



## Student Mental Health and Addictions Newsletter January 2021

YRDSB Mental Health services are provided by YRDSB psychology and social work personnel

### Returning to Virtual Learning after the Winter Break

As a result of a provincially mandated lockdown due to rising COVID -19 cases across the province, we end the Winter Break with a return to virtual learning. Although this will present a challenge for some and disappointment for others, our focus will be on how to keep one another physically healthy and maintain social connections and mental health while distance learning. This month's edition of our Mental Health newsletter will focus on some suggestions of ways to stay socially connected during this continued time of physical distancing.

Each one of us is unique and may require different strategies to support our mental health. One size does not fit all. The following are some suggestions to help you think about what may help to support your own mental health and the mental health of your children.

Distance learning from home can have positive or negative impacts. One well-supported recommendation is to create a sense of **routine and structure** in the day (as much as possible). For example, try to make the morning routine the same each day, with breaks built in at predictable times.

Other suggestions include:

- Building in positive goals to **incorporate positive pursuits** such as learning something new (e.g. cooking, puzzles), showing gratitude (e.g. reach out to tell someone you care about them), and exercising (e.g. at home or going for a walk).
- [Dr. Shimi Kang](#), a mental health expert and clinical associate professor at the University of British Columbia, suggests that individuals determine 2-3 personal coping strategies that can act as their **own “go to” tools to cope with stress**. Writing this down and making note can make using them intentional. In addition, Dr. Kang reminds us that we should try **to limit our use of technology** where we can. Over dependence on technology/ screens can affect our mental health.
- Lastly, **identify someone you can purposely check in with on a regular basis**, not just during times of stress, but as a measure to maintain social connection. This practice can help maintain positive mental health.

[School Mental Health Ontario](#) has created a variety of resources for educators, parents and families, and students regarding supporting student mental health during this time.

Check out some more tips from School Mental Health Ontario on building [personal resiliency](#).

## Mental Health COVID-19 Page

COVID-19 has presented unprecedented issues and concerns for our community, our country and the world. As we focus on keeping ourselves healthy and containing the spread of COVID-19, we must also keep ourselves mentally well.

The [Mental Health COVID-19 page](#) is dedicated to supporting student mental health during this pandemic. Resources for students, parents/guardians as well as community resources are listed. In addition, there are various links to YRDSB mental health supports as well as community supports available during the school closure. Please consider taking some time to familiarize yourself with these supports.

Continue to check out the [YRDSB website](#) for updated information as well as the Twitter account @YRDSB

**Patricia Marra-Stapleton, M.Sc., C. Psych. Assoc.**  
Mental Health Lead  
patricia.marra-stapleton@yrdsb.ca