



Student Mental Health and Addictions Newsletter October 2019

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

World Mental Health Day is on October 10

This is a day that the World Health Organization recognizes to raise awareness of mental health issues around the world and mobilize efforts in support of mental health. Let's begin by supporting our own mental health by practicing gratitude.

Most of us recognize that our thoughts often are negative in tone. Consider, for example, the thoughts to which you personally most often return. If you're like most people, many of these thoughts probably concern what you lack, what is in the way of your progress in daily strivings, and what could go wrong in your future. These kinds of thoughts contribute to stress, depression, anger, anxiety, addictive behaviours, and relationship problems.

A transformation often occurs when people learn to shift their thoughts from negative to grateful. We can all benefit from making mindfulness of the good in our lives a consistent lifestyle habit. This month would be the perfect opportunity to try out some new practices that might move us in the direction of a lifestyle of gratitude. Some specific suggestions follow.

Express your thanks to someone who made a difference in your life. In one study, Dr. Martin Seligman and colleagues (University of Pennsylvania) had research participants take a week to write and then deliver a letter of gratitude to someone they never properly thanked. They found that depressive symptoms, on average, declined for one month after the event. This week would be an excellent opportunity to apply this research. Think of someone who made a significant positive impact in your life and does not know how you feel and let them know in some meaningful way.

Keep a gratitude journal. Many studies have been conducted where they randomly assigned people to record things in their lives, daily or weekly, for which they were grateful or thankful. Results show consistent psychological, physical, and interpersonal

benefits from these practices, even when individuals were in the midst of experiencing a stressful life event. Make it a habit to record what you are thankful for on a regular basis. According to a 2011 study published in *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being*, spending just 15 minutes jotting down a few grateful sentiments before bed, may help you sleep better and longer.

Savour the moment. Engage yourself fully in the conversations with your loved ones. Enjoy the moment. Begin a tradition to make meal times a “technology free zone” with no television or phones allowed. Many of the above mentioned practices may be difficult for some to implement because they require vulnerability to softer feelings. In particular, it may be difficult to openly express a sense of heartfelt thanks in the presence of others. Vulnerability may be necessary for the connection that many of us deeply seek. Have the courage to be vulnerable, and this season may become very meaningful.

Release of the YRDSB Student Suicide Intervention Protocol



York Region District School Board is committed to student well-being and mental health. YRDSB has developed a Student Suicide Intervention Protocol to help keep students safe in the event of suicidal thoughts or actions. The Student Suicide Intervention Protocol will be implemented starting Fall 2019. Youth suicide is a complex, emotionally-charged and sadly a real problem in Canada. It is the second leading cause of death amongst young people. It's important to recognize that those who struggle with mental health have personal strength and resilience and the potential to overcome difficulties to ultimately thrive.

The YRDSB Student Suicide Intervention Protocol is designed to address the six steps involved when responding to current and present thoughts of suicide, as well as actions related to suicide. In addition, the Protocol is governed by a set of guiding principles which are underpinned by a culturally responsive and reflective practice.

Suicide is not culturally neutral. Our cultural and ethnic backgrounds will inform how each of us understands suicide. To see all the guiding principles, refer to the print version of the protocol on the on the board website [YRDSB-Student Suicide Intervention Protocol](#). If you have any questions about the Student Suicide Intervention Protocol, please contact your school principal.