

Parents and Caregivers' Information Sheet

Grade 9 - 2024-25

MENTAL HEALTH

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN VIOLENCE PREVENTION, HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AND MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is at the heart of all healthy relationships. Everyone has a mental health and it is by taking care of their mental health that each person can continue to maintain healthy relationships. Mental health is something that affects every teenager in different ways.

According to the BC Adolescent Health Survey, 64% of youth reported having felt depressed in the last month. In addition, 89% described having been stressed, with 10% saying it prevented them from participating in every day functions.

These alarming numbers reveal the importance of discussing mental health and how crucial mental health is when talking about healthy relationships as healthy relationship with ourselves is one of the most important relationships to develop and maintain.

Discussions concerning mental health have multiple objectives.

The first is to spread awareness of the different ways to take care of one's own mental health by using stress management techniques, to learn about the different types of diagnoses, as well as the effects that stigmatization can have on mental health treatments (see below).

Secondly, when discussing mental health, we also talk about the services that are available in schools, and in the community.

According to the 2020 research by Reichert & Associates on JLRS's impact, they measured the difference in the youth's knowledge on resources available to them before and after the JLRS workshops. They observed 35% more (46% to 81%) youth declared they felt well equipped with the resources they needed in case a friend found themselves in an unhealthy relationship.



STIGMATIZATION: WHAT IS IT?

Stigma is the collection of attitudes, beliefs, stereotypes, and negative behaviours that surrounds mental health. It is because of stigmatization that, oftentimes, a person (teens and adults alike) does not talk about their mental health. There is a fear of being ridiculed, judged, or not listened to.

Stigmatization happens everywhere, even at home, and it can affect the bond between parents and their children. In the same survey as above, 63% of teenagers mentioned that the main reason they have not tried to communicate their struggles with their mental health is that they did not want their parents to know. This statistic shows that there is still much work that needs to be done to reduce stigmas associated with mental health, so that youth can feel comfortable discussing this with their parents and that parents/guardians feel comfortable having these discussions with their teens.

STIGMA CAN:

- Cause a person to avoid asking for help for fear of being judged.
- Pushing a person to hide their drug use or to use drugs alone;
- Contribute to people who use drugs receiving lower quality care from the health system when they access services.

TIPS FOR A STIGMA-FREE HOUSEHOLD

Here are some ways to ensure that the household environment is conducive to mental health discussions:

- Avoid making jokes and be mindful of the language you use. "I am so depressed," "I am so OCD when it comes to cleaning" can seem innocent, but this language contributes to stigma, by making it seem as though you do not take mental health seriously and youth may feel uncomfortable for fear of being ridiculed.
- Discuss mental health openly with your teen. The conversations on mental health do not need to be lengthy, they can simply open space for discussion on various topics.
- Mental health is just as important as a teen's physical health. The question "What have you done to better your mental health today?" can make a difference.



SIGNS THAT YOUR TEEN MAY BE HAVING A HARD TIME:

Confessions that things are not going well can appear in different ways. Just as your teen can come and literally tell you "something's wrong," it is possible that there may be signs that things are not going well. Some of these include:

- They no longer participate in activities that they previously enjoyed;
- A lack of patience or have increased irritability;
- A change in personality;
- They become obsessed with something, like exercise, eating or their grades;
- They have trouble or difficulty sleeping;
- They reduce their socialization or begin isolating themselves.

YOUR TEEN CONFIDES IN YOU, WHAT NEXT?

Here are suggestions of what to do after your teen has confided in you about things not going well:

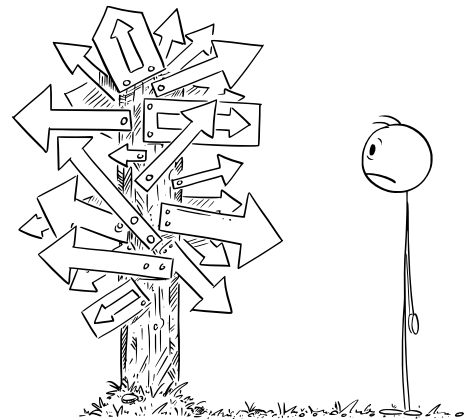
- Take the time to listen. Oftentimes, it is easy to want to find solutions when, sometimes, the best thing you can do is to simply listen.
- Avoid comparisons like: "I had it much worse when I was your age, get it together" or "Your sibling went through the same thing and they are fine." These comparisons do not help because they invalidate the teen's feelings and, next time, they will not feel as comfortable coming to you.
- Thank your teen for confiding in you. It takes courage and maturity to admit that things are not going well, so take the time to mention this to them, it is important!
- Continue the conversation. Even if you potentially found a solution, continue the discussion later in the week and check in to make sure they can keep coming to you to talk.



ADDRESSING SUBSTANCE USE

In the workshop, teens discuss the different messages they receive about drug and alcohol use. As you can imagine, the messages they receive from parents/guardians, school and friends vary. This variation can lead to confusion for youth as they begin to navigate this new part of their life.

In connection with mental health, it is important to make youth aware of the choices they make and the consequences that these can lead to. Thus, it is important to encourage teens to make healthy choices when it comes to substance use and to make them aware of the dangers associated with it.



WHAT TEENS THINK ABOUT SUBSTANCE USE DISCUSSIONS

Studies involving teens show that youth prefer not to discuss substance use issues with parents. Having said that, we want to work with parents and teachers to give them the tools to have these discussions with teens with ease.

The results of a [2019 study by the University of British Columbia \(UBC\)](#) show that harm reduction resonates more with teens than zero-tolerance discussions. In addition, parental influence is important for raising awareness of drug use among teens.

Collaboration between parents and educators is necessary to provide youth with the autonomy and agency they need to make sound decisions, based on the facts and the knowledge taught by the principles of harm reduction.

Resources

⚠ Important! If you are concerned about your adolescent's health, ask a professional for help, or call the helplines mentioned below.

Do not hesitate to communicate with the school staff: the counselor, the teacher or the principal. Your family doctor can also help, as can the following resources:

- **Kids Help Phone:** to confide in somebody, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Anonymous and bilingual. Toll-free number: 1-800-668-6868. kidshelpphone.ca
- **Phobies-Zéro (French only):** support and self-help group for people with anxiety, panic disorders, phobias and agoraphobia. 514-276-3105 or toll-free 1-866-922-0002.



RESOURCES IN FRENCH

- [Santé mentale chez les ados](#)
- [Réduire la stigmatisation](#)



RESOURCES IN ENGLISH

- [Tips for Building Healthy Relationships with Your Teenagers](#)
- [How to Talk to My Teen About Drugs and Alcohol](#)
- [Reducing Stigma](#)

Contact Réseau-femmes



Maryse Beaujeau Weppenaar
direction@reseaufemmes.bc.ca



1555, 7th Avenue West -
Vancouver, BC.



604-736-6912

Contact JLRS



General inquiries: info@jlrs.ca
Claudya Leclerc: projets@jlrs.ca



www.jlrs.ca



@jeunesleadersrs

