

EQUIPPED

Skills For Being There

Workbook



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Calgary
Mental health for all



In Memory

The EQUIPPED program has been initiated by a grant that was provided to CMHA Calgary in memory of Phillip Thomas.

“On Friday, September 13, 2019, at the age of 25 years, Phillip Thomas of Calgary, AB, passed away gracefully in his home. He was a son, a brother, a student, a teaching assistant (TA), and a friend.

From a young age, Phillip displayed a natural talent for tennis and a passion for fitness. Over the years, he competed in many tennis tournaments, was a member of the Dinos tennis team, and held the deadlifting record at the University of Calgary gym. He also loved competing (winning) against his family in Ping Pong, cooking healthy food, and watching/critiquing new movies and television shows with his family and friends. He is most remembered for his incredible intellect, his countless inside jokes with so many people, and his innate ability to make everyone laugh.

Phillip had a selection of goofy looks he would make that could make anyone laugh and could roast just about anyone – anytime. He also had this innate ability to create inside jokes with just about anyone whether it was in the form of hilarious comedy skits like Key and Peele, slightly offside comments, expertly executed pranks or witty remarks; he knew exactly what to say. He would always joke around making everyone laugh so hard, and always managed to put a smile on our faces.

He demonstrated a curiosity about the great mysteries of the world that was evident in his favourite shows and truly developed a passion for research, which eventually propelled him to pursue his master’s degree in Math + Computer Science. His passion for research and his natural teaching ability were evident as he had received an award for being an exceptional TA. We would sit in awe as he explained what can only be described as “the matrix” that he called algorithms or something; honestly it went over our heads, but we loved how he lit up talking about it.

He was an incredibly bright and talented young man and was able to brighten many of his fellow students' days. He was one of the most perceptive and unique minded people some have ever met, he was accomplished, supported and loved, and yet he battled anxiety and depression most of his adult life.

His mental health struggles started when he was a teenager and progressed throughout the years.

He felt it was only a temporary solution and was too tired to keep trying to figure it out. He felt alone, he felt that he would never support himself with a job, that he would never find a partner and that he would never find a permanent solution. He didn't drink or do any drugs, he was physically healthy, and he was loved and supported, but he still felt that he couldn't cope and was too tired to keep fighting. It breaks our hearts that he left us so soon, but he lives on in our memories and stories, and in what all of us have and will become because of him.

Our hope is that this program equips teens and young adults with the tools and resources they need to cope with mental health struggles, build resilience, and end the stigma around mental health. CMHA Calgary has helped our family survive this terrible tragedy, and we hope this program can help prevent another one."

The Thomas Family



PRACTICE

In Phillip's honour, this symbol will be used throughout these courses to help emerging adults practice mental health tools and build their own resiliency.



Acknowledgements

Land Acknowledgement

In the spirit of reconciliation, we acknowledge that the people of CMHA Calgary live, work, and play on the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Kainai, Piikani), the Tsuut'ina, and the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nations, more commonly known as the Stoney Nakoda Nations, the Métis Nation (Region 3), and all people who make their homes in the Treaty 7 region of Southern Alberta. This Land Acknowledgement reminds us of the histories that precede us, highlights our responsibilities going forward, and helps bring us together on a shared journey of Truth and Reconciliation.



Canadian Mental Health Association – Calgary Region

Canadian Mental Health Association – Calgary Region (CMHA Calgary) builds awareness and provides education and support for individuals and families living with mental health or substance use concerns. CMHA Calgary works closely with other community organizations to bridge gaps in the mental health care system and facilitates access to important services and resources.

YouthSMART

CMHA Calgary's YouthSMART (**Youth Supporting Mental Health And Resiliency Together**) integrates collaborative, youth-led mental health learning opportunities in local junior and senior high schools. YouthSMART knows that students are incredibly influential amongst their peers, within their schools, families, and communities.



As such, YouthSMART values youth as peer contributors, actively involved in the programming and opportunities that directly impact their wellness, and works with SMART School Leaders to transform the culture of their school surrounding mental health. For more information about CMHA Calgary's YouthSMART, check out [YouthSMART.ca](https://youthsmart.ca).

EQUIPPED

EQUIPPED offers mental health training and tools for young adults. It builds on the basic concepts taught in YouthSMART, but expands knowledge for a slightly older audience of emerging adults ages 16 to 24. The program is an online, self-directed mental health education platform that offers a variety of courses. The EQUIPPED name indicates that these educational courses will help to equip a young person with foundational mental health concepts and the skills necessary to practice self-care.

Funder Recognition

We are so grateful for the support of donors, funders, and partners who are helping make EQUIPPED possible for youth and young adults to access mental health literacy tools whenever they need them.

A special thanks to RBC Foundation for continuously supporting youth mental health and funding the Skills for Being There workbook and module.



How To Use This Workbook

Emerging adults are dealing with a unique balance of stress due to many life changes. Throughout this period, emerging adults may experience the following challenges: the pursuit of educational or career goals, moving out of their childhood home, establishing financial independence, establishing new relationships, and developing their sense of identity (who they will be).

This workbook aims to equip you with mental health knowledge and skills to understand the things you can do to help support a friend or peer's mental health. This workbook is primarily designed for those who are 16 to 24, also known as emerging adults.

This workbook was designed alongside the online module Skills for Being There, available at equipped.youthsmart.ca. Although it can be used independently, you may wish to check out the online module for additional information and resources.

Materials Needed:

There is not much required for this workbook other than an open mind and some curiosity. A pen and coloured pencils would be helpful.

If you don't have access to a printer, you can recreate the activities on any blank paper.

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LEARN THE SKILLS AND RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE PEOPLE
IN YOUR LIFE AS THEY FACE CHALLENGES.

Emerging Adulthood

Emerging adulthood is the term for the distinct life stage between being an adolescent and being an adult. Young adults today face a different set of expectations and realities than adults in the past.

This life period can entail many life transitions in living arrangements, education, employment, and establishing independence.



Mental Health and the Emerging Adult Experience

The transition between being a youth and an adult is tough! This time can be exciting, stressful, challenging, and everything in-between.

Mental health exists at every point of life, but this period brings specific new challenges to stress and mental well-being. Plus, the habits you develop now will often stick with you for a long time. Let's make these habits healthy.

Features of Emerging Adulthood

Emerging adulthood is unique because it contains the following five features:¹

Identity exploration: Emerging adulthood is a time to try out various possibilities for what kind of person to be and what kind of life you want to live. This time helps to answer the question of "Who Am I?". This occurs especially in the area of relationships, work, and life values.



¹ Arnett, J. J., Zukauskienė, R., & K. Sugimura. 2014. The New Life Stage of Emerging Adulthood at Ages 18-29 Years: Implications for Mental Health. *Lancet Psychiatry*. 1(7).

Instability: The exploratory nature of this period leads to many changes within the areas of relationships, work, and residence.

Self-focus: This is a time for self-focus as you are discovering who you are and what your worldviews will be. There are a variety of changes in your life that require attention and your obligations to others may be changing. Emerging adults focus on themselves as they develop the knowledge, skills, and self-understanding they will need for adult life.

Feeling in-between: During this transitioning stage, emerging adults tend to view themselves as neither adolescents nor grown adults.

Possibilities and optimism: Although emerging adulthood can bring a lot of stress and challenge, ultimately many emerging adults believe their future is bright.



Identity Exploration

Identity includes your beliefs, personality, how you express yourself, your race, gender expression, religion, and much more. It is what makes you, 'you'.

Identity is largely concerned with the question, "Who are you?" and "What does it mean to be who you are?"

A sense of identity means you are aware of who you have been in the past, who you are right now, and who you think you'll be in the future.



- Identity encompasses the memories, experiences, relationships, and values that create one's sense of self.
- Identity is the qualities, beliefs, personality traits, appearance, and/or expressions that characterize a person or group.

Emerging adulthood is a time to try out various possibilities for what kind of person you want to be and what kind of life you want to live. This occurs especially in the areas of relationships, work, and life values.

Having a strong sense of identity or who you are can make these difficult transitions and stressful moments a little easier.

>> KEY CONCEPT

IDENTITY EXPLORATION IS A KEY FEATURE OF EMERGING ADULTHOOD



Some specific things you may consider about your identity include:

- Your role in your family (e.g. daughter, brother)
- Hobbies and interests (e.g. guitar player, football fan)
- Background (e.g. nationality, race, place of birth)
- Attributes about yourself (e.g. kind, intelligent)



BIG SISTER



SWIMMER



SPANISH



WITTY

Ready for some identity exploration? Use the activities on the following few pages or check out this website: <https://alis.alberta.ca/careerinsite/know-yourself/>.

It has quizzes to understand yourself better to help plan your career path. Even if you aren't looking for career advice, these quizzes can help you identify your interests, abilities, and personality strengths.

It can be challenging knowing what the future may hold for us. Don't let this section overwhelm you, this is all part of the journey through emerging adulthood!

Activity – Identity Web



PRACTICE

If you have already completed the Mental Health Awareness or Stress Management and Healthy Coping Workbooks, you may have seen this activity before. If you have already completed this activity, take some time to review the original. Has anything changed?

Use this tool to explore your identity, then have a friend or loved one do the activity as well. Consider how this information shapes your relationship and how you can support each other to achieve future aspirations.

- Write your name in the middle of the page
- Brainstorm some things that make you, 'you' or that are unique to you as a person
- You can create different categories leading off your name or just write ideas as they come to you
- In another colour, add things you hope are part of your identity in the future. Some things could include career aspirations, goals, or just even traits you hope to be known for

Name: _____

What is Mental Health?

Mental health is the state of well-being in which every individual realizes their potential, can cope with normal stresses of life, work productively, do well, and fully enjoy life.

Mental health means having the capacity to successfully adapt to the challenges that life creates for people.

Everyone has mental health, just as everyone has physical health. Our physical health involves our body and how it functions. Our mental health involves our brain and how it functions.

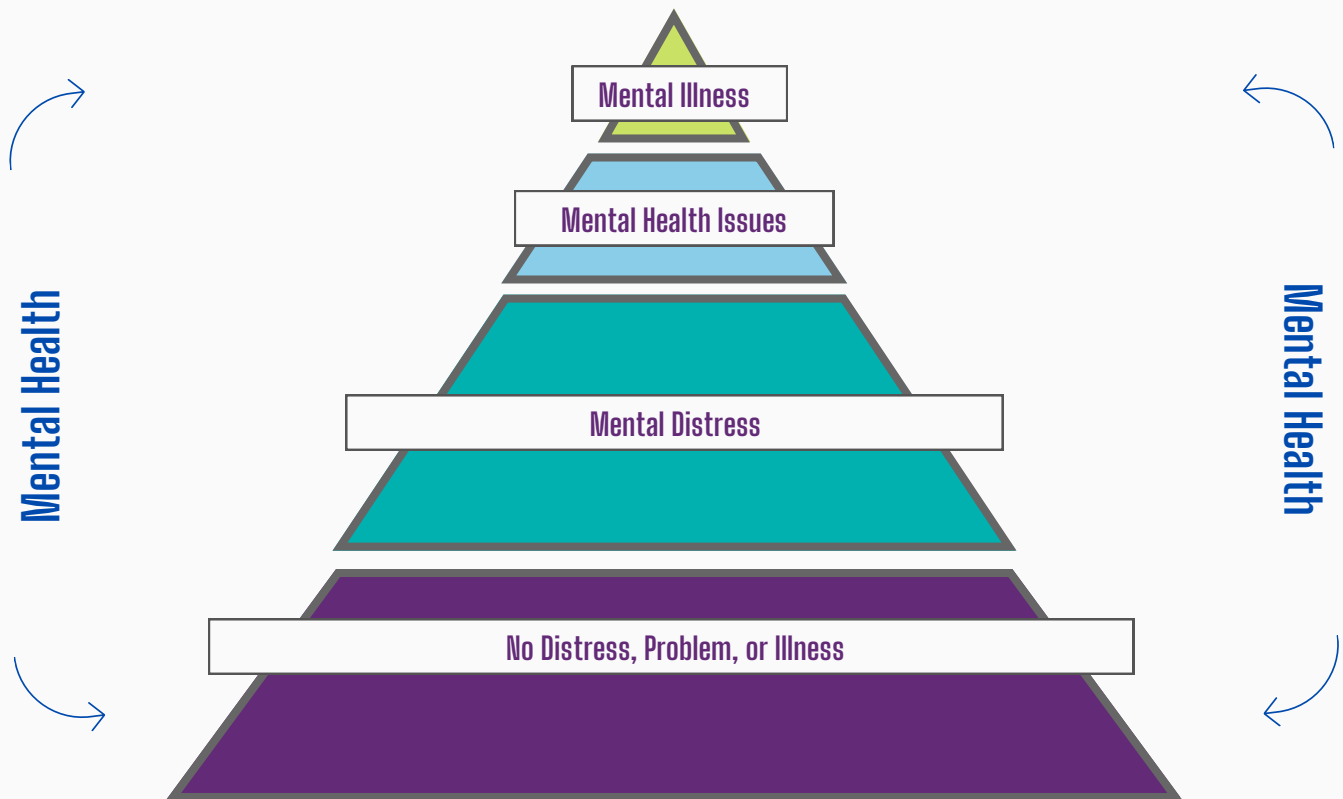
Having good physical health is not just about avoiding colds and getting sick. Physical health involves eating well, good hygiene, exercise, etc.

Similarly, mental health is not the absence of mental illness. Our emotions, thoughts, and behaviours can change at any time and this affects how our mental health is doing.



Mental Health Pyramid

Throughout our lifetime, we can exist in various states along the mental health pyramid.



Mental Illness – A mental illness is a medical condition with specific criteria diagnosed by a trained health professional. For example, having an anxiety disorder.

Mental Health Issues – Facing a situation that challenges your ability to adapt. This may be a time when it is important to reach out to others for help. For example, dealing with the death of a loved one, experiencing a breakup.

Mental Distress – Common, expected, and normal responses to the stresses of everyday life. These experiences are necessary to learn how to build resilience. For example, writing an exam or arguing with a friend.

No Distress, Problem, or Illness – Everything is going fine and we are generally enjoying life.

Mental health exists at any point on this pyramid. Good mental health includes a variety of emotional states and a person with a mental illness does not lose their mental health.

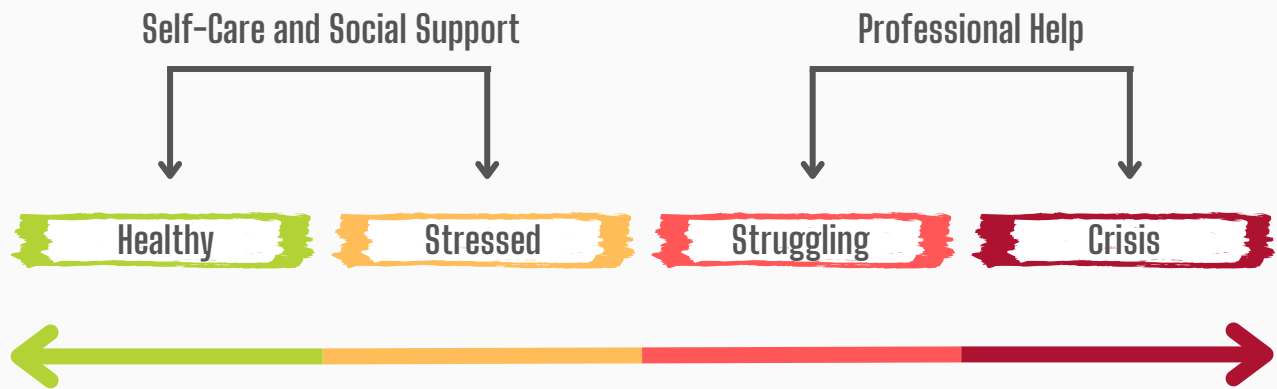
Activity – Mental Health Spectrum



PRACTICE

This activity can be used to identify how you are doing with your mental health or you can use it as a resource for a friend you are supporting.

People tend to think of mental health as good or bad, but in reality, it exists on a continuum and can fluctuate depending on what you are experiencing or the challenges you are facing.



Everyone experiences stress and these situations will naturally impact your mood.

When something stressful happens, we may shift to angry or sad, towards the yellow part of the spectrum. When we do an activity that makes us happy, we may shift over to the green side of the spectrum.

A drastic change that is harder to deal with on our own may shift us to the orange or red side. We are all unique – and as a result, what is healthy looks different for different people.

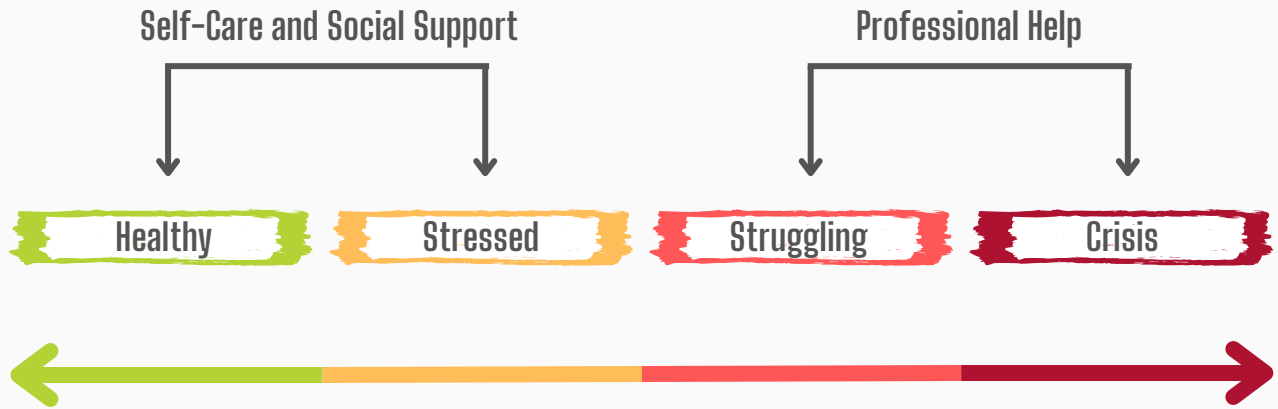
Note:

This is not a diagnostic tool and it isn't a replacement for a conversation with a medical professional.

Activity – Mental Health Spectrum



PRACTICE



Where do you feel you are today, at this moment?

What are some things that impact your mental health positively (e.g. move you towards the green zone)?

What are some factors that might impact your mental health negatively (e.g. move you towards the yellow or maybe the orange zone)? Who could you go to for help if you or a friend were in the orange or red zone?

What is Mental Illness?

Mental illness is a change in thinking, mood, or behaviour, and is accompanied by distress and impaired functioning over time.

IN ANY GIVEN YEAR, 1 IN 5 PEOPLE WILL EXPERIENCE MENTAL ILLNESS AND THIS JUMPS TO 1 IN 3 IF YOU INCLUDE SUBSTANCE-RELATED DISORDERS.

Warning Signs

Mental illness is a medical condition with specific criteria diagnosed by qualified mental health professionals.

- Feeling sad or withdrawn for more than two weeks
- Severe or extreme mood swings
- Intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities
- Sudden overwhelming fear, sometimes for no reason
- Changes to normal eating or sleeping habits
- Intensified risk-taking
- Increased use of drugs or alcohol
- Drastic changes in personality or behaviour
- Extreme difficulty concentrating, focusing, or staying still
- **Any major change from what was once typical**



Activity – How to Identify That a Friend Needs Support



PRACTICE

Brainstorm how you think someone might be impacted by mental illness or some common signs that something serious is going on:

Thinking	Mood	Behaviour



If you identify these things in a friend check out the Skills for Being There online module to see how to support someone.

Activity – How to Identify That a Friend Needs Support



PRACTICE

Your thoughts, feelings, or beliefs can be manifested in your physical body. You may notice the physical sensation first before you realize the emotion you are experiencing (e.g. you might notice your stomach hurts before you tune into the anxiety you are feeling).

Understanding these connections can help better identify what you are going through.

Take a look at the emotions on the Feelings Wheel on the next page. Consider how these emotions feel. When you feel a strong emotion, you often have a physical response in your body. What physical sensations do you feel when you are disappointed? How does your body feel when you are excited?

In the spots surrounding the Feelings Wheel, write the physical sensations connected to that emotion.

Examples of Physical Sensations:

- Jittery
- Sluggish
- Stomach ache
- Slumped shoulders
- Headache
- Butterflies
- Sweaty
- Heart pounding
- Clenched jaw
- Calm
- Energetic
- Flushed



Activity – Body Emotion Connection



PRACTICE



Activity – Mood Tracker



PRACTICE

Use this mood tracker to identify and reflect on the mood you are experiencing as well as any patterns that occur over time.



Happy	Sad	Productive	Tired	Angry
Joyful	Lonely	Motivated	Bored	Frustrated
Content	Disappointed	Excited	Lazy	Anxious
Relaxed	Hurt	Appreciated	Sluggish	Annoyed



What types of events, challenges, or priorities did I encounter today? How might have these contributed to my mood today?

What went well?

What could be improved?

Activity – Mood Tracker



PRACTICE

Continue to use this mood tracker to identify and reflect on the mood you are experiencing during different days of the week.

What types of events, challenges, or priorities did I encounter today? How might have these contributed to my mood today?

What went well?

What could be improved?

Empathy

Empathy is the ability to emotionally understand what other people feel, see things from their point of view, and imagine yourself in their place.²

It is putting yourself in someone else's position and feeling what they are feeling.

Why is Empathy Important?

- Empathy helps us build social connections with others
- Empathy helps us understand how others are feeling so we can respond more appropriately
- Empathy is important in helping us to recognize when someone is dealing with complex emotions

How to Develop Empathy:

Connect with your emotions

The better you understand the emotions you feel, the more you can recognize and connect with someone else.



Listen to understand

Before you can connect with what someone is feeling, you first have to listen to what they are saying.



Be vulnerable

Empathy involves you opening up about your feelings and experiences as well.



² Cherry, K. 2022. What is Empathy? Verywell Mind. Retrieved from <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-empathy-2795562>

Activity – Conversation Topics to Build Deeper Relationships



PRACTICE

Use these conversation topics to develop a deeper relationship which will help build empathy.

What is one thing people don't know about you?	What is your favourite way to spend a day off?	What is one thing that instantly makes your day better?
What is the first thing you'd do if you won the lottery?	What is your favourite memory?	What do you think makes someone a good person?
If you could go somewhere in the world for 1 hour, where would you go?	How do you like to show a friend you care?	What makes you feel accomplished?
If you could relive one moment in your life, which would it be?	If you could have a superpower, what would it be?	How do you show kindness to others?
How do you deal with a bad day?	What is a challenge you are proud you have overcome?	What animal do you think most represents your personality and why?

Activity – Empathy Reflection



PRACTICE

Practicing empathy requires us to be observant of the situations around us and the emotions they cause us or others to feel.

Use this reflection prompt to reflect on emotional situations (e.g. a fight with a friend) and take some time to identify related thoughts and feelings. This reflection can be helpful to practice empathy skills.



See



Think



Wonder



Feel

Ethics of Helping

Ethics are ground rules or guidelines that help guide the behaviour of a person or group.

It is important to be helpful and not harmful when supporting a friend. By keeping the following principles in mind, you can ensure you are supporting a friend in a safe and healthy way for both you and them.

Ethics of Supporting:



Confidentiality

WHAT YOU REVEAL AND WHAT YOU DON'T REVEAL

Confidentiality means you respect their privacy and do not spread what they say to others. It is not your story to tell unless they specifically say it is okay to share.



Responsible Behaviour

WHAT YOU DO OR SAY WHEN HELPING

The way you act is important to demonstrate that your friend can count on you. Responsible behaviour includes being reliable, using good judgment, and identifying the consequences of your actions. You don't have to be an expert in everything. You need to recognize your limits.



Supportee's Rights

THE RIGHT TO MAKE THEIR OWN DECISIONS

As a supporter, you cannot force someone to do what you think is right. Everyone has freedom of choice. It is your role to empower your friends to help themselves. If you are constantly solving problems for them, they may never actually develop the skills themselves.

Activity – Reflect On Your Values



PRACTICE

Values are closely tied to your ethics. They are a set of principles that guide our way of thinking and decision-making. Ethics refer to the actual manner in which we behave.

List of Values:

Reflect on the following values. If it is important to you, put a checkmark beside the value. Add any additional values that are missing. Can you narrow those down to your top 3? Finally, consider the following questions.

- ___ Achievement
- ___ Loyalty
- ___ Authority
- ___ Knowledge
- ___ Honesty
- ___ Wealth
- ___ Independence
- ___ Respect
- ___ Strength
- ___ Authenticity
- ___ Teamwork
- ___ Autonomy
- ___ Power
- ___ Wisdom
- ___
- ___
- ___

WHY ARE THESE THINGS IMPORTANT TO YOU?

HOW DO YOUR ACTIONS REFLECT THESE VALUES?

ARE THERE ANY ACTIONS YOU NEED TO TAKE TO LIVE CLOSER TO YOUR VALUES AND BE MORE ETHICAL?

HOW DO YOU HANDLE SITUATIONS THAT CHALLENGE THESE VALUES?

Top 3 Values

1.
2.
3.

The Skills for Being There

Use this as an overview of how to support your friends.

#1: Check-In – Start the conversation

- Start with what changes you have noticed in your friend
- Let them know you are there for them and you are concerned
- Just say what you see and stick to the facts
- “I see...”, “I noticed...”, “I heard...”, and “You look...”, or “You sound...”

#2: Listen Up – Listen without judgement

- Listen to them – it’s their time to share
- Actions speak louder than words
- Validate what they are saying

#3: Gather Ideas and Weigh Options – Brainstorm and weigh the pros and cons

- If they are ready to problem solve, help them to gather a variety of ideas
- Listen to how they want to solve the issue, they should generate ideas that work for them
- Evaluate the pros and cons of each option, including how it will impact them and those around them

#4: Accept Their Choices – Everyone gets to make the choice that is best for them

- Everyone has autonomy and it is their right to make the choice they want
- You should only intervene if a friend is making a choice that makes themselves or others unsafe

#5: Show Support – Be there for your friend

- Continue to show support for your friend and show that you were sincere in your concern

Helping a friend can be complicated. This is not an exact formula, but these steps can help guide you in supporting someone you care about.

Check-In

It is important to start a conversation with someone if you are worried about them. These conversations can be as simple as letting them know you have noticed a change, and you want to understand if they are okay. Remember to listen fully, without any judgment. If they don't want to talk about it, respect this and let them know you are available if they need.

Activity - Conversation Starters



PRACTICE

Read through the following conversation starters and try them out with a friend. Use the blank spaces to add any others you would use with a friend or loved one.

- It seems like you are going through a difficult time. How can I help?
- I noticed _____. Do you want to talk about it?
- When I am stressed, I feel _____. How do you feel?
- If you are having a hard time, who else could you talk to?
- Are you thinking of harming yourself?
- Sometimes when people say things like that, they are considering suicide, are you?
- What or who has helped you with this in the past?
- What are you doing to cope with your stress?
- How can I help you find more information or resources?
- You sound upset... Is everything okay?
- Can we talk about what you are experiencing?
-
-
-
-



Listen Up

Listening is a vital part of being there for a friend – how can you support someone if you don't listen to what they are experiencing and the emotions they are dealing with?

Tips for Active Listening:³

Be present

With your body language, tone, as well as what you say.



Listen with an open mind

Try to understand their point of view.



Avoid distractions

Things such as using your phone, or even thinking about what you are going to say next can impede your listening skills.



³ Therapist Aid. 2020. Active Listening: Communication Skill. Retrieved from <https://www.therapistaid.com/index.php/worksheets/active-listening>

Activity – Back-to-Back Drawing



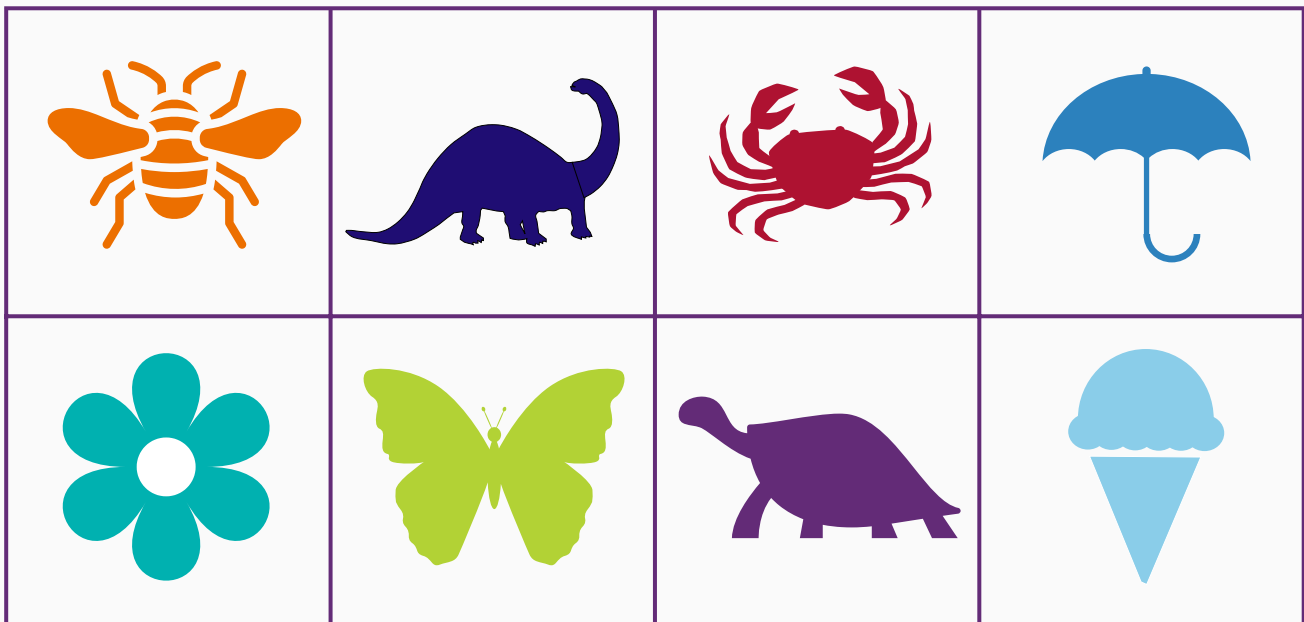
PRACTICE

Materials:

Paper, pencil, icon, or picture for reference (optional)

- Two people sit back-to-back. One person is drawing and the other is explaining
- The goal is to have the drawer replicate an image, but the instructions can only focus on the lines or shapes. For example, if the drawing is a tree, the person cannot say, "draw leaves," but instead must describe the lines or shapes
- The person drawing must listen to the instructions and can ask yes or no questions
- After a few minutes compare how the drawing turned out, and talk about what made the communication easier or more difficult
- This activity works on both communication skills for the person explaining and listening skills for the person drawing

Examples:



Gather Ideas & Weigh Options

Taking the time to effectively weigh the options is important to make a well thought-out decision.

Activity – Brainstorming Ideas



PRACTICE

So, you have identified the problem and you are trying to understand the best way to proceed. The first step is to brainstorm all options you have.

It is important to identify the various options that exist, to ensure you make the best decision. Sometimes if you go with the first option that pops into your brain, it can be impulsive, or reactive and not always the healthiest or most productive choice.

Brainstorming Tips:

Focus on getting ideas out

This is not the time to be thinking about whether options are good or bad, but just think of as many ideas as you can.



Withhold criticism

No ideas are wrong or stupid at this moment. Unusual ideas are important and sometimes having a variety of options can make good ideas look even better.



Make sure you consider all perspectives

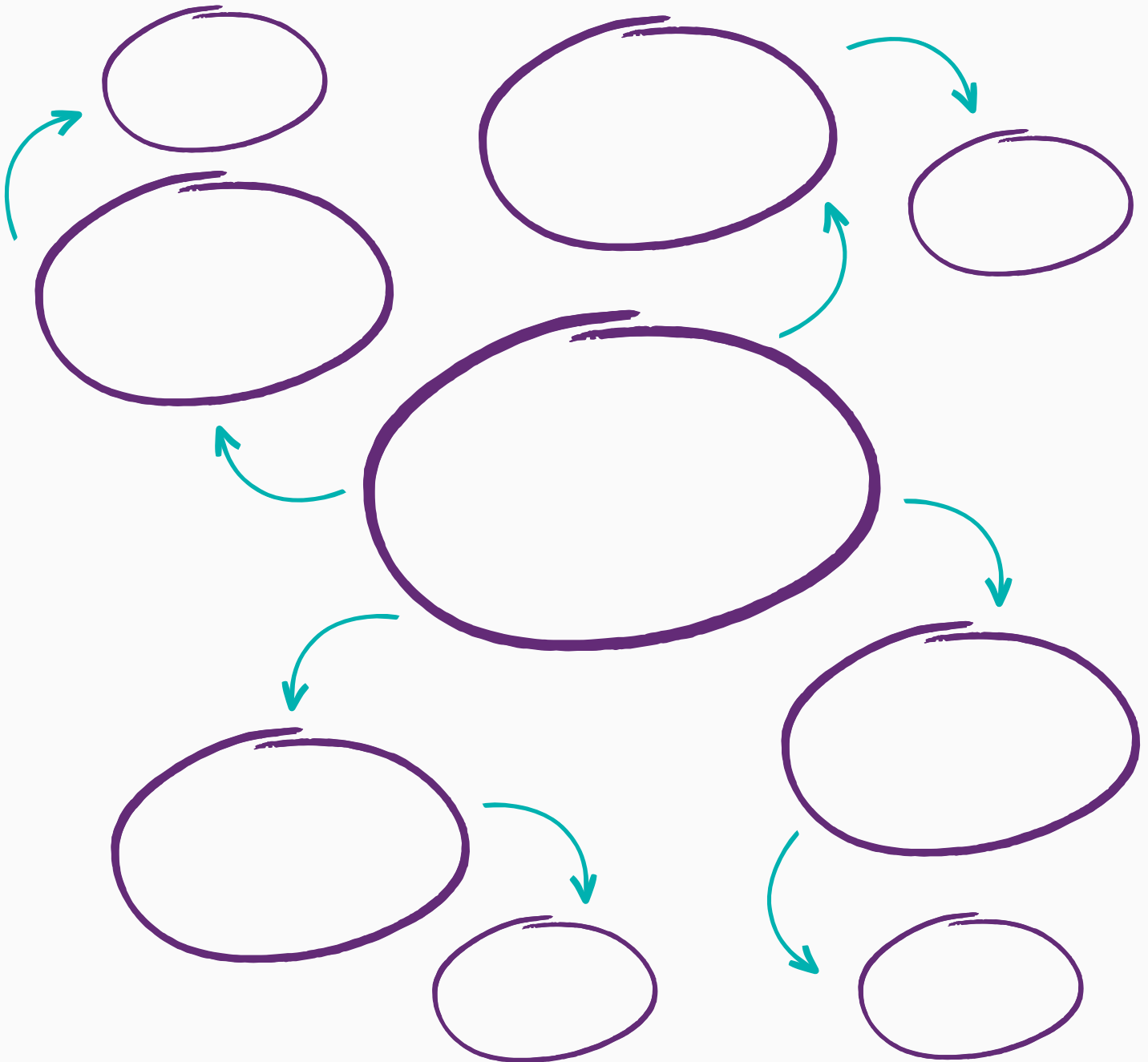
Sometimes you only think about options that work for you, but have you considered options that might work for others?



Activity – Brainstorming Ideas



PRACTICE

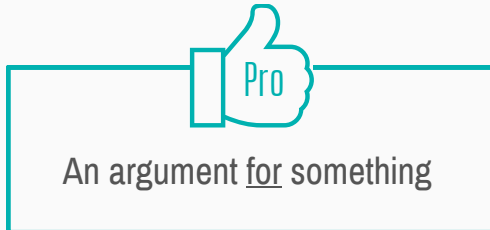


Activity – Pros and Cons



PRACTICE

Now is the time to write down all of the pros and cons of each option.



It can be tempting to move forward with the decision you think is best, without analyzing or considering the alternatives.

Using a pros and cons list can reduce the emotional weight of decision-making. Decisions often evoke emotions. Going through pros and cons can create some self-distanced perspective.⁴

Questions to ask yourself to help weigh the pros and cons:

- What emotions are tied to this choice?
- How will this choice make me feel?
- Does this option line up with my values?
- How will this choice impact others?
- What are the positive outcomes? What are the negative outcomes or challenges?
- Does anything make me nervous or worried about this choice?

⁴ Charyk, C. 2017. The Pros and Cons of Pros and Cons Lists. Harvard Business Review. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2017/01/the-pros-and-cons-of-pros-and-cons-lists>

Activity – Pros and Cons



PRACTICE

Problem #1: _____

Option #1: _____

Pros	Cons



Problem #2: _____

Option #2: _____

Pros	Cons



Accept Their Choices

Once someone has decided on the choice they think is best, it is important to now accept their choices.

Different types of choices:



Dangerous Choice

Harm to self or others
(e.g. punching someone, self-harm)



Reactive Choice

Emotional/impulsive
(e.g. screaming at someone, spreading gossip)



CHOICES



Unhealthy Choice

Not the best decision long-term
(e.g. avoidance, holding emotions in, binge eating, drug use)



Positive Choice

Healthy or productive
(e.g. talk about feelings)

Activity – Harm Reduction



PRACTICE

Harm reduction means exactly what it sounds like – reducing harm. Harm reduction understands that people use a variety of methods to cope with the difficult situations they face.

Harm reduction aims to reduce the negative consequences of any actions you do. Harm reduction means you don't have to stop the behaviour, but it supports any step in a positive direction.⁵

Examples of harm reduction in everyday life include wearing a helmet while riding a bike, or putting on a seatbelt in the car.

When your choices start to cause problems in your relationships or begin to affect your work, finances, or health, it might be time to make some changes.

Remember, it is up to each person to make the choices they want to make. You can support their decision-making, but ultimately it is up to them. You should only intervene if a friend is making a dangerous choice.



How should you act if a friend is making an unhealthy choice?

You can use the following questions to help a friend assess if their choices or actions are healthy or unhealthy.

You can also use these for an opportunity to self-reflect on your actions.

⁵ Centre for Addictions Research of BC. 2011. You and Substance Use: Stuff to Think About and Changes to Make. Retrieved from <https://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/workbook/you-and-substance-use>

Ask yourself or a friend if the following statements are true:

THE CHOICE YOU MAKE DOESN'T
SOLVE THE PROBLEM AT HAND.

YOU DON'T HAVE ANYTHING
ELSE TO DRAW ON.

IT MAKES YOU FEEL
WORSE AFTERWARD.

IT COMES AT A COST TO YOU.

If these statements are true for you, your decisions may be unhealthy.

Harm Reduction Plan

- What is your current choice/action?
- How does this make you feel?
- How important is it for you to make a change?
- What obstacles do you face in making a change? What strategies do you have?
- What can support you to make the change?
 - o Who are the people that can help?
 - o What are some alternatives?
 - o What can you do if you face a challenge?
 - o How can you celebrate your progress?

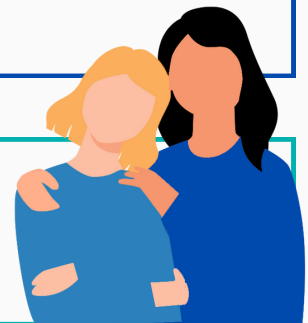
Show Support

The final step is to show support for your friend and continue to be there for them.

There are a variety of types of support. Supporting a friend can look unique depending on the person and the situation.^{6,7}

Physical/practical support

Taking on responsibilities for someone so they can focus on the problem.
(e.g. bringing someone dinner when they are sick)



Emotional support

Listening to someone, showing empathy, or telling someone you care.

Informational support

Sharing advice or information about potential steps that may work.



Esteem support

Sharing expressions of confidence or encouragement.

You can also play an important role in helping someone feel less alone or ashamed.

⁶ CMHA BC and Anxiety Canada. 2016. Social Support. Here to Help BC. Retrieved from <https://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/wellness-module/wellness-module-3-social-support>

⁷ Scott, E. 2020. Different Types of Social Support. Verywell Mind. Retrieved from <https://www.verywellmind.com/types-of-social-support-3144960>

Activity – Types of Support



PRACTICE

Brainstorm different examples of support for each type. These can be ways you can help a friend or ways you like to be supported.

Physical/Practical

Emotional

Informational

Esteem

Every situation is different, so how you support someone will be different.

Activity – Creating a Support Plan



PRACTICE

Use this template to help base conversations with your friends on how you can support them.

Warning Signs

- What are signs you need support?
- How do I know if this is serious or just normal up and downs?

People

- Who can I talk to about this?
- Is there anyone who doesn't know that you would like to know?

Strategies

- What are your goals?
- What options do you think could work?
- What actions/strategies will you try?
- What should we do if this doesn't work?

Support

- What does support look like to you?
- What would you like me to do?
- Is there anything you don't want me to do?
- How do I know if you are feeling supported?

Activity – Support Bingo



PRACTICE

Interested in finding new ways to support someone? Challenge yourself to complete the following activities:

Ask a friend, “How are you? No really, how are you?”	Do a self-care activity with a friend	Talk about what you are going through with someone	Get some fresh air	Do something that makes you happy
Encourage each other to swap one unhealthy coping strategy for a healthy one	Have a social media-free day together	Set a goal with a friend and plan to keep each other accountable	Celebrate a friend’s accomplishment, no matter how small	Check out CMHA Calgary’s website and resources
Take another EQUIPPED course, or encourage a friend to sign-up	Ask someone for help with anything, big or small	Free Space	Try a mindfulness video	Exercise or go for a walk together
Complete the boundary-setting activity, and set boundaries in your life	Talk about your feelings	Look up resources to help support your or a friend’s mental health	Plan on one way to support each other	Check-in on 3 people today
Say 3 nice things about yourself, then say 3 nice things to a friend	Try a mental health journaling prompt, reflect on your own or discuss with a friend	Attend a Recovery College course	Share 3 things you are grateful for with a friend	Make a support plan including who you can go to for help

Refer to page 52

Boundaries

Boundaries are limits or rules we set for ourselves within relationships. Boundaries are often used to protect yourself and your well-being.

Boundaries are important to help you maintain healthy relationships.

Steps to identify your boundaries include:⁸

Explore your values

What is important to me? The first step is to identify what matters to you and rearrange your boundaries to make this happen.



Emotions

How do you feel in certain situations? Emotional discomfort is a sign you need to address something and positive emotions mean you should find situations to support more of this.



Thoughts

What are you thinking in situations? Explore these thoughts and what they tell you about your boundaries.



⁸ Tartakovsky, M. 2014. How to Figure Out Your Boundaries. PsychCentral. Retrieved from <https://psychcentral.com/blog/how-to-figure-out-your-boundaries#1>

Activity – Identifying Boundaries



PRACTICE

Boundaries are often based on our values or things that are important to you. For example, if you value spending time with your family, you might set a boundary around helping a friend study on the weekends.

Here are some questions to help you identify some of your boundaries:

- What do you value? What is important to you?
- In what situations in the past have you felt supported? In what situations have you felt hurt or uncomfortable? How does that relate to your boundaries?
- How do you manage your time? Do you feel that you can split your time between demands as you need? Is something taking too much of your time?
- Can you ask for what you need without feeling bad?
- Are you thinking of yourself and your own needs? Or are you prioritizing the needs of someone else?



Reminder:

Boundaries can always change. You have the right to set a boundary at any time even if it didn't exist previously.

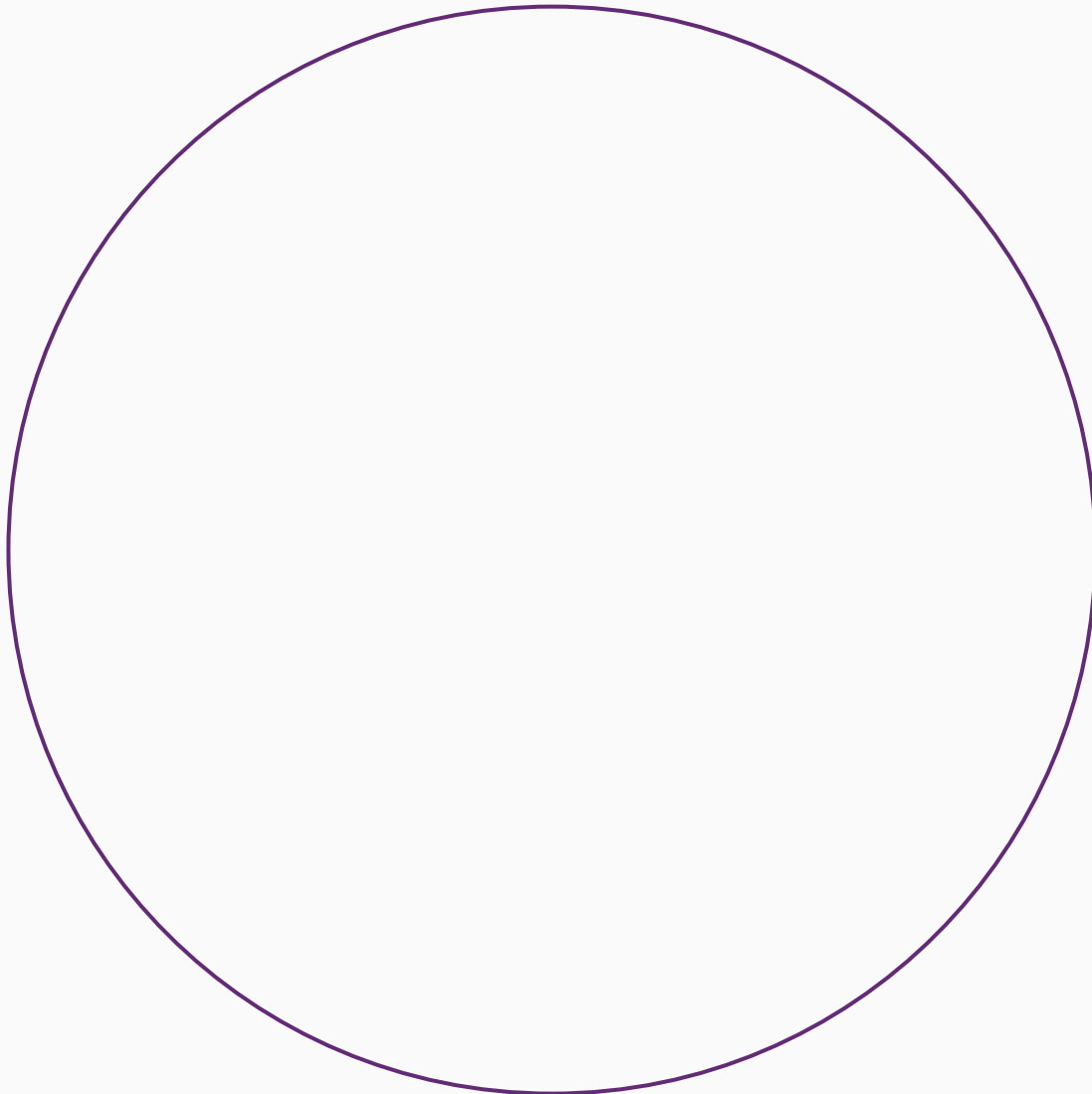
Activity – Identifying Boundaries



PRACTICE

Within the circle write down everything you need to feel seen, supported, heard, or safe. Reflect on your identity and values exploration from previous activities.

Anything that conflicts with or distracts from those values, write outside the circle.



Activity – Setting Boundaries



PRACTICE

Once you have identified that a boundary is needed, it is important to communicate it clearly and effectively. Use the WIN formula to communicate your boundaries with others.

WIN Formula

W

"When you..."

Describing the action that is causing the conflict.

I

"I feel..."

Describing the emotion that is attached to the action.

N

"I need..."

Describing what you need the other people to do for the conflict to be resolved.

Example:

"When you shout at me, I feel stressed and upset. I need you to explain your point calmly."

You can also add an "or else" statement. This is not meant to be a threat, but instead, it is stating the consequence of how you will respond should the situation not change. If you do include one, you must follow through on the consequence or your boundaries will have no meaning to them or you.

Activity – Setting Boundaries



PRACTICE

Practice Example:

You are supporting a friend with their breakup, but you have an important project due soon and you need to set a boundary around supporting them so that you can focus.

“Your time and mine are both important, and I want to help you as best I can. Right now, I have a project I need to finish, and then I can dedicate more time and attention to you and show that I am actively listening. I will reach out at *__insert time of the day__* or tomorrow morning.”

Example with “or else”:

A friend continues to tell you about something that is extremely triggering to you. It is beginning to affect your mental health so you have tried telling them that you need to stop discussing that specific topic.

“I value our friendship and time together and I want to continue with it. However, when we talk about (triggering topic), it creates a lot of stress for myself. I need you to respect that this topic is upsetting to me and not talk about it while we are together, or else I may need to take a break from spending time with you.”



Activity – Setting Boundaries



PRACTICE

Example Scenario:

A friend is going through a tough time at work. You let them know you'd be there for them if they needed to talk, but now they are calling you multiple times a day. You don't want to completely cut off support, but you want to set a boundary around how often they call you.

How would you set this boundary?

Write your own scenario here:

How would you set this boundary?

Self-Care

Self-care is any action that helps take care of yourself and helps to prioritize your mental health.

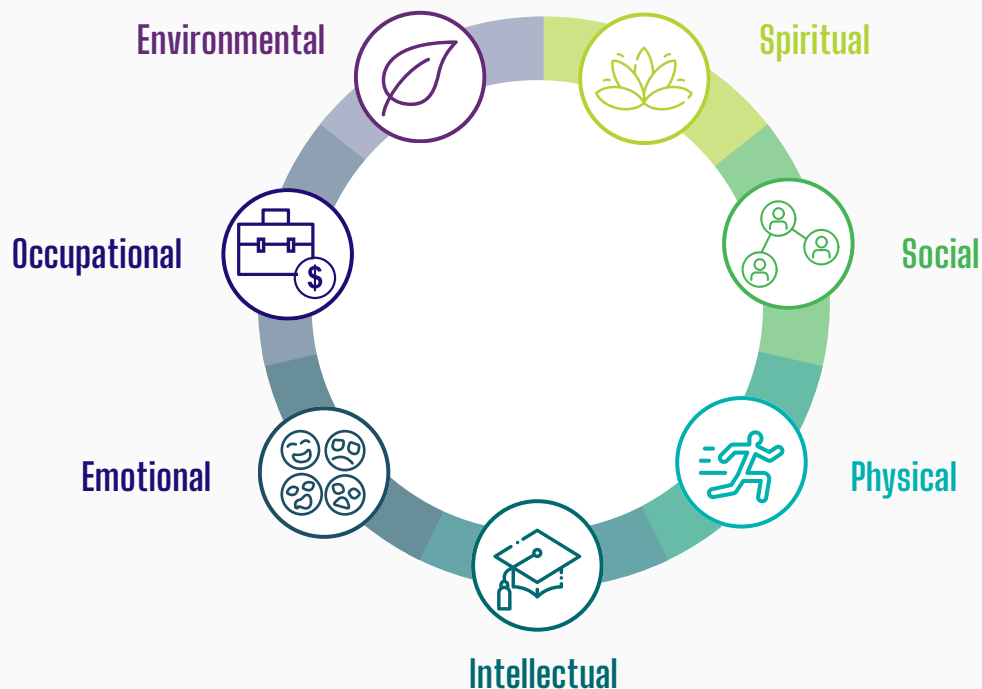
Self-care is important because it recharges your batteries and builds your physical and emotional energy.⁹

Activity – Wellness Wheel



Within each area of the Wellness Wheel, identify how you support this area of your life. Think of things you are already doing on a regular basis, as well as things you want to do more often. Some activities may fit within more than one section like going for a walk may help your spiritual or your physical wellness.

On the following page, brainstorm different ways to support your wellness in the following dimensions:



⁹ Jack. 2020. Understanding the Importance of Self-Care. Retrieved from <https://jack.org/getattachment/6408ff67-f4e4-47d3-a6a0-90e5c060d33a/Be-There-Poster-1.aspx>

Activity – Wellness Wheel



PRACTICE

Environmental

-
-
-



Occupational

-
-
-



Emotional

-
-
-



Intellectual

-
-
-



Activity – Wellness Wheel



PRACTICE

Physical

-
-
-



Social

-
-
-



Spiritual

-
-
-



Activity – Mental Health Journaling



PRACTICE

Reflecting on your thoughts and feelings is extremely important to support your mental well-being. Journaling can provide an opportunity to identify, process, and express your thoughts and emotions. It can also be a way to process difficult situations and create better awareness of your feelings and experiences.

While you can journal about anything that feels important to you, a journal prompt can be a helpful place to start.

You can also encourage a friend to use these prompts if they feel it would be helpful throughout their journey.

Journal Prompts

General mental health reflection:

- o Write down your coping mechanisms. Evaluate which ones are the most helpful and which ones you'd like to change
- o One thing I am holding on to that I'd like to let go is _____
- o What is currently challenging me? How can I deal with this differently?
- o What are signs I need more support? Who could I go to for help?



Reflecting on difficult situations:

- o How can I let go of negative feelings?
- o Looking back on a previous challenging situation, what do I wish I had done instead? How can I use this knowledge next time?
- o A difficult emotion I have been experiencing lately is _____. To impact this, I will _____

Activity – Mental Health Journaling



PRACTICE

Journal Prompts

Feelings that come up while supporting a friend:

- o What do I wish I could say to someone?
- o What are 3 things I could do to strengthen my relationships?
- o How can I ensure I am taking care of myself and prioritizing my own needs?

Well-being:

- o What motivates me? How can I find more motivation?
- o I am currently proud of myself for _____
- o I feel most challenged by _____. I feel most supported by _____
- o How have I been taking care of myself lately? What changes do I want to make?

Gratitude:

- o What am I most grateful for today?
- o What is one positive thing that has happened to me this week?
- o My biggest strength is _____
- o I am happy that _____ is part of my life because _____

Activity – Goal Setting



PRACTICE

It is important to have goals – big or small – at every stage of life. Use this template to set some goals for yourself or as a resource to support a friend in setting their own goals.



G

Goal

What do you want to achieve? What is your ultimate aim?

R

Reality

Where are you now? What are some barriers preventing you from achieving your goal?

O

Options

Consider what options you have. What resources are available to you? What changes can you make to your behaviour to overcome barriers?

W

Will

What choices will you make? How can you start making changes or tapping into resources to achieve your goal?

Activity – Goal Setting



PRACTICE



Supportive Network



It is important that you also have people you can draw on when you need additional support.

Helping a friend through something difficult can bring up stressful feelings for yourself. You cannot support someone else unless you take care of yourself first.

Healthy relationships reduce stress, build a sense of belonging, encourage healthy behaviours, and help us cope with challenging situations.¹⁰

And it is important that we build networks that we feel comfortable having serious conversations with, especially about mental health.

Activity – Personal Support Plan



PRACTICE

Who can you go to for support?

-
-
-
-
-
-

Reminder:

It is about quality over quantity.

¹⁰ Lawler, M. 2021. Why Friendships are so Important for Health and Well-Being. Everyday Health. Retrieved from <https://www.everydayhealth.com/emotional-health/social-support.aspx>

Activity – Personal Support Plan



PRACTICE

Different people might be there for different types of support. For example, a tutor can be a support for dealing with exam stress, a coach might provide mentorship, and a close friend may be support for a breakup.

How to Create More Conversations About Mental Health:

- Start a conversation about how you are doing
- Write down what you want to say
- Tell them what you need
- Ask them to do an activity that supports your mental health with you
- Send them an activity from this workbook
- Check-in with them and see how they are doing

THRIVE – An Acronym for Supportive Mental Health Conversations:

- T** **Time**
The time to talk about mental health is now.
- H** **Honesty**
Being honest with ourselves and others is important to support your mental health.
- R** **Reassure**
These experiences can be challenging. Reassure someone that they are not alone.
- I** **Involved**
Make a plan and work together to check in more often, as well as hold each other accountable.
- V** **Values**
Understand your values, or what is important to you, and use this as a reference point to guide conversations as well as your actions.
- E** **Encourage**
Small steps make a difference. Encourage your friends and encourage yourself for your progress.



Where To Get Help

This course was developed to provide introductory mental health knowledge and tips for emerging adults. However, if you are struggling or just need a listening ear, please reach out to one of the supports below for more assistance.

You can also screenshot and send this page to a friend who may need support.

Phone/Text:

- Canadian Mental Health Association - Calgary Region (CMHA Calgary)
Peer Line: 403-297-1402
- Distress Centre Calgary (24/7): 403-266-1605
- ConnecTeen (24/7 talk): 403-264-TEEN (8336)
- ConnecTeen (24/7 text): 587-333-2727
- Kids Help Phone (24/7 talk): 1-800-668-6868
- Kids Help Phone (24/7 text): 686868
- Alberta Mental Health Line (24/7): 1-877-303-2642
- Crisis Services Canada (24/7): 1-833-456-4566
- Access Mental Health: 403-943-1500

Websites:

www.youthsmart.ca

www.recoverycollegecalgary.ca

www.mindyourmind.ca

www.cmha.calgary.ab.ca

www.havethattalk.ca

www.thealex.ca

Note:

CMHA Calgary does not necessarily support or endorse the listed community resources. We have reviewed each source; however external organizations may change content without notice.

Stay Connected with CMHA Calgary

http://



www.cmha.calgary.ab.ca

www.youthsmart.ca

www.recoverycollegecalgary.ca

www.equipped.youthsmart.ca



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Canadian Mental Health Association - Calgary Region



Sign-up for our e-newsletter:

<https://secure.cmha.calgary.ab.ca/join-our-newsletter>



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