



Mental Health
Commission
of Canada

Commission de
la santé mentale
du Canada

The Inquiring Mind™

Post-Secondary

PARTICIPANT HANDOUT



Module 1: Mental Health and Stigma

Reference Guide – Respectful Language

Combating stigma related to mental illness, suicide, and substance use starts with how we use language – something that continuously evolves. That’s why we must all be aware of any outdated language being used in the media and around us every day. Everyone can be a champion against stigma when advocating the use of accurate and respectful language. So, as you communicate with others, be mindful of the impact of your language.

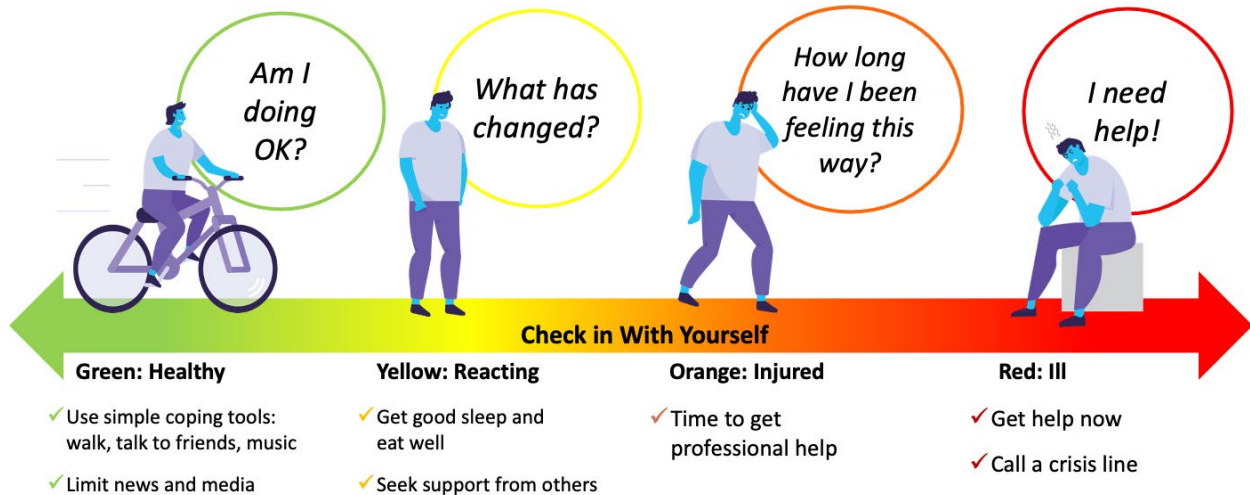
Language Matters!

Stigmatizing	Respectful
It drives me crazy .	It bothers/annoys/frustrates me.
This is nuts .	This is interesting/strange/peculiar/funny .
This individual suffers from depression.	They live with/are experiencing depression.
Mentally ill or insane person	Person living with a mental health problem or illness
Committed suicide, successful suicide	Died by suicide
Failed or unsuccessful suicide attempt	Attempted suicide
Substance abuse	Substance use or substance use disorder
Everyone who is a junkie...	Everyone who uses substances...
They used to be an addict .	They are in recovery .

Module 2: Mental Health Continuum Tool

	Healthy	Reacting	Injured	III
Changes in Mood	Normal mood fluctuations Calm Confident	Irritable Impatient Nervous Sadness	Angry Anxious Pervasive sadness	Easily enraged Excessive anxiety/panic Depressed mood, numb
Changes in Thinking and Attitude	Good sense of humour Takes things in stride Ability to concentrate and focus on tasks	Displaced sarcasm Intrusive thoughts Sometimes distracted or loss of focus on tasks	Negative attitude Recurrent intrusive thoughts/images Constantly distracted or cannot focus on tasks	Noncompliant Suicidal thoughts/intent Inability to concentrate, loss of memory or cognitive abilities
Changes in Behaviour and Performance	Physically and socially active Present Performing well	Decreased activity/socializing Present but distracted Procrastination	Avoidance Skipping class Decreased performance, lower grades	Withdrawal Dropping out of class Cannot complete assignments
Physical Changes	Normal sleep patterns Good appetite Feeling energetic Maintaining a stable weight Good personal hygiene	Trouble sleeping Changes in eating patterns Some lack of energy Some weight gain Less attention hygiene	Restless sleep Loss of appetite Some tiredness Fluctuations or changes in weight Poor hygiene most of the time	Cannot fall/stay asleep No appetite Constant and prolonged fatigue or exhaustion Extreme weight gain or loss Consistently poor hygiene
Changes in Addictive Behaviours	Limited alcohol consumption, no binge drinking Limited/no addictive behaviours No trouble/impact due to substance use	Regular to frequent alcohol consumption, limited binge drinking Some to regular addictive behaviours Limited to some trouble/impact due to substance use	Frequent alcohol consumption, binge drinking Struggle to control addictive behaviours Increasing trouble/impact due to substance use	Regular to frequent binge drinking Addiction Significant trouble/impact due to substance use
My Personal Changes				

When do you think it's time to seek help?



How can you use the Continuum?

- Take a minute to see where you are on the colour continuum?
Do this daily.
- **Text or call** a friend or family member and use the colours to talk about how you are feeling, coping, or reacting in the moment.
- **Do a “colour” check-in** at study groups or student clubs.



<https://learn.openingminds.ca/courses/the-inquiring-mind-post-secondary/>

Scenario 2A: Feeling Overwhelmed

You are a second-year student living in a small apartment near campus. Your roommates have all moved back home, leaving you on your own. In your first year you took part in several clubs on campus and had a good group of friends to spend time with.

Now that all students are studying remotely, you are finding that your virtual courses require a lot more time and attention than when you attended them in-person on campus. You miss seeing your friends and find yourself getting worried and stressed as exams approach.

You don't always get enough sleep because you can't stop feeling overwhelmed by how much you need to do. You are feeling increasingly anxious about everything that is happening around you.

Scenario 2B: Heavy Course Load Stress

You are a full-time student with a heavy course load, which requires several hours of virtual class time and a lot of online reading every day. One course you are taking is particularly challenging for you, and you are very worried about it.

You are having a hard time concentrating as you have been struggling to sleep well and often experience fatigue, nodding off on the couch in the middle of the day. When you are awake, you are easily distracted and have difficulty keeping daily routines. For two weeks, you simply stop logging in to the challenging course and do not respond to any of the chat threads or online assignments.

Your midterm exams are approaching, and while you hoped things would improve on their own, things are getting worse and you start to skip your other classes as well. You imagine that other students must also be struggling with studying remotely, but you worry about how your professors will respond if you email them.

Scenario 2C: Summer Job Stress

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, your long-standing summer employer has made a lot of changes to their business operations, including modified work duties and shifts. Many employees have been laid off, particularly part-time and summer workers.

To keep your position, you accepted extended work hours, taking on extra duties and possibly increased health risks. In the last week or so, you have been feeling exhausted and overwhelmed, and have been experiencing restless sleep, and sometimes can't focus on your tasks.

One day you break down in front of everyone. You are worried about how your boss will react, but you really need the job to pay for next year's tuition.

Scenario 2D: Far from Home

You are an international student in Canada, studying in a post-secondary program. When the campus was closed down due to the pandemic, you were able to stay in Canada to complete your studies but had to move out of your residence and into a rental unit.

Even before all the changes, your grades were poor, and now you find you are not enjoying your studies at all. Your parents support your studies and are relieved you are safe from COVID-19 in Canada. You have not told them about your struggles and instead tell them you are doing well. You don't want to worry, embarrass or bring shame to them and yourself. You know now that you will not be allowed to travel home to visit your family until you finish your program.

You have one friend from the same country as you, but lately you don't even want to text with them. You are spending more time playing video games and missing your online classes. Some days you don't even get out of bed and forget to eat. You have lost quite a bit of weight without noticing. You are beginning to feel hopeless and want to reach out to someone but don't know how.

Scenario 2E: Pressure to Provide

You are an international student enrolled in a Canadian graduate program. You came to Canada one year ago with your spouse and two young children. Your spouse is not yet able to work due to restrictions attached to your family's immigration status. You rely on a scholarship that is meant for one person to live on. Money is tight and causes a lot of stress. Your parents and younger siblings still live in your home country. They are under increasing financial strain because, as you recently learned, your father has become very ill and is no longer able to work. Your spouse and children are not happy in Canada and miss their life in your home country.

You feel an immense amount of pressure to provide for your family and to ensure they are happy. Your comprehensive exams are coming up and you do not feel prepared. You are also behind in your lab work, and your program supervisor does not seem satisfied with your efforts. You are very nervous and are sleeping poorly as a result. For the past few weeks, you have started having a few glasses of wine each night before going to bed.

Module 2 Discussion Questions

1. What signs or indicators do you notice?

2. Where are you on the Mental Health Continuum Tool?

3. What are your possible next steps?

Module 3: Self-Care & Building Resilience

The Big 4: Coping Strategies

Deep Breathing

Deep breathing is particularly important when we are stressed because our natural reaction in times of stress is to breathe rapidly and shallowly. Deep, slow breaths into the abdomen put pressure on a nerve that releases chemicals which slow down the central nervous system, thus reducing stress and anxiety.

The ability to breathe deeply does not come easily. It is a skill that has to be learned and practised. ***Here are the basics:***



- Sit or stand comfortably.
- Put one hand on your chest and one on your abdomen.
- Breathe deeply through the diaphragm: slowly inhale through your nose for a count of three or four, allowing the abdomen to expand.
- Hold briefly, then exhale slowly for a count of three or four.
- Repeat several times.

Paying attention to your breath is also a mindfulness practice that you can use anywhere, anytime to bring yourself back to the present moment.

You can use deep breathing to decrease stress:

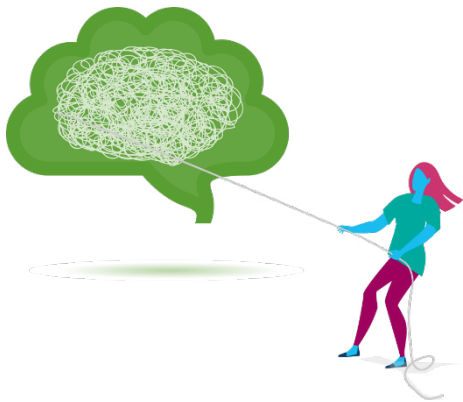
- ✓ before an exam, presentation, or interview
- ✓ when riding a crowded bus or entering a noisy room
- ✓ when you have been upset emotionally by a conversation
- ✓ before doing something that usually scares you, like flying
- ✓ before doing something alone for the first time
- ✓ to help fall asleep or when you wake up in the morning
- ✓ when you get a poor result or bad grade
- ✓ when you feel a wave of anxiety coming on.

Self-Talk

Think about how often you find yourself having an internal dialogue with yourself throughout the day. You are your own constant companion and that means that your thoughts influence your emotions. During stressful situations, it's important to notice your inner dialogue. We know that replacing negative thoughts with more helpful or positive ones can give us confidence and focus, which can help our state of mind.

If your thoughts are turning negative, try to see if you can challenge them with either more factual thoughts or thoughts that are more gentle, positive, or helpful. Using key words such as focus, persist, or confident can have an impact.

These phrases can help in the moment:



- ✓ I've got this.
- ✓ I am working hard; I will be ready.
- ✓ I can do this.
- ✓ I have gotten through difficult situations in the past and I can get through this one.
- ✓ One day at a time.
- ✓ I'm going to get through the next hour.
- ✓ I did a good job, even if it wasn't perfect.
- ✓ I'm strong and capable and I really want to do this for myself.

Goal Setting



Goals provide direction and motivation and facilitate feedback. A helpful goal is one that is challenging but not impossible. During stressful situations, we don't have the luxury of analyzing long-term goals. In these types of situations, focus on the moment and break the problem down into manageable chunks.

Set a deadline for each step and focus on one at a time!

Term paper: if you are feeling overwhelmed by a large assignment, break it down into smaller steps such as:

- picking a topic
- doing background reading
- preparing an outline
- writing a draft
- editing a final version.

Go easy on yourself and try one new thing at a time!

Better sleep: if you haven't been getting enough sleep, start by figuring out what small actions you can take before bed to prepare yourself to have a restful night:

- no screens an hour before bed
- go to bed at the same time each night
- meditation or relaxation exercise
- deep breathing

Build towards your goal gradually and celebrate each step along the way!

Improved fitness: if you want to get more exercise and set a long-term goal like going for a 45-minute walk five times a week, start by breaking the task into chunks such as:

- set a time in your calendar to walk
- get dressed for exercise
- start with a 5- or 10-minute walk around the block or down the street

Mental Rehearsal



Mental rehearsal involves mentally preparing yourself for the what ifs you may experience in day-to-day life or when you have to be at your best.

Mental rehearsal helps us predict possible problems and work out solutions in advance. In mental rehearsal you walk through the situation step by step, think about how to approach potential challenges you might face, and consider how you will overcome them.

When we practise mental rehearsal, we bring in many sensory elements to make it as real as possible. We train our brain to know what a situation or task will look, feel, sound, and even smell like. This helps build motor pathways in your brain and body so default actions kick in, and as your brain recognizes the task, it overrides any stress response that you may feel.

Many competitive athletes use mental rehearsal to be at their best on game day. But it also works extremely well to prepare for many different situations.

Have you ever had to...

- have a difficult conversation with a friend or family member?
- give a presentation in class and felt nervous about it?
- do an interview and were worried you will lose focus because of nerves?
- deal with a conflict with a co-worker or customer at work?

Beforehand, consider what problems you might run into when you are in these situations and visualize solutions for each one. These mental preparations will help you to face the situation in real life.

Scenario 3A: Loss of Healthy Lifestyle

You are very passionate about keeping fit and know first-hand how regular exercise helps you focus on your studies. But you can't do your daily workout at your campus gym because it has been closed due to COVID-19. You try to run outside in your neighbourhood, but each time you find yourself becoming more and more anxious as many people are not following physical distancing.

Now after exercising you feel irritable and upset instead of feeling better. You are angry that you have to sacrifice your lifestyle while others aren't doing their part. You want to give up running but are not sure what to replace it with.

You are finding it harder and harder to motivate yourself to do simple daily things like eating breakfast, brushing your teeth or logging in to class.

Scenario 3B: The Upbeat One

You are usually a very patient and easy-going person who likes to make your classmates laugh. Since the pandemic required you to move back home and study remotely, you've felt impatient and frustrated. You have been trying to focus on your studies but are worried about how your parents are coping. If you make jokes, they are usually dark, sarcastic and hurtful, particularly with your close friends and family.

You often catch yourself thinking about what a bad friend you are, how you can't say anything right and how you don't deserve your parents' support. You would like to ask someone for help, but everyone thinks of you as the upbeat one who can laugh it all off when in fact you are starting to feel quite sad.

Scenario 3C: Returning to Part-Time Work

You are a part-time student who works at the mall to pay for your tuition. For several months you had no shifts because businesses were down due to the pandemic, but your debts are growing very quickly. Your boss has contacted you about coming back to work in the coming weeks.

You have been told there will be strict measures to protect your health and safety, but even so, you have started to feel very stressed and anxious whenever you think about returning to work. This has affected your ability to sleep and concentrate on your studies. You are drinking more and earlier than you had before, just to get through the day.

3D: Unfair Treatment

You are a graduate student in a very competitive and demanding program. Your responsibilities include acting as a teaching assistant and working in a lab for your supervising professor. Your experience working with your professor has been largely negative. You feel that they have favourites in the lab and that you are not one of them. Several times, in front of the other students, your supervisor has put you down by saying you don't belong in the program and questioning how you even passed your undergraduate courses. Your lab mates are nice to you when you are alone, but in front of the supervisor they ignore you and seem to agree with the supervisor.

You often cry on your way home from the lab and have lost your appetite. You regularly lie awake much of the night thinking about your supervisor's comments. You don't want to tell anyone about what is happening because you are embarrassed. You were very excited to get the opportunity to work in this lab and with this professor, but you now feel like a failure.

3E: Feeling Out of Place

You are a single parent of a young child, and you work about 30 hours a week. A few months ago, you started a part-time master's degree. Many things have changed since last you were a student (15 years ago). You are finding it difficult to keep up with the technological aspects of the course delivery and assignment submissions. You generally avoid talking with your classmates, many of whom are younger than you, because you feel you have very little in common with them. You sometimes miss your child's extracurricular events so you can complete course assignments on time. When you are with your child, you are often distracted and irritable.

You are always tired and occasionally miss class to sleep. Sometimes you put off doing schoolwork and then rush through it. You feel overwhelmed by all your competing responsibilities. You are questioning your decision to take this program and are doubting your ability to complete it.

Module 3 Discussion Questions

1. What signs or indicators do you notice?

2. Where are you on the Mental Health Continuum Tool?

3. How could you use the coping strategies to help with the situation at hand?

Module 4: Creating a Supportive Campus



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What resources can you find on your campus?

- Student wellness programs
- Student success, disability, and accommodation services
- Professors, academic advisors
- Peer support
- Student union/student associations
- Residence assistants

What resources will you find in your community?

- Family doctors and other health care providers
- Community resources
- Insured or private services such as psychologists
- Social workers
- Family and close friends
- Spiritual leaders

Add in Resources specific to your campus and Community:

Scenario 4A: A Good Friend is Heartbroken

A good friend in your program recently went through a relationship breakup. They had to move out of their apartment and, due to the pandemic, reluctantly moved back in with their parents.

Your friend is in touch with you every day, often in tears, saying they are not able to sleep and cannot imagine life without their former partner. You are afraid to hang up and leave them alone, but you can't always be talking to them as you have studying to do.

They won't go out for fresh air or exercise, spend all their time in bed and ignore their assignments, which are piling up. You have suggested several times that they try calling a counsellor on campus, but they say, "It is pointless".

4A Discussion Questions

1. Which signs or indicators do you notice?
2. Where is your friend on the Mental Health Continuum Tool?
3. Why might your friend be reluctant to seek help?
4. How would you support your friend?

Scenario 4B: Left Out

You have been on your school's student council for three years, are good friends with most of the members and get along with everyone. You were recently on a video call when a first-year student told the group that they had been diagnosed with schizophrenia when they were in high school. They explained that they are taking medication for it and are doing really well with treatment. Everyone seemed to be fine with it and the conversation moved on.

The next week, when you joined the weekly video call, the student had not received an invite and had to ask you for the link. When they joined in, everyone got quiet. Over the next few weeks, you noticed others typing negative comments on social media, and the situation got worse when they were deliberately excluded from a working group. You want to support the student because you think they are being treated unfairly, but you are not sure where to start.

4B Discussion Questions

1. How would you support the student?

2. How does this behaviour impact the campus environment?

3. What can you do on campus to improve the situation?

Scenario 4C: Final Year Worries

You are in your final year and working on a proposal for your honours thesis/capstone project/final practicum. You previously had a very good relationship with your supervisor, but recently they disclosed to you that they have been struggling a lot with the stress from the pandemic.

Lately they have been missing appointments and not returning your emails. On a recent Zoom call, your supervisor was visibly upset and very distracted, and got impatient when you asked when you could expect approval of your proposal.

You understand that there are many uncertainties and unanswered questions for everyone, but you feel you are not getting adequate support. You don't want to say anything to your supervisor, fearing they may get upset with you. After working so hard for so long, you are getting very anxious about upcoming deadlines and being able to complete your program on time.

4C Discussion Questions

1. How would you support your supervisor?
2. Where is your supervisor on the Mental Health Continuum Tool?
3. What can you do on campus to improve the situation? What can you do to ensure your needs as a student are met?

Crisis Support Lines and Resources

Canada Suicide Prevention

www.crisisservicescanada.ca

1-833-456-4566 (toll free, available 24/7)
Quebec: 1-866-277-3553 (1-866-APPELLE)
Text 45645 (4 pm to Midnight EST, standard text messages rates apply)
Free national network for distress, crisis, and suicide prevention lines.

Wellness Together Canada

www.wellnesstogether.ca

1-866-584-0445
Adults text WELLNESS to 741 741
Youth text WELLNESS to 686 868
App Stores: PocketWell

Kids Help Phone

<https://kidshelpphone.ca>

1-800-668-6868
Text CONNECT to 686 868
Available 24/7 to young people aged 5 to 29 in Canada, for confidential and anonymous care from trained responders and access to e-mental health resources.

Hope for Wellness Help Line

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

1-855-242-3310
Or connect on the online Hope for Wellness chat (hopeforwellness.ca)
Immediate mental health counselling and crisis intervention to all Indigenous peoples across Canada. Services are available in Cree, Ojibway, Inuktitut, English, and French.

Naseeha Muslim Youth Helpline

<https://naseeha.org/>

1-866-627-3342
Provides a safe mental health hotline and mental health support by text for youths and individuals to talk and get the help they need.

Black Youth Helpline

<https://blackyouth.ca/>

1-833-294-8650
Black Youth Helpline serves all youth and specifically responds to the need for a Black youth-specific service, positioned and resourced to promote access to professional, culturally appropriate support for youth, families, and schools.

Trans Lifeline

<https://translifeline.org/hotline/>

1-877-330-6366
Provides peer support by trans people for trans and questioning callers. Crisis and other supports and resources are provided in both English and Spanish from 10:00 am to 4:00 am EST.

LGBT Youthline

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

1-800-268-9866
Text to 647-694-4275
Live chat with a peer-support volunteer
Offers confidential, non-judgmental, and informed LGBTTTQQ2S1 peer support through telephone, text, and chat services to 2SLGBTQ+ people 29 and under (Sunday to Friday 6 to 9 pm EST).

Good2Talk

Good2talk.ca

1-866-925-5454
Provides free, confidential support services for post-secondary students in Ontario and Nova Scotia

Resources

Mental Health Commission of Canada

National Standard for Mental Health and Well-being for Post-Secondary Students
<https://mentalhealthcommission.ca/studentstandard/>

Mental Health Apps: How to Make an Informed Choice
<https://mentalhealthcommission.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Mental-Health-Apps-How-to-Make-an-Informed-Choice.pdf>

Choosing the Mental Health Resource That's Right for You: Not All are Created Equal
https://mentalhealthcommission.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/covid_19_tip_sheet_choosing_resources_eng.pdf

Goal Setting in a Year of Uncertainty
https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/wp-content/uploads/drupal/2021-01/covid_19_tip_sheet_goal_setting_eng.pdf

Guide to Student Mental Health During COVID-19
https://mentalhealthcommission.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/covid_19_tip_sheet_student_mental_health_eng.pdf

Coping with Stress, Anxiety, and Substance Use During COVID-19: How Animals Can Help
<https://www.ccsa.ca/sites/default/files/2020-06/CCSA-COVID-19-Coping-with-Stress-Anxiety-Substance-Use-Animals-Can-Help-Infographic-2020-en.pdf>

Resources and Organizations

Best Practices in Canadian Higher Ed.

<https://bp-net.ca/>

A national mental health community of practice and knowledge exchange network, aiming to promote and advance evidence-based post-secondary student mental health and wellness initiatives to improve Canadian post-secondary students' well-being.

Bell Let's Talk

<https://letstalk.bell.ca/en/>

A multi-year charitable program dedicated to improving mental health. This initiative offers support for a wide variety of mental health awareness and management projects across the country.

Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention

<https://suicideprevention.ca/>

Devoted to reducing the national suicide rate by facilitating knowledge exchanges, advocating for policy improvements at all levels of government, and supporting leading research in the field.

Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)

<https://cmha.ca/>

Promotes good mental health for the entire population and the resilience and recovery of people living with mental illnesses through advocacy, education, research, and services.

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)

<http://www.camh.ca/>

CAMH is the largest teaching hospital for mental health and addictions in Canada and is a national leader in research, education, clinical services, policy development, and health promotion. CAMH's Mental Health and Addiction 101 is a series of free tutorials on some of the most common mental health and substance use issues.

Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health
<https://campusmentalhealth.ca/>

Our mission is to help Ontario's colleges and universities enhance their capacity to support student mental health and well-being.

Healthy Minds, Health Campuses (HM-HC) - British Columbia

<https://healthycampuses.ca/>

A province-wide community of practice, learning and working together to promote mental wellness and healthier relationships with substances within B.C. post-secondary institutions.

Living Works

<https://www.livingworks.net/trainings>

LivingWorks is a social enterprise company dedicated to empowering people to save lives, by providing integrated training programs and courses on suicide intervention.

Mental Health First Aid Canada

<https://www.mhfa.ca/en/home>

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is the help provided to a person developing a mental health or substance use problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. It is given until appropriate support is found or until the crisis is resolved. MHFA Training is available, in-person and virtual, across Canada.

Multicultural Mental Health Resource Centre
<https://multiculturalmentalhealth.ca/>

The MMHRC provides resources in multiple languages to support culturally safe and competent mental health care for Canada's diverse population. Please join us to build a community of practice.

The Jack Project

<https://jack.org/Home>

Promotes good mental health among youth by improving awareness of mental health issues and developing technology to help students reach the help they need.

Wellness Together Canada

<https://wellnesstogether.ca/en-CA>

Free online resources, tools, apps, and connections to trained volunteers and qualified mental health professionals.



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