

SchoolFinder.com

## Prioritizing Your Mental Health

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### All I do is **STRESS**

School can be stressful — everyone knows it! In recent years, **talking about struggles with stress and mental health** has become a lot more normalized. This is great, because talking through a problem is one of the best ways to address it — or at least feel a bit better.

### Recognizing the struggle

The **first step** to recovery is **realizing you're having a rough time**. Stress manifests differently for everyone, but here are some **common signs** that your mental health might be suffering:

- difficulty **concentrating**
- disruptive **eating patterns** — eating too much or too little
- feelings of **anxiety** or insecurity
- **irritability**
- social **isolation**

This list isn't comprehensive, and the presence of a symptom or two in your life isn't the end of the world — but if you **recognize yourself** in a lot of these, you might be suffering undue stress.

The things that cause you stress are called, well, **stressors**. Assignments and exams are common stressors, but Snap and Insta can be stressors too. Do your best to **identify the stressors that affect you**, and if you can, reduce or remove them from your daily life. Some stressors can be minimized; others you'll just have to live with.

### Speaking up when times are tough

The best thing you can do when you're feeling overwhelmed is to **talk with someone you trust**. It may be a family member, a friend, or a professional — it doesn't really matter, so long as you're comfortable.

Ask if you can borrow some of their time, and find a **quiet, private place to chat**. Can't meet in person? **Zoom** works almost as well.



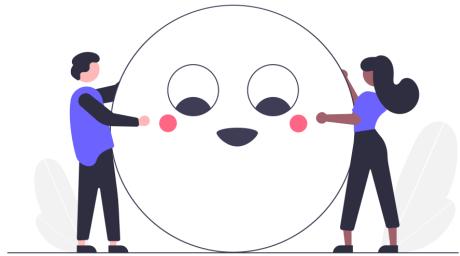
Texts and DMs aren't ideal. **Real-time communication** is best, but feel free to use whatever tech you prefer. It's important to be comfortable, not add more stress to your day.

## How to talk about your mental health struggles

Opening up about personal challenges isn't easy for a lot of people. It might **feel weird at first**, and it may not go exactly as you imagine, but taking this **first, important step** will provide a little relief.

Try to be as **honest and forthcoming** as you can. Consider laying out some or all of the following:

- what you've been **feeling**
- **how long** you've felt this way
- what you're **struggling** with specifically
- how **speaking about it** makes you feel now
- **why** you're opening up
- what you need in terms of **support**



Expect to **get questions**, but don't get caught up in an interrogation. Only **be as open as your comfort level permits**, and remember that this conversation is just the beginning of a long process. Even so, you'll probably feel a **lot better** afterward.

If you get a **negative response**, try not to take it personally. Next time, consider opening up to someone else. Not everybody's comfortable discussing tough topics.

## Just say no thanks — taking a **mental health day**

A mental health day is just like a sick day — if you're overwhelmed, and suffering, and you've got a thousand things to do, and the stress keeps piling up — eventually, you just have to say "**No thanks!**"

**Take some time to yourself** in a calm, nurturing environment, and give yourself the care you deserve. We all need a little time to ourselves to rest and recover, so don't feel ashamed about doing what you need to for your own health and wellness. **Remember**, though; a mental health day is a **short-term solution**, not a long-term fix.

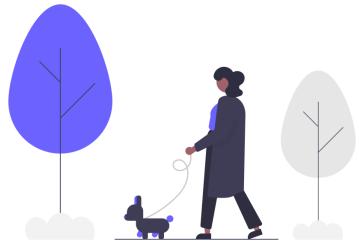
If you're in **high school**, coordinate with your **guidance counsellor**. They're lovely people who live to serve! Your guidance counsellor will help you understand your school's rules and regulations around mental health days.

If you're in **college or university** already, check out your school's **Accessibility department** for info and advice on prioritizing your mental health while you study.

## Classic stress-busting activities

When you've got some **free time**, here are a few tried, tested, and true activities for **bringing down your stress levels**. Give them an honest shot — even if some are a little outside of your comfort zone — and you may find a few that help you **feel more calm and collected**.

- grab a **20 minute nap**
- take a **walk or jog** around the block
- **read** a favourite book — or something random off the shelf
- sit down for a short **meditation**
- enjoy a **cup of tea**
- listen to your **favourite music** — or relaxation tunes on Spotify
- **doodle** or sketch your surroundings
- play with a **friendly pet**



## Getting help

If you're really suffering, you may want to **visit a professional** therapist or counsellor. You'll find resources online, both in-person and remote. Talking to a pro can help you get **on track to recovery**.

Below are a few **popular options** in Canada. Don't hesitate to reach out if you need help. If you feel unsafe, or you're in a crisis, **call 9-1-1**.

### Kids Help Phone

<https://kidshelpphone.ca/>

Call 1-800-668-6868

### Crisis Services Canada

<https://www.crisisservicescanada.ca/en/>

Call 1-833-456-4566

### Youthspace

<https://www.youthspace.ca/>

Text 778-783-0177



### Togetherall Canada

<https://togetherall.com/en-ca/>

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