



Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board
CELEBRATES CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK
MAY 4 – 10, 2014

Did you know: "1 in 5 children and youth will experience a mental health problem"

Source: Children's Mental Health Ontario

Children and youth can experience mental health concerns that range from mild to serious. For instance, some children may experience mild anxiety when they are facing a test, while others may experience a high level of anxiety about writing the same test. When an issue lasts for more than a few weeks, and interferes with your child's daily life, it then becomes a concern that requires further assistance. Depression and anxiety are the most common mental health concerns for children and youth.

Children's Mental Health Week is about increasing awareness of the signs of child and youth mental health problems, decreasing stigma and understanding that help is available and treatment works!

The more educated we are on the subject the more capable we are to reach out for support. There should be no shame in talking about mental health issues. The more we talk about it, the more we reduce the associated shame and stigma so that young people can get the help they need when they need it most.

What is Mental Health?

Mental health is defined by the World Health Organization as a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing. "Mental Health exists on a continuum and can be enhanced through positive relationships with supportive friends, congenial social opportunities, involvement in meaningful activities and the effective management of stress and conflict".

5 tips to promote mental health in your child or youth

- **Be positive role models.** Children and youth need to see you express your feelings, talk over a problem with your partner, or see things from someone else's point of view. Teach children how to reach out to others when they need help and support.
- **Promote a healthy lifestyle.** Provide healthy food and make sure children get enough sleep and exercise.
- **Ask them how their day went.** Let your children know when they've done something well (like trying hard, being patient or kind, or getting better at something). Focus on the effort and not necessarily the result. If something is bothering them, ask if they need help to solve their problem.
- **Ask them how they're feeling about things.** Some children and youth may not know how to express themselves. Help them find the words to 'name' and express feelings (i.e. "it must have been very frustrating for you to have to wait so long, it looks like you might feeling angry or upset about...").
- **Always take their concerns and worries seriously.** Children and youth may believe that their feelings don't matter if their feelings are dismissed.

Please refer to the following links for additional tips on how to talk to teenagers about mental health, how to spot signs of a mental health concern in children and the difference between normal teenage behaviour and a mental health concern:

[How to Talk to Teenagers about Mental Health](#)

[How to spot the signs of a mental health concern in children](#)

[What's the difference between normal teenage behaviour and a mental health concern?](#)

With an increased understanding of mental health issues, as parents, you will be better equipped to helping your children grow in ways that affirm their emotional, spiritual, physical and social needs. Remember that you are not alone reach out to your Catholic school community for support and direction.

"God in heaven hear my prayer. Keep me in thy loving care. Be my guide in all I do. Bless all those who love me. Amen."