

**REMEMBER**

- Help the teen retain as much of a voice as they can as you help them get connected to support services. Never do for them what they can do for themselves because that reinforces a sense of powerlessness which brings despair.
- Encourage the youth to stick with services that are in place for them such as counselling, medication prescribed by a doctor/psychiatrist, or a support group. You can also speak hope into their situation, reminding them that many people have made it through what they are going through - they aren't the only one.
- Positive parent involvement makes a huge difference. Connect the parent to resources and support such as www.familysmart.ca.
- Invite the teen to imagine a picture that symbolizes their situation. Then ask Jesus to show them where He is in that picture. He is there—in the middle of the messiness.

**RECOGNIZE**

- ▶ Mental health allows a person to meet the demands of everyday life from a place of emotional/psychological well-being. Poor mental health is the opposite.
- ▶ Mental illness is one possible reason for poor mental health. It is a health problem that affects thoughts, feelings, and behaviours making it difficult to meet the demands of everyday life.
- Someone can have a mental illness and good mental health; someone can have no mental illness and poor mental health. Mental illness does not need to determine the quality of someone's life.
- Some common mental health disorders in teens are anxiety disorders, depression, conduct disorder, ADD/ADHD, alcohol use disorder, and eating disorders.
- By the age of 25, more than 20% of Canadian youth experience a mental illness but less than half of those access services.
- It can sometimes be difficult to know if changes in a teen's behaviour are part of adolescence or something more serious. If a teen is having difficulty coping with life and also suffers from sleep difficulties, little interest in what used to bring them joy, loss of appetite, isolation, and personality shifts it's time for some concern.

**RESPOND**

- **Educate yourself** - especially around anxiety, depression, and substance use disorder. Become aware of the information and help that is available.
- **Develop a net of support** for the teen. The amount of care required by mental health concerns is too heavy for one helper to manage alone. Together is better.
- **Encourage a visit to their doctor** to explore what may be going on inside.
- **If the young person is reluctant to seek help**, talk about their reasons. Chances are they may feel that nothing will help or they may be embarrassed about being seen as "crazy".
- **Discover online information** about mental health with the teen to help them recognize that they aren't the only one.
- **Warn them** that getting professional help can involve lots of waiting. Look at options with them and move multiple directions at once because there's rarely one answer.
- **Advocate for them** if they are not getting the help they need. Be the squeaky wheel.
- **Make a list together** of the things they can do to offer positive support to themselves. Explore the impact of grounding their thoughts, physical exercise and regular sleep/healthy diet with them. Connect them to a 24 hour crisis line that they can call when things are overwhelming.
- **Remember** that if the inability to manage overtakes them, the E.R. at the hospital always has a psychiatrist on call.

**RESOURCES**

Child and Youth Mental Health is a government funded resource in every community, available to assess and provide supports such as counselling, referrals and groups, as well as connection to a psychiatrist. Call and speak to an intake worker about the process.

mindcheck.ca - Helps youth and youth workers to better understand the impact of mental health concerns.

"Booster Buddy" is a mental health app that teaches coping skills, helps manage meds, and supports them on the journey. Download for free in the app store.