

Mental Health and Well-Being Belongs to Us

Children's Mental Health Week - Belonging

#BelongingMatters



APRIL 2016

Issue #18

Every year the first week in May represents Children's Mental Health Week in Canada. This year marks the 65th annual Children's Mental Health Week, which started in 1951 by the Canadian Mental Health Association. This annual national week of awareness is meant to "encourage people from all walks of life to learn, talk, reflect and engage with others on all issues relating to mental health" (www.mentalhealthweek.ca).

At the TDSB the theme for this year's Children's Mental Health Week (May 2– 6) is **belonging**, with the tagline: #BelongingMatters. A sense of belonging has been shown to improve a student's ability to learn and increase relationship building skills. Feeling included helps develop a sense of pride, which not only enhances self-esteem but also an appreciation for the differences in those around us. Belonging is important to everyone's mental health and well-being; however, for some students finding a sense of belonging can be more challenging than for others, as there can be barriers to belonging. It is important to keep this in mind when activities are being planned at your school that aim to build a sense of belonging for all students.

This newsletter highlights the theme for each day of Children's Mental Health Week and provides a few ideas and suggested activities. Remember to check the Children's Mental Health Week resource package for additional activities, ideas and lesson plans that were created, compiled and researched by staff from various TDSB departments.

(<http://tdsbweb/site/ViewItem.asp?siteid=10486&menuid=43024&pageid=36161>)

(by: Saleem Haniff, Social Worker, Mental Health and Well-Being – System Support)

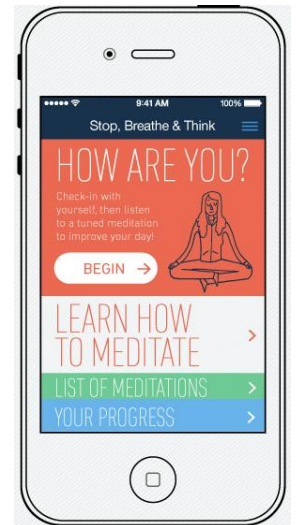


Mindfulness Goes Digital...Check Out These Apps

Mindfulness is about becoming more aware of what you are thinking and doing – what's going on in your mind and body. It's an invitation to just be in the moment which will slow things down so you see things more clearly.

Stop, Breathe & Think

This app offers a solid sampling of the basics of meditation, featuring a range of exercises at varying lengths (mindfulness meditation, loving-kindness meditation, the body scan practice), ideal for short practices at work and longer sessions at home.



The Mindfulness Training App

Created by Sounds True, a major publisher of meditation books, audio and other media, this app gives you a taste of teachings from key mindfulness instructors, including Jon Kabat-Zinn, the pioneer of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), Jack Kornfield, Tara Brach and others. If you're new to meditation, this app is a great opportunity to get a more intimate understanding of what it's all about. Seasoned practitioners might be drawn to the extra talks available on the app concerning the science of mindfulness, varying definitions surrounding the practice, neuroplasticity and happiness.



Smiling Mind App

The app developed by a group of mental health professionals who work with adolescents, greets users with a simple, cheerful smile. Smiling Mind's goal is to spread the practice of mindfulness meditation among young people to fight depression, anxiety, and alleviate symptoms of physical and mental stress. The app's creators also hope to start young people in meditation so they can develop a lifelong practice.





Creativity and the Arts

Fostering a Sense of Belonging through the Arts

When young people are asked to describe feelings of belonging, they refer to a sense of connection to family, friends, even people they have met for the first time and have shared experiences with. If you take a moment to reflect on a time when you experienced a strong sense of belonging what are the feelings that arise? What does it look like? How can we share these ideas through art, music, dance and drama.

Using different forms of art can help foster the expression of engagement, connection and belonging.

Activity for Take Time to Create Tuesday

Bricks of Belonging Activity:

1. Provide each student with a brick sized (12" by 6 "or 30cm by 15cm) piece of paper (construction, mural etc.)
2. Ask students/staff to write about their strengths (sense of humour, reading skills, etc.), and how we are all connected in the school community.
3. Build a "brick wall" by placing each brick, row on row in a building pattern in a central location in the school



Students from Malvern Public School showcasing the school's Brick of Belonging Mural

Belonging and Connectedness Improves Mental Health and Learning

Research tells us that a sense of belonging will help protect children against mental health problems and improve their learning. Students who feel that they belong are happier; more relaxed and have fewer behavioural problems than others. They are also more motivated and more successful learners.

Sometimes it is challenging for students to feel that they belong. Being new to a school or a country, feeling different, having unique challenges, not yet being able to find one thing that they are passionate about, or systemic oppression and racism can affect students' sense of belonging. It is important that we recognize and are aware of how these factors impact students and look for entry points so that all students can find a way to feel that they belong.

It's all about relationships. Being connected is about knowing you can seek support when you need it, that you will be listened to, and that you can work together to learn and develop. Support may come from talking with staff or from making connections with family and friends.



Activity for We Belong Wednesday

1. Provide each class with piece of mural paper and finger paints.
2. Ask students/staff to each add their own handprint into the circle. Talk about how each handprint is unique and offers something different. What is the strength of everyone being part of the circle?
3. Place the class murals in a central location in the school to see how everyone belongs and is part of the school community.



The importance of self-care is paramount to good mental health and well-being. Proper nutrition, hydration, sleep and exercise are key to one's self-care. It is all a matter of balance between work and play. When you take care of yourself, you're also able to take care of others. This creates a feeling of connectedness and that we all belong. We encourage everyone to take care of themselves on "Taking Care Thursday". Challenge yourself to eat lunch with a friend that day, stay hydrated and get the required hours of sleep. We are certain that you will be ready to tackle Fit Friday and get going with "whatever moves you"!

Activities for Taking Care Thursday

Bake it UP! →

http://www.eatrightontario.ca/EatRightOntario/media/ERO_PDF/en/School/Bake_It_Up_fin_al.pdf includes over 20 recipes for healthier baked goods that comply with the Ministry of Education's School Food and Beverage Policy. It can be used by parents, students, school councils, community volunteers and school staff for making baked goods to be sold in schools. *Bake It Up!* can also be promoted to staff, students and parents who wish to make healthier baked goods for school events or classroom celebrations, or to enjoy at home.

Teach Nutrition → <http://ontario.teachnutrition.ca/home.aspx>

A wide variety of useful and relevant programs and resources that will help support healthy living in the classroom. Designed by [Registered Dietitians](#), teachers and students, these programs and resources easily integrate healthy eating into the Ontario curriculum.



Be inspired to engage in a physical activity for a ½ hour each day → <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aUalnS6HIGo>

Dr. Mike Evans: The single best thing we can do for our health – video (9 min 18 secs)

Get Sleep →

	Sleep Guide
Toddlers (1 to 3 years)	10-13 hours
Preschoolers (3 to 5 years)	10-12 hours
School aged children (5-10 years)	10-12 hours
Youth/Teens	9-10 hours

(*Caring for Kids: Canadian Paediatric Society*)



We know that being physically active is an important way to support our well-being as well as managing stress and mental health challenges. It's important that we offer different ways for students to be active. Some like to do competitive sports, others enjoy dancing, walking, running or yoga. The focus should be on encouraging all students to find something that "moves them". Creating this culture of acceptance can build an opportunity for students to feel that they can be active vital members of the school community in their own way. Everyone belongs - no matter what "moves them".



Activity for Fit Friday

DrEAM - Drop Everything and Move!:

Purpose: The purpose is to get students moving as a means to improve their mental and physical health. This activity will show students that they don't need to invest a lot of time to get in a good workout!

Done in partners: Partner 1 does an exercise for 30 seconds while Partner 2 encourages them and rests. Then the partners switch roles. This pattern continues for exercises 1 – 7 and then repeats for exercises 1 – 4 (in total 11 exercises are performed). Students should be encouraged to perform these exercises at a quick pace and put in maximum effort. The following exercises were recommended by the Phys. Ed department:

1. Jumping Jacks
2. Line Jumps
3. Butt Kicks
4. Wall/Desk Push Ups
5. Wall Sits
6. Invisible Skips
7. Plank

Upbeat music can be played over the intercom system throughout the activity to motivate students.

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May 2 to 6, 2016



Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<p>Mindful Monday</p> <p>Take 10 minutes to do a mindfulness practice in your classroom or your whole school</p> <p>Show a guided 10 minute video that focuses on Mindfulness techniques on the TDSB website for staff and students.</p> <p>Be mindful Be calm Be inclusive Be focused Be aware Be reflective</p>	<p>Take Time to Create Tuesday</p> <p>Create posters, Wordles, videos, t-shirts, websites, etc. to promote positive mental health & well-being and stigma reduction.</p> <p>Portray themes of sense of self, identity, etc., through art, dance, music and spoken word</p> <p>Do a collective school-wide art project with students contributing a piece of artwork.</p> <p>Be yourself Be positive Be creative Be imaginative Be inspired Be artistic</p>	<p>We Belong Wednesday</p> <p>Create Collage/Mural: "Thank You"/"Notes of Appreciation"</p> <p>Participate in random acts of inclusion.</p> <p>Model being a "Caring Adult"</p> <p>Student-led school assemblies.</p> <p>Creating Spaces of Belonging through an Aboriginal Lens Mental Health & Well-Being Conference</p> <p>Bricks of Belonging Activity</p> <p>Be caring and kind Be compassionate Be resilient Be a leader Be thoughtful Be understanding</p>	<p>Taking Care Thursday</p> <p>Do a "Healthy Breakfast" as a school community</p> <p>Do a "Healthy Lunch" in the school community (i.e., eat with your reading buddy)</p> <p>Drink water –take regular hydration breaks</p> <p>Do a Sleep Pledge in your school</p> <p>Take a walk, dance, laugh, sing, run, exercise, listen to music</p> <p>Connect with community partners to set up Mental Health and Well-Being displays with pamphlets, brochures and other information items.</p> <p>Envision Conference for LGBTQIA2S Middle School Students and Allies, Grades 7-8.</p> <p>Be open Be an active listener Be flexible Be involved Be proactive Be connected</p>	<p>Fit Friday</p> <p>Schools/administrative sites to organize walks for Children's Mental Health Week.</p> <p>Organize a whole classroom/school walk in the community to model belonging and identify community connections (ie. Walk with your reading buddy, crossing guard, police officer etc.)</p> <p>Active Transportation: walk or bicycle to school/work.</p> <p>Be active Be fit Be healthy Be involved Be optimistic Be engaged</p>

Mental Health and Well-Being Core Leadership Team

Heather Johnson & Saleem Haniff, Social Workers, Mental Health and Well-Being – System Support

Rose D'Alimonte, Chief of Social Work/Attendance – Area D

Marcia Powers-Dunlop, Interim Senior Manager – Professional Support Services

Sandy Spyropoulos, Executive Superintendent – Student Support Services and Care

Leslie Fox, Executive Assistant – Student Support Services and Care

