's thoughts and/or worries to come out; review fun, special moments from the day or week.
- Chat in the car or while on a walk. **“Sideways conversations”** can be less intimidating, especially for pre-teens and teens.

(Sources: *PsychologyBenefits.org; PsychologyToday.com*)



## Rooted in Christ: We Belong

As the first year of our current three-year pastoral plan (Rooted in Christ: We Belong, We Believe, We Become) comes to a close, let us continue to remember the importance of promoting belonging within our families, schools, parishes, and communities. Sense of belonging is a human need, not unlike our need for food and water. Meaningful connections with others can act as a buffer against stress, can enhance happiness, and can even protect us against depression (Sources: *TCDSB.org; Psychology Today.com*).

Here are ten ways you can foster a sense of belonging in your child/youth within the family, community, and parish this summer:

1. **Model** acceptance of others, compassion, and inclusion.
2. Encourage children/youth to **join** clubs, teams, or parish youth groups.
3. Participate together in **community** clean-up days.
4. Encourage your child to **volunteer** in a setting they are interested in.
5. Teach and model **“acts of kindness.”**
6. Establish **family** rituals and routines.
7. **Invite** your child/youth's friends to your home.
8. Get to know your **neighbours**.
9. Attend community, parish, and neighbourhood **events**.
10. Ask for and **validate** your child/youth's opinion (even if you disagree).

## Community Mental Health Resources

**Kids Help Phone** 1-800-668-6868

[www.kidshelpphone.ca](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca)

*Professional and confidential counseling available 24/7 via phone. Text and live chat also available – see website.*

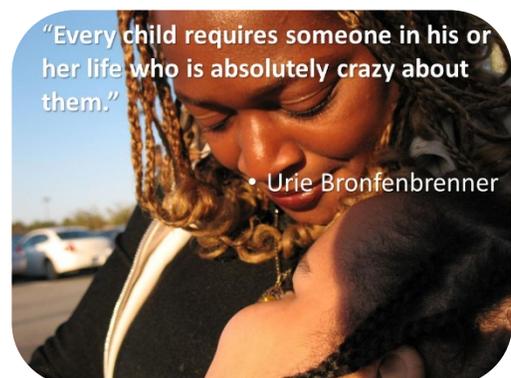
**What's Up Walk-In Counseling**

[www.whatsupwalkin.ca](http://www.whatsupwalkin.ca)

*Professional and confidential walk-in counseling for children, youth, young adults and their families. No fee. No appointment. No Health Card. Six locations across Toronto. See website for locations and hours of operation.*

**211 Toronto** [www.211toronto.ca](http://www.211toronto.ca)

*24/7 information and referral to community and social services.*

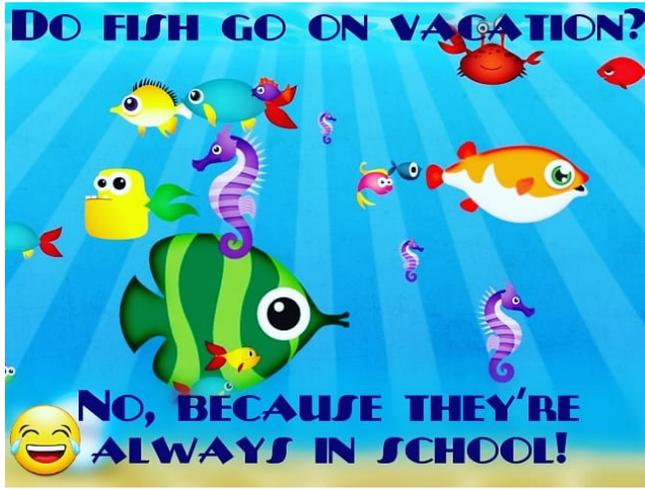


*“Every child requires someone in his or her life who is absolutely crazy about them.”*

• Urie Bronfenbrenner



A Laugh a Day...



When do you go at red and stop at green?



When you're eating a watermelon!!!

[momvstheboys.com](http://momvstheboys.com)

## Student Mental Health Initiatives: Highlights from 2018 - 2019

- Creation of a new Student Mental Health Strategy for 2019-2022, to be released next school year. The current strategy can be found here: <https://www.tcdsb.org/programsservices/specialeducation/mhs/pages/mental-health-strategy.aspx>
- Support to schools to maintain mentally healthy classrooms through staff professional development and consultation.
- Collaboration with community mental health agencies in the promotion of mental health for all.
- Continued mental health support for students through our guidance counselors, social workers, psychology staff, CYWs; as well as referrals to community mental health agencies.
- Suicide awareness workshops (safeTalk) offered to all staff; and suicide intervention workshops (ASIST) offered to social workers, psychology staff, guidance counselors, and school administrators.
- Hiring of six Mental Health Professional Workers who work in partnership with existing regulated mental health professionals in secondary schools.