

TIPS FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS



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Canadian Mental Health Association

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**Canadian Mental
Health Association**
Saskatchewan
Mental health for all

We've come to realize that Mental Health is something none of us should take for granted.

The Canadian Mental Health Association is the only national voluntary health agency that addresses itself to the needs of the mentally ill and to the promotion of mental health. Our association, founded in 1918, is one of the oldest voluntary organizations in Canada.

Mandate:

The Canadian Mental Health Association is dedicated to four objectives:

1. To improve attitudes toward mental illness and the mentally ill.
2. To improve the treatment and caring services for the mentally ill.
3. To work for the prevention of mental illness.
4. To work for the promotion of mental health.

Facts:

- Emotional distress or illness strikes people from all walks of life, in all kinds of jobs.
- Mental illness and emotional distress effects more Canadians every year than all other health problems combined (including cancer and heart disease).
- 1 in 3 Canadians will suffer temporary emotional problems during their lives; 1 in 6 seriously enough to require professional care.
- Emotional problems cost Canadian business and industry billions of dollars annually. Emotional problems are often responsible for employee absenteeism and industrial accidents.
- People who suffer from emotional distress or mental illness fill almost half the country's hospital beds and account for at least 50% of visits to family physicians.



Mental Health is...

... something all of us want for ourselves. When we speak of happiness, or peace of mind, or enjoyment, or satisfaction, we are usually talking about mental health.

Mental health has to do with everybody's everyday life. It means the overall way that people get along in their families, at school, at work, at play, in their communities. It has to do with the way each person harmonizes his/her desires, ambitions, abilities, ideals, feelings, and his/her conscience in order to meet the demands of life as he/she has to face them.

One way to define mental health is by describing a mentally healthy person. Such a person, it is said ...

Feels comfortable about himself/herself

... can usually cope with his/her emotions: fear, anger, love, jealousy, guilt, or worry; can take life's disappointments in stride; has self-respect and neither underestimates nor overestimates his/her abilities; and feels able to deal with most situations that come about ...

Is able to meet the demands of life

... is one who, if possible, does something about his/her problems as they arise; accepts his/her responsibilities; welcomes new experiences and new ideas; uses his/her natural capacities; is able to think for himself/herself and make his/her own decisions; puts his/her best efforts into what he/she does and gets satisfaction out of doing it.

Whatever the characteristics used to describe mental health, it is as broad as life itself; different from one individual to another, from one viewpoint to another, and from one culture to another.

Feels right about other people

... is able to give love; expects to like and trust others; does not push people around and does not allow himself/herself to be pushed around; and is able to establish personal relationships that are satisfying and lasting ...

How to get your child to listen to you

Have the child's attention

Before giving instructions or starting an important conversation, be sure you have the child's attention. If the child is absorbed in another activity (playing, reading, watching T.V.) call his/her name and wait until he/she stops what he/she is doing before speaking.

Make eye contact

Get on your child's level. Speak eye-to-eye with him/her.

Keep it simple

Don't expect your child to remember complicated directions. It's easier for him/her to follow simple instructions. Make only one request at a time to avoid confusion.

Make your expression and tone of voice match your words

Don't smile when your message is sad or serious. When making an important request be direct, use a firm tone of voice and tell the child why he/she must comply. When praising him/her smile and show your pleasure openly.

Apply the golden rule

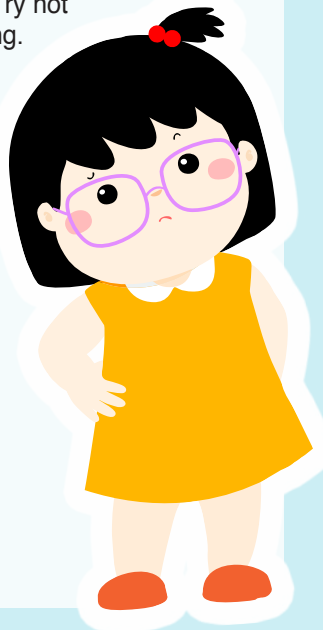
Treat your child the way you would like to be treated. Be polite and caring. Use "please," "thank you" and "you're welcome." Try not to be rude or unkind. Avoid shaming, sarcasm, or ridiculing.

Allow for disagreement

Expect your child to disagree, question your wisdom, and even (occasionally) prove you wrong. You can set a good example and show how to compromise and back down when necessary. Your child will be more eager to listen if he/she is allowed to give his/her own point of view in return.

Allow for feelings

Accept that some things you have to say will provoke "pleasant" feelings in your child and other things will bring on so-called "unpleasant" feelings. It doesn't help to tell a child he/she should feel differently or that he/she should not feel what he/she does. Let the child know you can accept his/her feelings both "pleasant" and "unpleasant."



Avoid labels

"Stupid," "silly," "lazy," "naughty," "baby," etc. are examples of labels that are hard to get rid of. Children often define themselves with the words they hear from adults around them.

Talk positively

Use more do's than don'ts more can's than cant's. Whenever possible, frame things positively.

Examples:

POSITIVES

You can go out and play when your homework is done.

Please put your glass in the sink.

You may play that game upstairs or outside.

NEGATIVES

You can't go out to play until your homework is done.

Don't leave your glass on the table.

Stop making all that noise.

Use "I" Messages

"I Messages" tell your thoughts and feelings and express your wishes.

"I Messages" are a way to let the child know how his/her behavior affects you.

Examples:

I MESSAGE

I would like to rest for a half hour.

I need you to help me clean up the kitchen.

I have a lot of confidence in you.

BLAME

Leave me alone you pest.

You sure made a big mess.

Grow up and handle your own problems.

Talk "with" NOT "at" children

Remember, conversation is a two-way process. Talk to your child and listen to what he/she has to say.

How to listen to your child

Be accepting

Demonstrate a willingness to see the world through your child's eyes. "Adult" communication styles of preaching, criticizing, giving orders and threatening don't work well with children. Finding ways to communicate love and acceptance builds your child's self-esteem and confidence. When he/she feels accepted, he/she will find it easier to communicate openly and to seek out your help. He/she will be eager to develop and change, and to pass good feelings on to others.

Remember

There will be times when you will accept your child, but not approve of his/her behavior. For example, while loving and accepting your child, you do not approve or allow him/her to hit other children.

Listen to behavior as well as to words

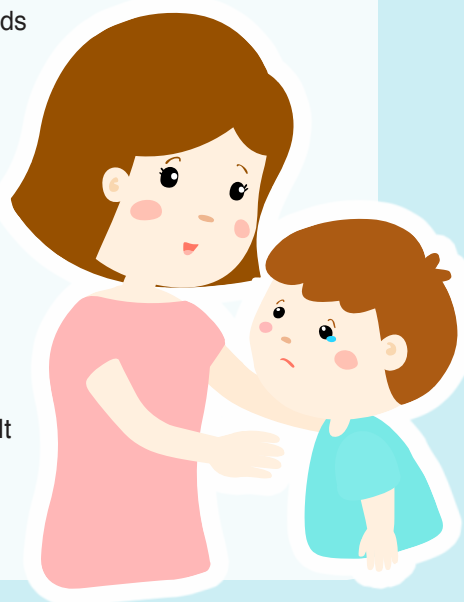
Tears, tantrums, laughs, and giggles tell you as much as words. Actions are an important form of behavior. Use your child's behavior as cues to encourage him/her to express his/her feelings in words.

Don't interrupt

Allow children to tell their stories in their own words without being corrected or questioned. Never criticize your child's speech or use of language while he/she is telling you something that is important to him/her.

Example:

Jimmy came home from school excited about his class project. As he was describing the project to his mother, she noticed that his pants were ripped at the knee. Mother interrupted to ask how Jimmy split his pants. Jimmy became discouraged and reluctant to talk about school. It would have been better for mother to ask about the pants after she and Jimmy had talked about the class project.



Demonstrate your interest

Listen attentively. Set aside the time to give him/her your individual attention. Get rid of distractions, turn off the television set or put down your newspaper. Never pretend to listen. If you can't stop what you're doing, tell your child "I can't talk with you right now, let's talk about this later."

Use "Door Openers"

Door Openers indicate your interest and encourage your child to tell you more.

Examples:

"Oh, I see!"

"Say more about that."

"Tell me what you mean." "Mm Humm."

"Really?"

Respond with Reflective or "You" Messages

"You Messages" (1) reflect to your child what you hear and (2) use feeling words to help your child identify what's going on "inside."

Examples:

"You are disappointed because dad is working late."

"You are confused about your homework."

"You are sad because we can't go to Grandma's."

"You are angry because your brother won't share."



Developing responsibility in children

Responsibility cannot be “taught” it must be given.

Some ways to do this are:

1. Put jobs on a child's level. Give a child jobs he/she can do on his/her own, and never do for a child what he/she can do for himself/herself.
2. Encourage a child's first attempts to help you or to do things for himself/herself. (Remember, he/she is learning so he/she will not do the task as well as you can.)
3. Give a child credit for trying to help out.
4. Give plenty of time to learn.
5. Don't criticize or make fun of poor results. Encourage him/her to try again and carefully steer him/her toward a better way.
6. When a child is ready for larger responsibilities, let him/her take them on.
7. Let a child know you trust and have confidence in him/her.
8. Give hugs, love, warmth, pats, smiles and praise. Praise more than you punish. Praise efforts as well as performance.
9. Let your child make mistakes without feeling guilty.
10. Be sure the child knows that his/her help benefits the whole family.
11. Allow your child to explore, to try new things, visit new places and have many different types of experiences. Give him/her more chances to say, “I can” than he/she has to say, “I can't.”
12. Admit your own mistakes when you make them.
13. Don't keep punishing for the same offense. Help the child find a better behavior.
14. Don't demand more of a child than he/she can give.
15. Remember, “a child needs encouragement as a plant needs water and sunshine.”
16. Offer your child realistic choices and be prepared to go along with his/her decision.



Self-Concept Development

Following is a list of words and statements that contribute to the development of a poor self-concept. The list is provided to increase your awareness of the nature of discouraging remarks. Immediately after is the list of encouraging remarks, which will help a child build a healthy self-concept. These remarks also stimulate the development of self-confidence.

Words That Discourage

I am ready to give up on you.

You can't do anything right.

Look at all those mistakes.

You were so clumsy. That's a good paper, BUT...

Here, let me do it for you.

John can do it, why can't you?

When are you going to grow up?

I told you that would happen.

Why don't you ever listen?

I won't love you.

Boys don't cry.

You are driving me crazy!

Words That Encourage

Everybody makes mistakes.

It's so nice to know someone like you.

You are improving.

Mistakes do happen.

I like the way you are listening.

You try it, you can do it.

That is very nice work!

Thanks so very much!

I appreciate your considerate behavior.

Keep up the good work.

Failure is no crime.

Your work is really improving.

I feel so good when you guys work nicely together.

Good work!

I understand how you must feel.

That is great!

What a neat idea!

