



## Student Mental Health and Addictions Newsletter

January 2022

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

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### Returning to some uncertainty after the Winter Break

To our students, families and caregivers, it is our sincere hope that you have had moments of rest and joy over the winter break. Even if these moments may have been brief or minor, they are worth highlighting in the spirit of hope and optimism. Our return to in-person learning has been delayed due to provincially mandated school board requirements coinciding with the rising COVID -19 cases across the province. For many, this has created feelings of uncertainty, worry and other emotions. Although these feelings may not be new, they can be challenging to navigate, especially for younger children and children with special education needs.

As we respond to this current phase of the Pandemic, our families are asked to shift their focus from in-person learning to online learning. We are also encouraged to follow Public Health guidelines for social distancing and gatherings. It is especially important at this time for us to maintain social connections and positive mental health practices. 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.

This month's edition of our Mental Health newsletter will focus on some suggestions of ways to maintain mental health during this continued time of physical distancing. [Dr. Shimi Kang](#), a mental health expert and associate professor at the University of British Columbia, suggests 5 tips for supporting our mental health during the Pandemic. Although these tips may be familiar, they bear repeating as a reminder of ways to support our mental health.

1. Practice self-care: Taking care of our mental health is just as important as caring for our physical health. For example, monitoring sleep, routine exercise, and mental stimulation.
2. Identify, practice and master coping skills: Identify what are your own personal and unique coping skills that help you to cope, practice these in times of distress.

3. Learn from experience: Reflect on what has worked or not worked from you in the past as you have navigated stress during the Pandemic.
4. Honour your unique mental health needs: There is a lot of information out there about “what works”. Honour your own unique needs and recognize what may work for others may not work for you and vice versa.
5. Monitor your “Tech Diet”: Monitor your tech use and recognize the difference between positive and negative tech use. Consider replacing some of your tech use time with meaningful social connection or self-care. For example, 30 minutes of tech time might be replaced with 30 minutes of movement, music or mindfulness.

[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 link below 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 the supports found on the [COVID-19 Mental Health Resources for Students and Families](#).

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](mailto:patricia.marra-stapleton@yrdsb.ca)

**Hoshana Calliste, M.S.W., R.S.W.**

Assistant Coordinator of Mental Health

[hoshana.calliste@yrdsb.ca](mailto:hoshana.calliste@yrdsb.ca)