



KNOW

BEFORE

YOU

GO

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

TeenMentalHealth.org



youtube.com/teenmentalhealth1



fb.com/tmentalhealth



info@teenmentalhealth.org



[@TMentalhealth](https://twitter.com/TMentalhealth)

Created & Written by

Dr. Stan Kutcher, ONS, MD, FRCPC, FCAHS

Professor of Psychiatry and Sun Life Financial Chair in Adolescent Mental Health

IWK Health Centre, Dalhousie University

With Inputs from

Sun Life Financial Chair in Adolescent Mental Health Team

Vanessa Bruce Little

Mina Hashish

Yifeng Wei

Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Rola AbiHanna

Kelly Campbell

Steven Carrington

Natalie Flinn

Jude Gerrard

Peter Oldreive

Joanne Syms

Special thanks to The Youth Project, Nova Scotia

Edmonton Catholic Board

Cheryl Shinkaruk

Sandra Talarico

Tisa Haesch



© This material is under copyright held by TeenMentalHealth.org

This material can not be altered, modified or sold. Teens and parents are welcome to use this material for their own purposes. Health providers are welcome to use this material in their provision of health care. Educators are welcome to use this material for teaching or similar purposes. Questions on other uses of this material, other than described above, can be forwarded to info@teenmentalhealth.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS



Identity

1



Becoming Independent

14



Building Relationships

19



Education

30



Mental Health

40

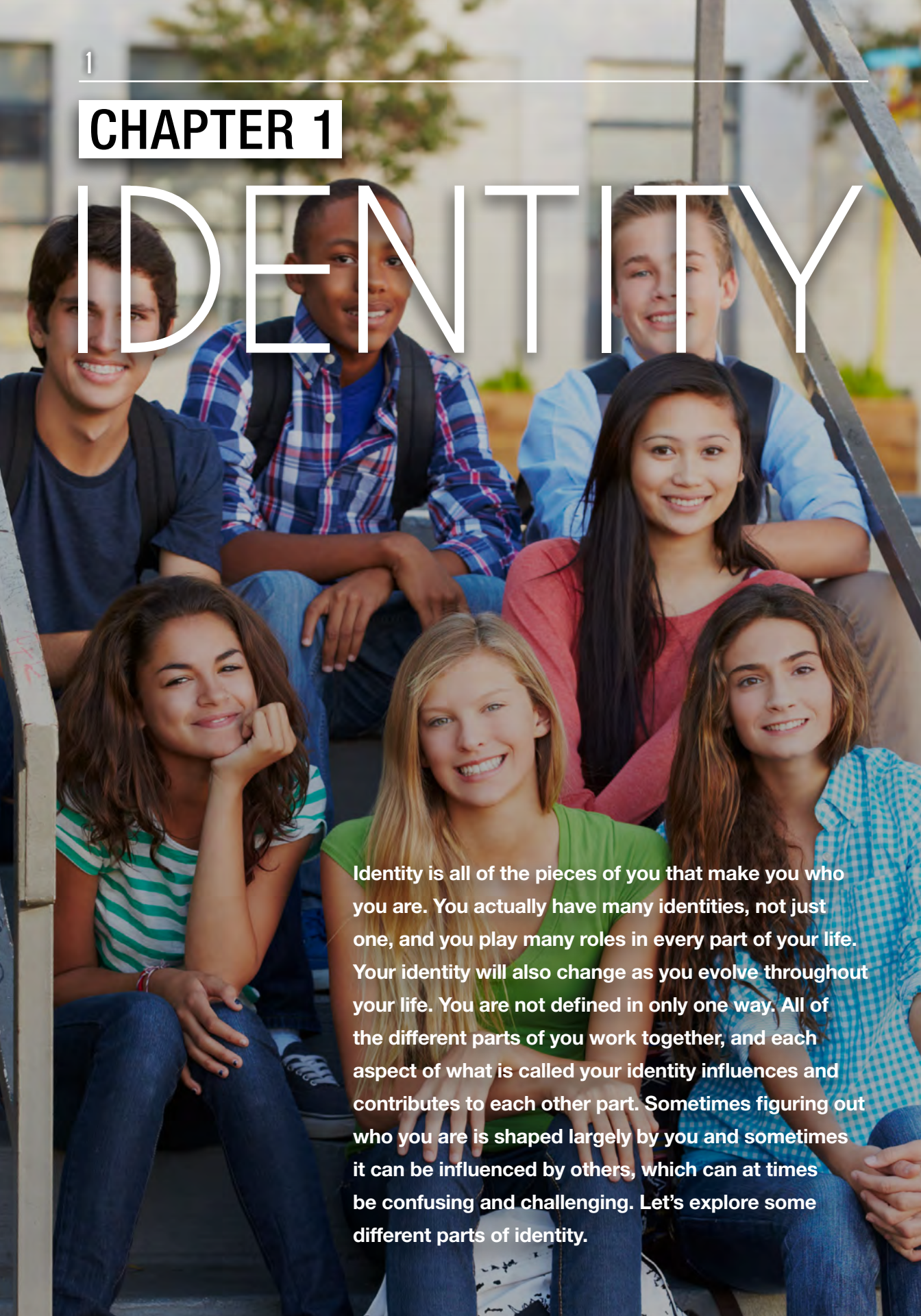


Human Sexuality

69

CHAPTER 1

IDENTITY



Identity is all of the pieces of you that make you who you are. You actually have many identities, not just one, and you play many roles in every part of your life. Your identity will also change as you evolve throughout your life. You are not defined in only one way. All of the different parts of you work together, and each aspect of what is called your identity influences and contributes to each other part. Sometimes figuring out who you are is shaped largely by you and sometimes it can be influenced by others, which can at times be confusing and challenging. Let's explore some different parts of identity.

RACIAL & ETHNIC IDENTITY

The particular racial or ethnic group(s) you feel a part of may influence your identity. This may affect your dress and language, and the ways in which you engage and communicate with others from and outside of your race or ethnic group(s). Some people may have advantages in life because of their race or ethnicity while others, because of their race or ethnicity, may face disadvantages and challenges. Although establishing racial or ethnic identity may be confusing at times, it can also be empowering and provide you with a sense of self and community.



Things to think about:

1

Do you identify with a particular race or ethnicity?

2

In what ways do you feel advantaged by your race or ethnicity?

3

In what ways do you feel disadvantaged by your race or ethnicity?

4

In what ways do you define yourself by what others think or feel about you or how your race or ethnicity is commonly portrayed?

5

How does your race or ethnic community influence who you are?

6

How does your race or ethnicity impact the other parts of your identity?

CULTURAL IDENTITY

A particular cultural group(s) you feel connected to may influence your identity. This may include a geographic area, such as a country, province or community that you live in. It may also include belonging to a community, a spiritual or faith group, or the disabilities community, for example. Your cultural identity may also be shaped by an interest-oriented community such as music, art, gaming, or athletics. And, to make it even more complicated, you are likely to have a number of different cultural identities at the same time (for example: your city, your school, your athletic team, your church).



Things to think about:

- 1 How do you define your family and community?
- 2 How do your family and community influence how you interact with other people?
- 3 In what ways do your family and community influence how you think about the world around you?
- 4 How do your family and community influence what you value as important?
- 5 In what ways do you function similarly to your family and community and in what ways are you different?
- 6 In what ways do your family and community impact the other parts of your identity?

FAMILY & COMMUNITY

The people you consider to be your family and your community will play a significant role in your identity. They will influence what you do, the way you think, the things you care about, and more. Sometimes that influence means that you function similarly to your family or community, or it may mean that you do things differently. Understanding your family and community and the role they play in your life will help you better understand who you are and help you navigate the experiences that come your way.



Things to think about:

1

How do you define your family and community?

2

How do your family and community influence how you interact with other people?

3

In what ways do your family and community influence how you think about the world around you?

4

How do your family and community influence what you value as important?

5

In what ways do you function similar to your family and community and in what ways are you different?

6

In what ways do your family and community impact the other parts of your identity?



PERSONALITY

Your personality traits, of which you have many, will help shape your identity. One aspect of your personality may include whether you prefer quiet and value alone time or prefer being more social and around others. Your sense of humour, how animated and expressive you are, whether you prefer routine or spontaneity, whether you are cautious or a risk taker, and if you are more optimistic or pessimistic, are just some of the other aspects of personality to consider. Here is a place to go to find out more about common personality traits:



www.verywell.com/the-big-five-personality-dimensions-2795422



Things to think about:

1

How would you describe your personality?

2

How do you think others would describe your personality?

3

If there is a difference in the way that you describe yourself and ways others describe you, why do you think that is?

4

How does your personality influence how you interact with other people?

5

In what ways does your personality influence how you think about the world around you?

6

How does your personality influence what you value as important?

7

In what ways does your personality impact the other parts of your identity?

VALUES

Values are principles or judgments about what is important to you and to others. They can help shape your views and behaviour, and impact your personal growth and development. Values come from our homes, parents, communities, schools, peers, culture, religious and spiritual teachings, people we appreciate, respect and cherish, and society in general. Sometimes there can be a “clash” amongst different values and sorting out what to do in that kind of situation may be challenging.



Things to think about:

- 1 What do you value?
- 2 Where do your values come from?
- 3 How do you feel when your values are different from others?
- 4 Can values change?
- 5 How can values influence the way you view the world?
- 6 Which values are most important to you?



STRENGTHS & CHALLENGES

We all have things that come naturally or more easily to us, in the same way that we have things that take more time and attention before we get them. It is important to have a good sense of what your own strengths and challenges may be, as well as how they connect with the other aspects of your personality. Strengths and challenges don't make us more or less intelligent or capable — just different and unique.



Things to think about:

1

How would you describe your strengths and challenges?

2

How would you share your strengths and challenges with those in your life?

3

How do your strengths and challenges influence how you interact with other people?

4

In what ways do your strengths and challenges influence how you feel about yourself?

5

In what ways do your strengths and challenges impact your connection to or engagement with school?

6

In what ways do your strengths and challenges impact the other parts of your identity?

SOCIAL IDENTITY

All people have a personal identity and multiple social identities – all of which contribute to our sense of self. Our personal identities, such as our name, specific family and place in the family, age, personality, interests and talents are attributes that provide us with a sense of individuality. Our social identity, in contrast to our personal identity, refers to the significant group categorizations assigned to us by the society in which we grow up and live and which we share with many others. These include components of identity that we have already described, such as our racial/ethnic/cultural and religious identities, as well as identities that pertain to economic class, geographic identities. All people are born into social identities and it is important to note that our social identities can and will likely change throughout our lifetime.



Things to think about:

1

What social identities do you most associate yourself with?

2

What social identities were you born into?

3

In what ways has your social identity changed over the course of your life?

4

What aspects of your social identity are you proud of? Are there any aspects of your social identity (now or in the past) that are or have been a struggle?

5

How does your social identity influence your belief about your own capacity for or limitations in achieving life goals?

6

In what ways does your social identity (s) impact your values?

7

In what ways does your social identity provide you with a sense of self and/or belonging?

SPIRITUALITY & FAITH

Spirituality is a sense of connection to something bigger than oneself. It comes in many different forms and is considered a universal human experience. It is a look at our inner selves and way of being as we relate to our surroundings, including interactions with others and our environment. We usually look for meaning in our spirituality. Some people describe themselves as highly spiritual while others do not consider themselves to be spiritual at all. There is no “right” degree of spirituality. Faith, or religion, is a strong belief that is shared by a community that helps followers find meaning in their world. Spirituality and faith/religion are two separate but common phenomena. Both shape who we are and may provide us with community as well as helping us determine our values and life directions. For us, the Catholic faith informs how we make sense of Jesus Christ. It’s about how we pray, the values we cultivate, and the goals we think spirituality will achieve for us.



Things to think about:

1

Where do you find meaning?

2

How do you feel connected to others?

3

How do you feel you should live?

4

What rituals do you follow?

5

How do you determine what is right and wrong?

6

What do you believe and why?

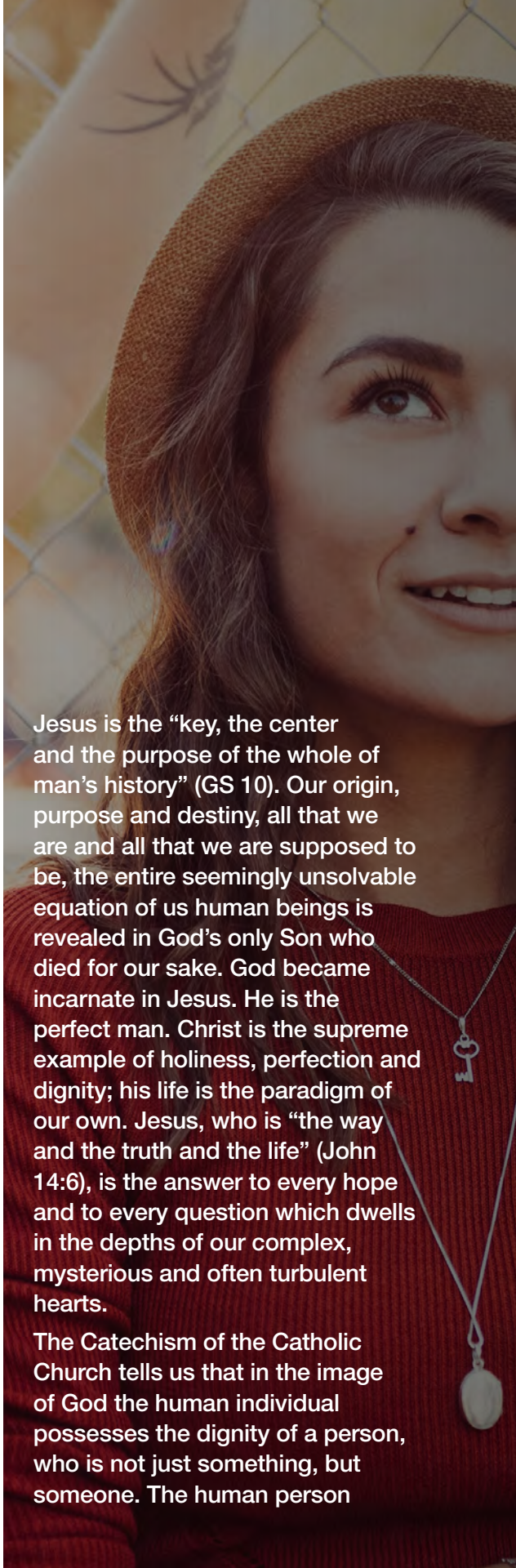
SEXUALITY

When we ask the question, "Who is the human person?" and seek to answer it from a position of reason informed by the light of faith, we enter the realm of the anthropology of the Catholic Church. There are many questions one may ask oneself: Why am I here? What is my origin and purpose? What does it mean to be human? Who and what am I? What is my end? These are certainly very ancient questions that, both with every new generation and repeatedly within each generation, rise to the surface of the human mind. The pressing question that follows is, where are the answers? Catholic teaching tells us that the human person receives one's dignity from God in the following three ways:

- 1** One's creation in the image and likeness of God.
- 2** One's redemption by Christ's sacrifice on the cross
- 3** One's destiny to eternal communion with God

The human person is clearly not just "something" but rather someone whose exceeding dignity and beauty is founded on one's destiny to share in God's divine nature: each of us is brought forth from the darkness of nonexistence into the light of existence to participate in God's life. Each of us is destined for eternal glory. The human person's dignity is, therefore, of transcendent value which reaches beyond the natural into the supernatural life of God.

The anthropology of the Church points to the Incarnation as the definitive answer to our deepest questions about ourselves, for "it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear" (*Gaudium et Spes* 22).



Jesus is the "key, the center and the purpose of the whole of man's history" (GS 10). Our origin, purpose and destiny, all that we are and all that we are supposed to be, the entire seemingly unsolvable equation of us human beings is revealed in God's only Son who died for our sake. God became incarnate in Jesus. He is the perfect man. Christ is the supreme example of holiness, perfection and dignity; his life is the paradigm of our own. Jesus, who is "the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6), is the answer to every hope and to every question which dwells in the depths of our complex, mysterious and often turbulent hearts.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us that in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. The human person

is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving oneself and entering in communion with other persons. We are called by grace to a covenant with our Creator, to offer Him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give in our stead. The coming of Jesus Christ provides the fuller revelation of the meaning of persons as images of the Creator. The Second Vatican Council taught that Jesus Christ reveals our human nature to us as the “New Man” (GS 22). By becoming one of us, God reveals our unique dignity in the order of Creation. Human nature is the only appropriate subject for union with divine nature, in the Person of Christ. Each of us is an appropriate subject to be united to God through grace. Our ‘imaging’ of God is expressed above all in our capacity for self-giving love, divine love. Human nature cannot be understood fully without reference to God, which is a basic principle of Christian humanism.

Catholic schools share a foundational belief that all children are loved by God, are individually unique and that the school has a mission to help each student to answer their God-given destiny in all aspects of their person: physically, academically, socially, morally and spiritually.

To be sure, young people represent a diverse range of sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions. Some transgender students struggle with figuring out who they really are. Questions they may ask are: Who am I? Am I gay? They may be confused about their gender and sexual orientation. And at the center of understanding gender identity is the need to understand what gender is. Quite often, the terms sex and gender are used

interchangeably when, from a secular perspective, they are distinct but related concepts. Sex is a term that refers specifically to our bodies and includes things such as chromosomes, genitals, physiology and hormones. Sex is usually defined by primary sex characteristics, such as the reproductive organs required for procreation and the secondary sex characteristics that develop during puberty. Sex is about anatomy; however, we may begin sending messages to children as soon as they are born based on their sexual organs with pink or blue coding, and through girl or boy toys. This social coding is based more on gender expectations than on any sort of biological imperative.

At the same time, gender can be characterized as the way we express our identities to others and it is informed by our thoughts, feelings and choices regarding how we move through the world around us. Gender is shaped by cultural and social influences and our sense of self. Gender could be demonstrated through our clothing choices, how we refer to ourselves, how we speak and perhaps the activities in which we choose to engage. Sometimes our choices are based on stereotypical divisions of gender and have been associated with either “male” or “female” identities. Many things in our society are assigned a gender, whether that assignment makes sense or not—toys, colors, clothes and behaviors are just some of the more obvious examples: pink for girls and blue for boys; dolls for girls and trucks for boys; gentle play for girls and rough play for boys. Because of the pervasive nature of accepted gender roles, expectations can become entrenched and many people cannot imagine life any other way.

CHAPTER 2

BECOMING INDEPENDENT

A close-up photograph of a person's hands resting on a car's steering wheel. The person is wearing a blue shirt and a red and white wristband. The background is a blurred green landscape, suggesting the car is parked outdoors. The image is used as a background for the chapter title.

Becoming more and more independent is an expected and natural part of every person's path through life and requires the development of new skills and the confidence to use them to help us shape our own destiny. While this is a lifelong process, the adolescent and young adult years are a key period in that journey. Being more independent will give you the freedom to make choices for yourself and greater opportunity to chart your own path.

As you become more independent, you will take more responsibility for yourself and begin to develop some original solutions to everyday life challenges. You will also learn how to use the wisdom and advice of others to help you on your journey. As you do this, you will get some things right and you will also make some mistakes. This is normal. Learning from our mistakes is one of the most common ways in which we find out what we should and what we should not do in our lives.



CATEGORIES

Building Resiliency

Resilience means having the skills to be better able to adapt to the inevitable stresses of everyday life. When life difficulties, adversity or even trauma strikes, you may experience a range of challenging thoughts and negative emotions. Resiliency will help you to keep functioning both physically and psychologically through these rough patches. However, resilience is more than just coping with life's challenges on your own. Being able to reach out to others for support is a key component of being resilient, as is learning from failure.





Living Arrangements

Respect for others and clear communication are two important aspects of making any living arrangement work. Another important consideration is being aware of and reasonably accommodating to the needs of others. In college, university or when you begin to work, you may set up an independent living space, often shared with others. It is important that you choose your roommates or living partners carefully. As you make your plans, it is a good idea to discuss any specific concerns you may have (for example: dietary needs, party space versus study space, guests, etc.) or write out a contract which clearly outlines everybody's responsibilities and conditions before you move in with others.

Managing Stress

Experiencing stress is normal and an expected part of life. Most everyday stress is not harmful. On the contrary, it can be healthy and it is part of how we learn to become resilient and develop skills that we need to adapt to the challenges life brings us. It is necessary to understand that when we experience the sensations we call stress, that this is a signal that we have a problem or challenge that we need to solve. Solving the problem reduces or shuts off the stressful feelings and our solution now becomes a new skill that can help us in the future. Avoiding stress or focusing only on reducing our stressful feelings can change everyday positive stress into chronic long-term negative stress – because we have not successfully addressed the challenge we have encountered, even if we have reduced our feelings of stress. There are many useful strategies we may be able to consider in managing the normal stresses of life. These include changing how we think about stress. Watch the video below by Dr. Stan Kutcher:

 youtu.be/0RrcIj7LeRg

Making Decisions

Every day we make many decisions — sometimes on our own and sometimes together with others. Some are simple and others are complex. There is no formula for making the best decision, and often we may not know the outcome of that decision for some time in the future. When making a decision that's important to you, it's often best not to rush and instead, to take the time to consider your options, the likely outcomes of your decision, and the advice of people you trust. Don't expect to get every decision right. We can learn valuable lessons from all the wrong decisions that we make! It's good to keep in mind this quote from the famous inventor:



I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work.

— Thomas Edison

Managing Money

Understanding your total expenses compared to how much money you have is important to help you budget. The preparation of a budget is a good starting point, but sticking to it can be a challenge. It is important to know where your money goes! Planning well may help you avoid getting over your head in debt. Here is a useful website that you can use to assist you:




[fcac-acfc.gc.ca/Eng/forConsumers/lifeEvents/
payingPostSecEd/Pages/StudentB-Grillepo.aspx](http://fcac-acfc.gc.ca/Eng/forConsumers/lifeEvents/payingPostSecEd/Pages/StudentB-Grillepo.aspx)

Relating to Family, Friends, and Community

Positive support from family, friends, and community promotes better health throughout your life. Culture, customs, traditions, and beliefs of family and community can all contribute to your health. However, as human beings we are continuously evolving and the way we relate to family, friends, and community may change over time. And, not all family, cultural or community influences may be helpful or supportive to you. As you become more independent you will make important choices that will determine how all these different influences interact to help make you the person that you are and that you will become.

CHAPTER 3

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS



When we experience a change in our lives, such as getting a job or going off to school, there is an opportunity to meet new people and build new relationships. Not knowing many people can be a bit scary at first, but don't let your "stress signal" stop you from making new friends. Most people feel some stress when meeting new people and making new friends. Instead of thinking about meeting others as a "stress", imagine how exciting it can be to develop new friendships and discover new ways of looking at the world. And remember, not every new person you meet will be an automatic friend. You get to choose who you will be friends with! The more people you meet, the more likely you will be to find another person who will become a friend.

MEETING NEW PEOPLE





a Get Involved

Look for opportunities to get involved in activities that are of interest to you. It might be a sports team, club, faith group, or a volunteer organization. Your involvement can lead to meeting others that have interests similar to you. Don't wait for people to come to you; get out there and look for opportunities to meet others.

b Be Open-minded

As you meet new people, you will be exposed to new cultures, values, and beliefs. These may be different from those you have been exposed to in your home town, your family, or with your high school friends. If you are going to college or university, one of the most exciting parts of that experience is being exposed to ideas that are different from your own. Being exposed to different ideas can make you feel uncomfortable, but don't shut yourself off from ideas that are new to you or different than yours. Try to be open-minded. Be inquisitive and interested in others and their lives. Think about things critically – both the new ideas you are facing and those you have carried with you from before. This will help lead you to new and potentially enriching life experiences and relationships.

c Communication

Do all you can to be welcoming and open to new people. Engage with others, introduce yourself, and listen to others and their stories and perspectives. Depending on your comfort level — smile, make eye contact, laugh, and enjoy relating to others. At the same time, be aware that not everyone greets each other the same way. For example, hugging someone when you greet them is common in some cultures but not in others. Be respectful and considerate, while at the same time being yourself.

BEING WITH YOURSELF



Loneliness

Change is never easy and it is normal to feel lonely if you are in a new place and are looking to build new relationships. If you are experiencing loneliness over an extended period of time, try to change your daily patterns and connect more with people. Don't be afraid to reach out to people you trust and let them know how you are feeling!



Role of Solitude

When we are going through transitions in our lives, spending a certain amount of time alone can help us to pause, recharge, and reflect on life. These pauses can help us reflect on what is going well, changes we might like to make, and plans for how to move ahead. Different people need different amounts of solitude, so opt for however much feels right for you.



Self-Awareness

Being self-aware can help you through many challenging times in your life. It can also be important to the types of relationships you choose, how you function in those relationships, and what your expectations and needs are from those relationships. Spend some time getting to know yourself — it is time well spent.







ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS

What is an Abusive Relationship?

Abusive relationships occur when one partner controls the other partner with violence, intimidation, and/or threats. Abusive relationships don't happen overnight. At first, the signs may be subtle and you may hope that the relationship will change and improve over time, but abusive relationships tend to worsen and become more violent or controlling over time.

Forms of Abuse

a Emotional Abuse

The use of constant criticism, insults, threats, and intimidation to isolate another person and make them afraid to leave the relationship or seek help.

b Sexual Abuse

Any kind of forced sexual act, ranging from sexual touching to intercourse (rape). Some people believe you cannot be raped by someone you are in a relationship with; this is not true. If you don't agree to have sex, it's rape. It does not matter who the person is or what your relationship is to that person.

c Physical Abuse

Any kind of assault with the body (e.g., punching, kicking) or with an object (e.g., gun, knife, baseball bat) intended to cause physical harm.

d Financial Abuse

Limiting access to financial resources (e.g., cash, bank accounts, credit cards) so as to limit your ability to leave a relationship or to control you within a relationship.

Warning Signs of Abuse

Remember — the warning signs may be subtle and you may hope that the relationship will improve but abusive relationships often worsen over time. And, remember, the abuser in a relationship is not determined by sex, wealth, or other identifying feature.

1 Your partner isolates you, limiting your time with family and friends.

7 Your partner is violent and may yell at you, push you, or hit you.

2 Your partner is jealous and accuses you of things you did not do.

8 Your partner demands you have sex, even if you say no.

3 Your partner tries to control many aspects of your life (e.g., decisions, finances, how you dress, your friends, etc.).

9 Your partner threatens to hurt themselves, you or your family or friends if you do not do what they want.

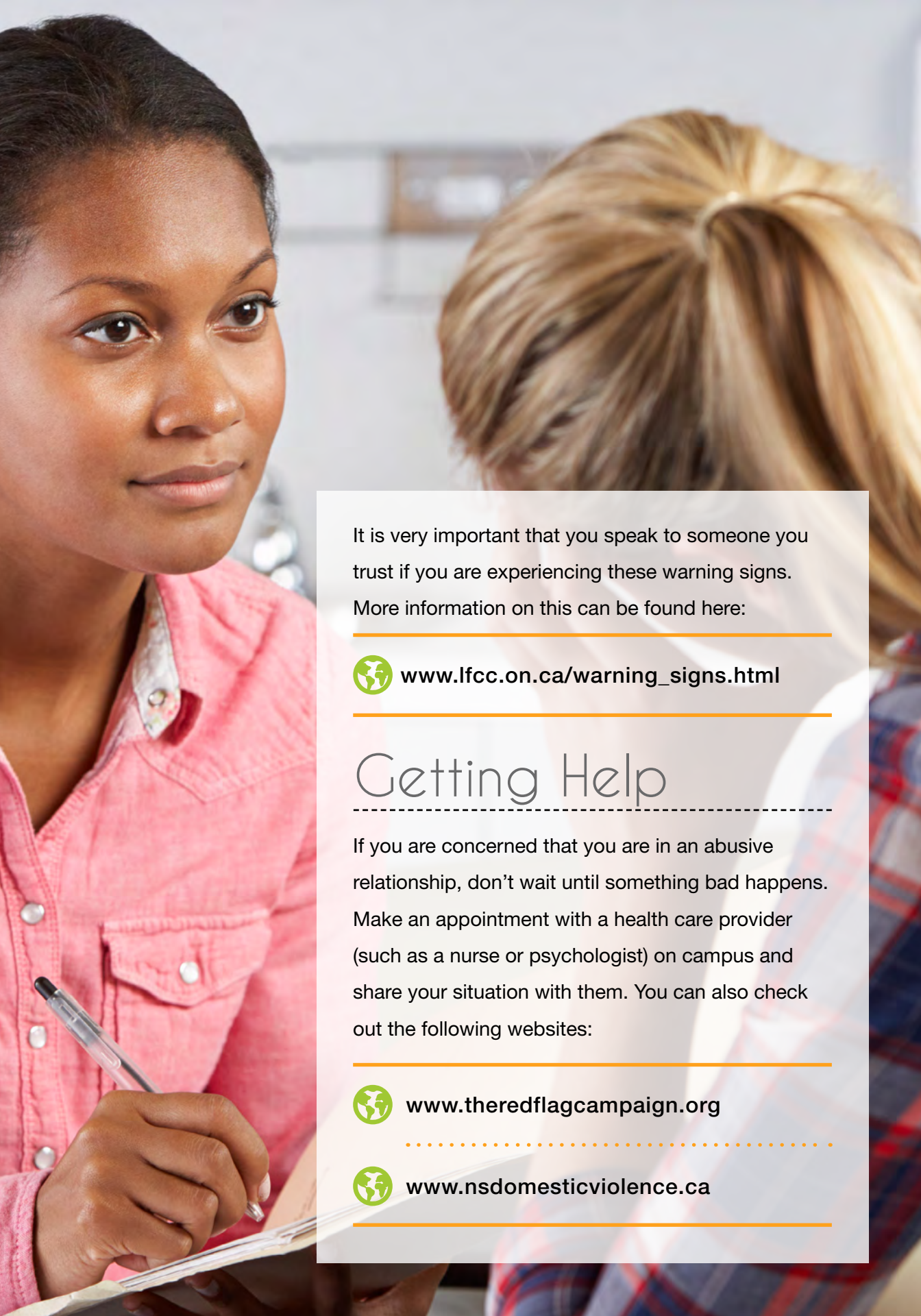
4 Your partner criticizes you and makes you feel ashamed.

10 You feel you always have to always act a certain way to please your partner (i.e. walking on eggshells).

5 Your partner calls you names or ridicules you.

11 Your partner frequently demeans or humiliates you in front of others (this can be done as a “joke”).

6 Your partner uses intimidation to make you feel afraid of them or to control your behaviour.



It is very important that you speak to someone you trust if you are experiencing these warning signs. More information on this can be found here:



www.lfcc.on.ca/warning_signs.html

Getting Help

If you are concerned that you are in an abusive relationship, don't wait until something bad happens. Make an appointment with a health care provider (such as a nurse or psychologist) on campus and share your situation with them. You can also check out the following websites:



www.theredflagcampaign.org



www.nsdomesticviolence.ca



DATING, RELATIONSHIPS & ENCOUNTERS:

There are many types of relationships that we form with people throughout our lifetime. Sometimes we have intimate encounters that can be brief in duration, sometimes we are dating, sometimes we have friendships, and other times we are involved in more committed and long-term relationships. Sometimes more than one relationship with others can exist at the same time. Regardless of the type of relationship you form with others, there are some important things to consider.



Things to consider:

1

Be safe and choose people who respect you and whom you respect

2

Find a balance that works for you of time for yourself, your friends and family, and the things you enjoy

3

Communicate your expectations, needs and boundaries with your relationship

4

Remember that you are not the only person in the relationship, so listening to and respecting your partners and friends is essential

5

If a relationship is not working out for you, consider safe and healthy options to deal with ending it

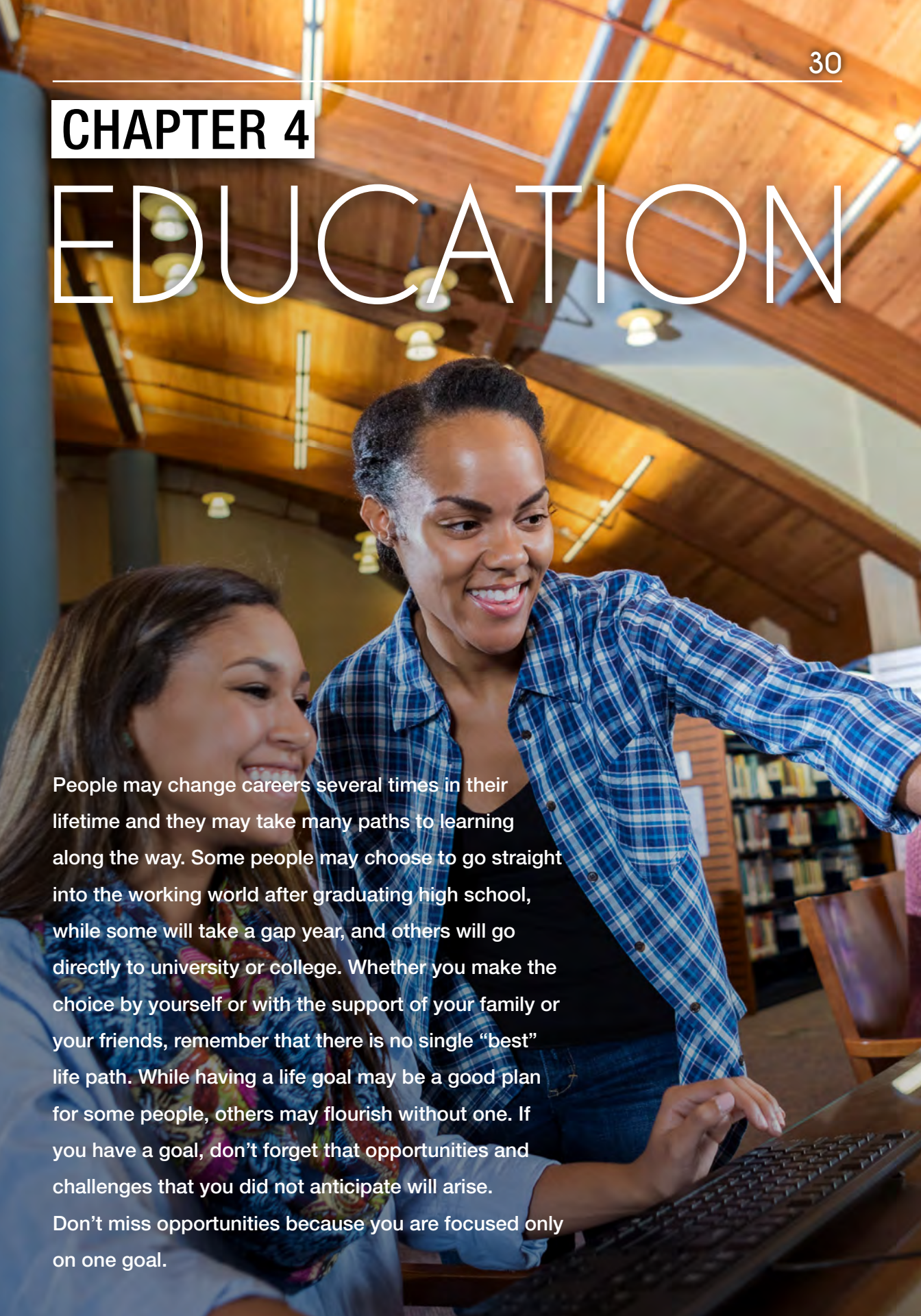
For more information on building relationships, check out the full Transitions document here:



www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/transitions/

CHAPTER 4

EDUCATION

A photograph of two young women in a library setting. One woman, with dark hair pulled back and wearing a blue and white plaid shirt, is leaning over a desk and pointing at a computer screen. The other woman, with long brown hair and wearing a colorful patterned shirt, is sitting at the desk and looking at the screen with a smile. The background shows bookshelves and a wooden ceiling with exposed beams and lights.

People may change careers several times in their lifetime and they may take many paths to learning along the way. Some people may choose to go straight into the working world after graduating high school, while some will take a gap year, and others will go directly to university or college. Whether you make the choice by yourself or with the support of your family or your friends, remember that there is no single “best” life path. While having a life goal may be a good plan for some people, others may flourish without one. If you have a goal, don’t forget that opportunities and challenges that you did not anticipate will arise. Don’t miss opportunities because you are focused only on one goal.

ACADEMICS

Course Selection

Your first year of university or college is a year of discovery. Choosing a course or program can be challenging and exciting at the same time. Some people know exactly what they want to study but many don't. When choosing, it can help to ask yourself: What interests me the most? What are my hobbies? Which courses did I enjoy in high school? What am I good at? What am I not so good at? Are there courses I need to take to help me achieve what I may want to do? Asking your family, teachers, and friends what courses they took and enjoyed may also help.

Once you have an idea of what interests you, you should check the admission requirements for relevant programs so you know which high school courses you have to complete before graduating. Some programs may require courses to be taken in a specific order, so there is less choice.

Read the school calendar or website

1

thoroughly – It will provide you with a basic description of the courses.

Class size – Do you prefer bigger, lecture-type classes? Or do you prefer smaller, discussion-based classes?

2

Class time – Are you an early riser and work best in the morning? Or do you prefer attending classes in the afternoon or evening?

3



Learning Styles

Not everyone learns the same way. Learning styles are simply the methods we use to learn and understand new information. You may find that more than one learning style is helpful for you. Some people are:

Auditory Learners

Learn through listening. Discussing ideas learned or repeating out loud can help you remember key points when studying.

Visual Learners

Learn through visual representations of knowledge, thoughts, ideas, and concepts. Drawings, graphs, and charts may be helpful for you.

Reading/Writing Learners

Learn through reading and writing. A good strategy for this type of learning is to go over your notes after class, summarize, and rewrite them to create a new, condensed set of study notes.

Tactile/Kinesthetic Learners

Learn through doing. Tactile learners like hands-on learning.

It is important to remember that many students experience a drop in their grades in their first semester or two of university or college. This is not unusual and in most cases; you just need time to adjust to your new learning environment. Consider these helpful tips and ask for support if you need it to help along the way.



More On Learning Styles

The way you receive and process information can have a lot to do with who you are and the other aspects of your personality. There are many different kinds of learning styles. For example, you may learn best by seeing, hearing, or manipulating information. You may have multiple learning styles and not just one way of learning.



Things to think about:

1

How would you describe your learning style(s)?

2

How would you share your learning style(s) with those who teach you?

3

How does your learning style(s) influence how you engage or communicate with other people?

4

In what ways does your learning style(s) influence how you learn about the world around you?

5

In what ways does your learning style(s) impact your connection to or engagement with school?

6

In what ways does your learning style(s) impact the other parts of your identity?

Study Tips

1 Ask questions. Ask yourself questions about what you are reading. This can help you figure out the most important areas to focus on.

2 Quiz yourself. Use chapter review questions to reinforce what you know and determine what you need to review.

3 Cramming is not ideal. It can cause added stress, loss of sleep, and loss of concentration. Also, it does not promote long term learning. Pace your studying.

4 Highlight key points. This can help you recognize the most important parts and can help you with a last minute review.

5 Take scheduled breaks. Commit to taking a break from studying at regular intervals. Sometimes walking away for a few minutes can be refreshing.

6 Group study. Sometimes studying with your classmates can help with areas you find difficult.

7 Stay away from distractions. Study where you will not be distracted. Remember, the TV and your phone count as distractions!

8 Sleep. Studying will be much less effective if you are tired. Try to get a good night's sleep, or take a nap (20 – 30 minutes) if you are tired.

9 Careful with caffeine. Too much caffeine can increase feelings of anxiety and restlessness. However, caffeine in moderation can be helpful (just know your limits!).

10 Do not procrastinate. This may lead to cramming and that does not help. However, some people study best under stress, and they procrastinate as a way to get into their optimal study zone. Know your study sweet spot!

11 Reduce your stress levels. If you start to feel stressed, taking a few deep breaths can help you relax. Exercise and good time management can also help. And, remember that the stress feeling is there to encourage you to study!

Organization

Being organized when transitioning to post-secondary life will help you manage your time, reduce stress, and help keep you on a path to success. You are probably going to be responsible for your meals, laundry, bills, and many other things that you may have had help with in the past. Here are a few tips to help you stay organized:

Set Goals

Set realistic goals for your first school year and break them down into smaller, more manageable goals. Writing them down can make them more concrete and help motivate you.

Use “To-Do” Lists

Spend a few minutes each evening preparing a list of things you need to accomplish the next day.

Use a Student Planner

Schools give these out for a reason - they work! You can also use your phone to help you keep track of your assignments, work schedule, class times, study groups/times, as well as fun events like school functions, society meetings, etc.

Stay Healthy

Try to eat three meals a day, and healthy snacks. Look for vegetables, fruit, whole grains, and lean proteins when possible.

Colour Code Your Calendar

For example, highlight all of your tests in yellow, assignments in purple, study time in blue, etc.

Don't Forget to Reward Yourself

Reaching goals you set is an accomplishment. When you set your goals, also decide on the reward you will get once you reach that goal. Make sure you reward yourself for all the small goals along the way to your larger goals as well! This may help keep you motivated.



Learning Challenges

(disabilities, test anxiety, academic expectations, etc.)

There are many challenges that can get in the way of learning. The key is to find strategies that work to alleviate or lessen these challenges.

Test Anxiety

Set realistic goals for your first school year and break them down into smaller, more manageable goals. Writing them down can make them more concrete and help motivate you

Learning Disabilities

Spend a few minutes each evening preparing a list of things you need to accomplish the next day.

Resiliency

Things in life don't always go your way. Nobody lives a life that is stress-free. Experiencing set-backs teaches you how to recover from them and move on. Learning to cope with academic challenges is important and many students will experience academic difficulties when they first start university or college.

1 Lessons to learn. Ask "what could I have done differently and how can I apply what I have learned from this to other situations?"

2 Accept it. You cannot always control what has happened, but you can control how you deal with it. Focus on what you learned, not on what you think you may have lost.

3 Be realistic. Put things into perspective and don't sweat the small stuff. Not every stressor is the end of the world. Indeed most of them are good for you.

4 Relationships matter. A good support network can go a long way in helping you cope with stressors.

5 Put yourself first. Taking care of yourself with proper food, exercise, rest and friendships is an important part of preparing yourself to deal with stressors.

6 Trust yourself. Know that you are capable of success, and that some areas may just need more effort than others.

7 Learn from your failures. We tend to learn more from our failures than our successes. When you fail at something (and you will), use that experience to help you develop new skills and strategies. Check this out:



.....
www.7ideas.net/21-ways-to-learn-from-failures/

CAREER PLANNING

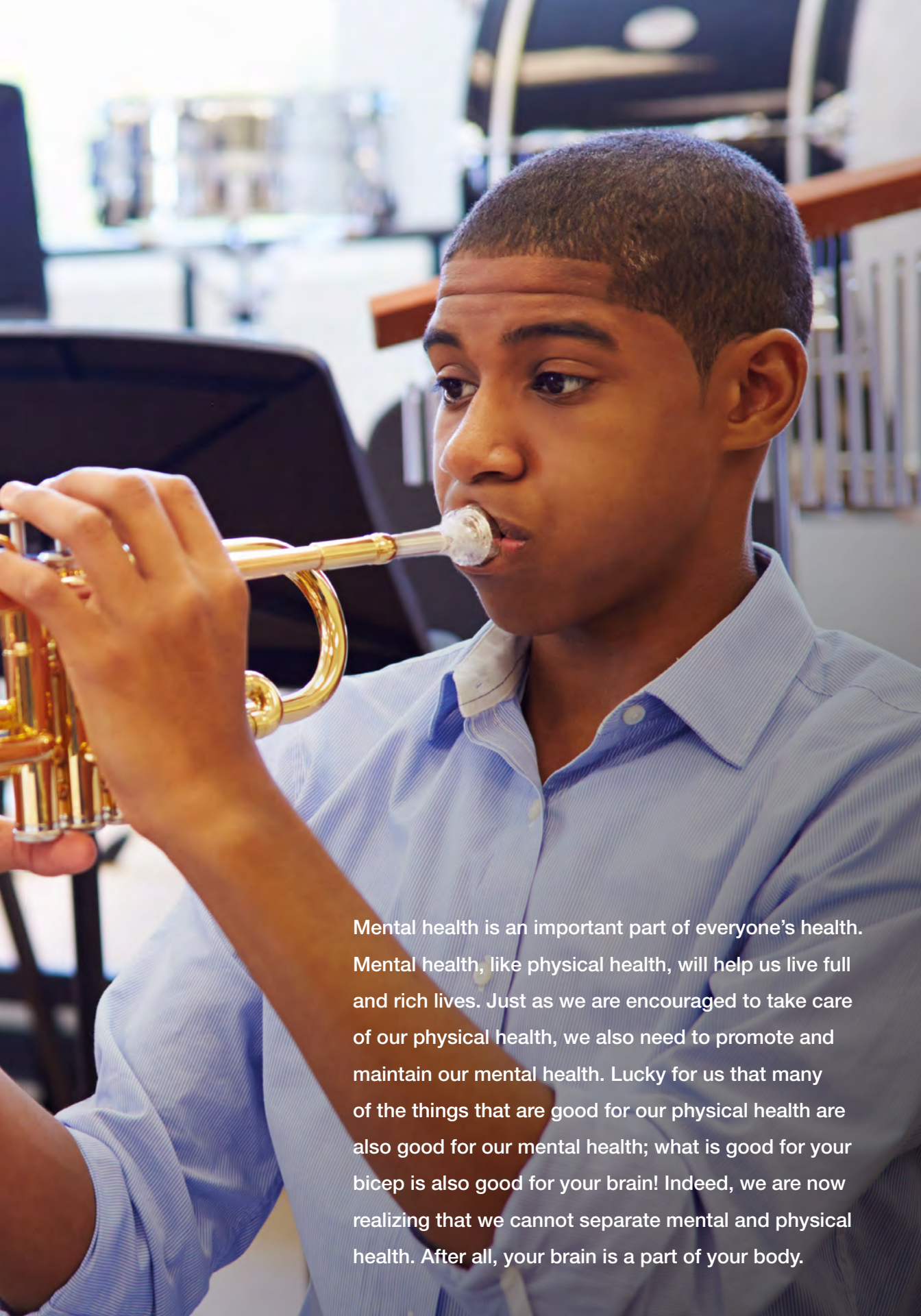
When you are making career choices, it may be helpful to review the Identity and Becoming Independent sections of this resource. It may also be helpful to think about the following:

- 1 What path do I want to take? Straight to university or college?
Take a gap year? Go straight to work or into a job-training program?
- 2 Is the choice my own or are my family and friends a part of my decision making? Who can I ask for advice?
- 3 What is my financial situation and how will that impact my study and career choices?
- 4 Where do I want to work or study?
- 5 What opportunities exist in the place where I want to study or work?
- 6 What are my goals now and in the future?
- 7 What am I passionate about and can I fulfill those passions in other ways or only through work?
- 8 How and where can I get all of the information I need to help me make the most informed decisions?

CHAPTER 5

MENTAL HEALTH





Mental health is an important part of everyone's health. Mental health, like physical health, will help us live full and rich lives. Just as we are encouraged to take care of our physical health, we also need to promote and maintain our mental health. Lucky for us that many of the things that are good for our physical health are also good for our mental health; what is good for your bicep is also good for your brain! Indeed, we are now realizing that we cannot separate mental and physical health. After all, your brain is a part of your body.

INTRODUCTION

It is useful to think about different categories related to mental health. These are mental distress, mental health problems and mental disorders. Mental distress is normal, expected, and necessary for growth and resilience. It is characterized by the stress response, your body's signal that something in your environment needs to be addressed (for example: facing a final exam or going to a new school). This signal (often called stress) helps you assemble your resources to solve the problem and learn new skills. A mental health problem arises from a much greater challenge in your life (for example, death of a loved one) and may require additional resources and supports to assist you in navigating that challenge. A mental disorder is a diagnosed medical illness that requires professional interventions using effective treatments to help you. All of these (mental distress, mental health problem, mental disorder) include difficulties with how we feel, think, and behave. It's very important not to confuse these different categories. Just because you are feeling sad, low, down, or depressed does not mean you have a mental disorder!

And, a person can be in more than one category at any point in time! A person can have mental health and a mental disorder at the same time.

Examples of these different categories would be:

- 1 Disappointment or sadness after a relationship breakup or failing at something important (such as not being selected to be part of the school team) – this is **mental distress**.
- 2 Grief and poor ability to function at school after someone close to you has died – this is a **mental health problem**.
- 3 Intense sadness along with negative thoughts (such as hopelessness), fatigue, and sleep problems that interferes with your ability to live your life – this is a **mental disorder**.





DEVELOPING POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH

Exercise

Daily physical activity improves your physical and mental health. Any exercise is better than no exercise, but 30 minutes per day of exercise that increases your heart rate to a robust level (e.g., running, playing soccer) is recommended.

Sleep

Sleep is an important part of staying healthy. Although the amount necessary varies from person to person, most teenagers need 8-9 hours of sleep each night. Developing good sleep hygiene is important – check out Healthy Sleeping for tips on how to develop your own sleep hygiene routine.



www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/healthy-sleeping/

Take Time to Relax

Taking time each day to do something that you find relaxing is important for your mental health. It might be listening to or playing music, reading a book, talking to a friend, going to Church, praying or meditating – whatever you find to be relaxing. Taking time to relax on a regular basis can help you recognize the strategies to use when you are feeling stressed or overwhelmed. You may also find it helpful to practice strategies such as **Deep Breathing** (Breathe in for 4 seconds. Through your nose, if possible). Hold your breath for 4 seconds (You're not trying to deprive yourself of air; you're just giving the air a few seconds to fill your lungs). Exhale slowly through your mouth for 4 seconds. Pause for 4 seconds (without speaking) before breathing in again. Repeat this process as many times as you need or **Hand Relaxation** [Clench the muscles of your left hand into a really tight fist for 5 seconds. Gradually let go of your fist (for about 15 seconds) while breathing slowly and concentrating on the way your hand feels. Repeat using your right hand] during times of stress. Often about three cycles (left plus right hand relaxation is one cycle) is enough to help decrease the stress response.]

Time Management

Having structure in your day and an understanding of what activities and deadlines are coming up can help you avoid unnecessary stress, help keep your mood stable, and help prevent you from feeling overwhelmed. Keeping a daily agenda or schedule can be very helpful – even if it only includes basic daily activities, such as when to exercise. For help getting started, check out Taking Charge of Your Health:



www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/taking-charge-health-daily-checklist/

Eat Healthy

Eating a balanced diet gives your body the fuel it needs to help it get well and stay well. Try not to skip meals and go easy on the junk food. There are many free apps and online tools that you can use to help ensure you're getting the right balance of healthy nutrients each day. Check out this website for more information and an App:



www.healthycanadians.gc.ca/eating-nutrition/healthy-eating-saine-alimentation/food-guide-aliment/my-guide-mon-guide/index-eng.php

Limit/Avoid Alcohol or Drugs (including cigarettes and caffeine)

Although you may feel better temporarily, alcohol, marijuana and other drugs won't solve your problems and may even make them worse in the long-term. Limiting your caffeine intake can be helpful.

Build Healthy Relationships

Having a good support network of people that you can talk to when necessary for help or advice is an important part of staying mentally healthy. Also, helping others is a good way to boost your health. See the relationships section for more information.

MENTAL DISORDERS & OTHER RELATED CONCERNS THAT MAY REQUIRE PROFESSIONAL CARE

Depression

Depression affects approximately 7% of people over the course of one year. It often begins during the teenage years.

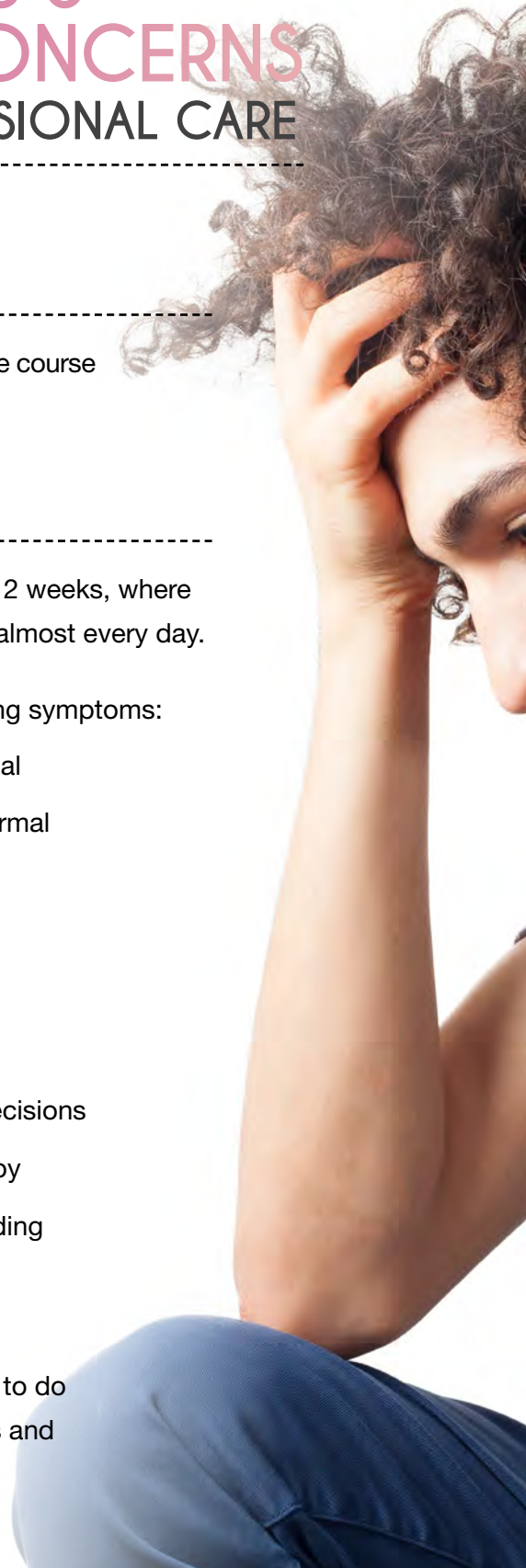
Symptoms

1 A Major Depressive Episode that lasts at least 2 weeks, where you've felt sad or depressed most of the day, almost every day.

2 You might also experience most of the following symptoms:

- Eating much more or much less than normal
- Sleeping much more or much less than normal
- Moving restlessly or barely moving at all
- Feeling really tired and lacking energy
- Losing feelings of pleasure or enjoyment
- Feeling worthless, hopeless, or guilty
- Having trouble concentrating or making decisions
- Losing interest in activities you usually enjoy
- Having thoughts of death and dying, including suicidal thoughts and plans
- Attempting suicide

3 These symptoms prevent you from being able to do well at school, at work, or in your relationships and are not due to an obvious cause.



For More Information



[www.teenmentalhealth.org/learn/
mental-disorders/depression/](http://www.teenmentalhealth.org/learn/mental-disorders/depression/)



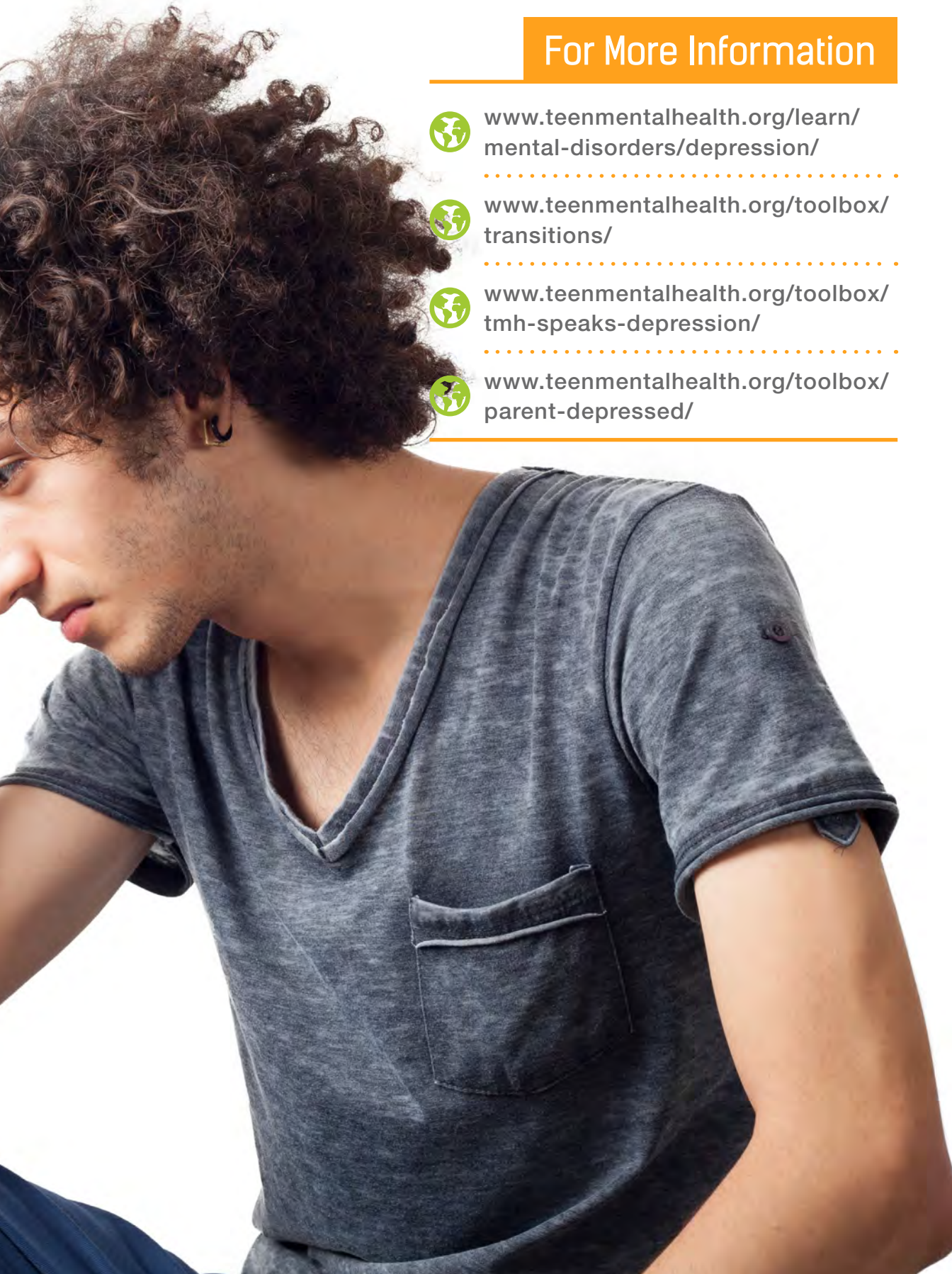
[www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/
transitions/](http://www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/transitions/)



[www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/
tmh-speaks-depression/](http://www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/tmh-speaks-depression/)



[www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/
parent-depressed/](http://www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/parent-depressed/)



Social Anxiety Disorder

Social Anxiety Disorder affects approximately 4% of people between the ages of 15 and 24.

Symptoms

- 1


Intense fear of social situations where people could judge you or you could feel embarrassed that lasts at least 6 months
- 2

Avoiding these social situations whenever possible
- 3


Fear or anxiety is much stronger than it should be for that type of threat
- 4

These symptoms prevent you from being able to do well at school, at work, or in your relationships and are not due to an obvious cause.


For More Information

- 


www.teenmentalhealth.org/learn/mental-disorders/social-anxiety-disorder/

.....
- 

www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/transitions/

.....
- 

www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/tmh-speaks-social-anxiety/

.....
- 

www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/parent-anxiety-disorder/

.....



Drug & Alcohol Misuse

Drugs and alcohol are misused by many people, which can impact not only themselves but the other people in their lives. If someone in your family struggles with alcohol or drug abuse, you may be at risk for misuse.

Symptoms

- 1 Use of alcohol or drugs that interferes with your ability to do well at school, at work, or in your relationships.
- 2 In a one-year period, at least two of the following:
 - Craving alcohol or drugs
 - Drinking more alcohol or taking more drugs than you meant to
 - Difficulty reducing the amount of alcohol or drugs that you use
 - Spending a lot of time trying to get, use, or recover from alcohol or drugs
 - Not doing what you're supposed to do at home, school, or work because of alcohol or drug use
 - Continuing to drink or do drugs, even when it causes or worsens social, physical, or psychological problems
 - Consistently choosing alcohol or drug use over other social, work, or entertainment activities
 - Using alcohol or drugs in situations where it could cause you harm
 - Needing to drink more alcohol or take more drugs than you used to in order to get the same effect
 - Experiencing withdrawal from alcohol or a drug



For More Information



www.ccsa.ca/Pages/default.aspx



www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/transitions/



www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/parent-addiction/

Bipolar Disorder

Bipolar Disorder affects approximately 1% of people over the course of their lives and often begins before age 25. With Bipolar Disorder a person has both major depressive episodes and manic or hypomanic episodes.

Symptoms

1 A Major Depressive Episode that lasts at least 2 weeks, where you've felt sad or depressed most of the day, almost every day.

2 You might also experience most of the following symptoms:

- Eating much more or much less than normal
- Sleeping much more or much less than normal
- Moving restless or barely moving at all
- Feeling really tired and lacking energy
- Losing feelings of pleasure or enjoyment
- Feeling worthless, hopeless, or guilty
- Having trouble concentrating or making decisions
- Losing interest in activities you usually enjoy
- Having thoughts of death and dying, including suicidal thoughts and plans
- Attempting suicide

3 A Manic Episode that lasts at least one week, where your mood has been extremely elevated or irritable and you are much more active and energetic than usual.

4 These symptoms prevent you from being able to do well at school, at work, or in your relationships and are not due to an obvious cause.

5

You will also experience most of the following symptoms:

- Feeling really confident, like you can do anything (even if it's impossible)
- Feeling like you don't need to sleep, and not getting much sleep
- Feeling super talkative, like there's a buildup of words inside you that need to get out, and speaking much more than usual
- Feeling like your thoughts are racing and jumping from one idea to another really quickly
- Feeling easily distracted by small and unimportant details
- Feeling motivated to move around and get things done, often without accomplishing goals
- Feeling like nothing can go wrong, even when you do really risky things, like having unprotected sex, using drugs, speeding, or blowing all your money

Sometimes people have hypomanic episodes, which are a less severe form of manic episodes. People with Bipolar I Disorder experience Manic Episodes and people with Bipolar II Disorder experience Hypomanic Episodes.

6

For More Information



www.teenmentalhealth.org/learn/mental-disorders/bipolar-disorder/



www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/transitions/



www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/tmh-speaks-bipolar-disorder/



www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/parent-bipolar/

Panic Disorder

Panic Disorder affects approximately 2% of people between the ages of 15 and 24.

Symptoms

- 1 Intense uncontrollable panic attacks that occur for no obvious reason.
- 2 Panic attacks are intense feelings of fear that are at their worst for about 10 minutes. They may include:
 - Fear that you're going to lose control, go crazy, or even die
 - Feeling like you cannot breathe or like you're choking
 - Feeling like you're not in your own body, like you're watching yourself freak out
 - Sweating, chills, or hot flashes
 - Trembling or shaking
 - Feeling dizzy or faint
 - Numbness or tingling
 - Pain in your chest
 - Racing heart
 - Nausea
- 3 Worry about having another panic attack.
- 4 Avoiding places that would be difficult to escape from if you had a panic attack (e.g., crowds, buses).
- 5 These symptoms prevent you from being able to do well at school, at work, or in your relationships and are not due to an obvious cause.



For More Information



www.teenmentalhealth.org/learn/mental-disorders/panic-disorder/



www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/transitions/



www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/tmh-speaks-panic-disorder/



www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/parent-anxiety-disorder/




Suicide

Suicide, although it is rare (about 5/100,000 Canadian teenagers) is one of the leading causes of death in young people. Most people who attempt suicide have a mental illness and effectively treating that mental illness is one of the most important steps in reducing the risk of dying by suicide.

Warning Signs

- 1** Intense hopelessness or sadness
- 2** Preoccupation with death
- 3** Talking about what it will be like when they're gone
- 4** Giving away valued possessions
- 5** Loss of interest in regular activities
- 6** Withdrawal from family and friends

For More Information

-  www.teenmentalhealth.org/learn/suicide/
.....
 -  www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/transitions/
.....
 -  www.rightbyyou.ca/
.....
 -  www.suicideprevention.ca/
-

Self-Harm

Self-Injury or Self-Harm is an unhealthy coping strategy often used to deal with overwhelming emotions. It is not an attempt to die and it is not the same as suicide, however, self-harm may lead to unintentional death. Someone who self-injures usually needs to learn new healthy coping strategies (often in counseling or therapy) before they are able to stop self-harming.

Warning Signs

- 1** Unexplained or poorly explained cuts, burns, bruises, or scratches, especially on the arms, legs or stomach
- 2** Clothing that isn't appropriate for the weather or situation but covers most of their body (for example, long sleeves and pants on a very hot day)
- 3** Hoarding razors/knives and other objects that could be used for self-injury

For More Information



www.teenmentalhealth.org/understanding-self-injury-self-harm/



www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/transitions/



www.sioutreach.org/



www.insync-group.ca/for-youth/

Gambling Problems

Although many people are able to gamble without experiencing problems, some students are gambling large amounts of money – both in casinos and online.

Warning Signs

- 1 Ongoing money problems because of gambling.
- 2 Constantly borrowing money from friends.
- 3 Avoiding friends to whom you owe money.
- 4 Relationship problems because of gambling or money losses from gambling.
- 5 These symptoms prevent you from being able to do well at school, at work, or in your relationships.
- 6 Acting secretive or lying about gambling.
- 7 Nervousness or anxiousness, usually about money.
- 8 Constantly talking about gambling or money.
- 9 Neglecting your responsibilities due to gambling.
- 10 Choosing to gamble instead of spending time with friends or family.





For More Information



www.problemgambling.ca/



www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/transitions/



Eating Disorders

Eating Disorders affect approximately 3% of Canadian women during their lifetime and include Anorexia Nervosa (AN), Bulimia Nervosa (BN), Binge Eating Disorder, and other Specified and Unspecified Eating Disorders. Although much more common in women, eating disorders can affect men as well.

Symptoms

- 1** Becoming so focused on your weight and eating habits that it interferes with your emotions, your thoughts, your behaviour, and all aspects of your life.
- 2** Depending on the particular disorder, you might:
 - Use unhealthy strategies to try to reduce your weight
 - Feel out-of-control when you eat
 - Base most of your self-esteem and self-worth on how you look or how much you weigh
 - Feel depressed and unhappy most of the time

For More Information



www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/parent-eating-disorder/



www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/transitions/



www.keltyeatingdisorders.ca/

Generalized Anxiety Disorder

Generalized Anxiety Disorder affects approximately 9% of people over their lifetime, affecting twice as many women as men.

Symptoms

- 1 Excessive and persistent worry about many different things that lasts for at least 6 months
- 2 You will also experience most of the following symptoms:
 - Restlessness, feeling on edge
 - Difficulty swallowing
 - Difficulty concentrating
 - Trouble falling asleep
 - Trembling or twitching
 - Hot flashes
 - Nausea
 - Lightheadedness
 - Going to the bathroom often
 - Feeling like you cannot get enough air
 - Difficulty relaxing
 - Being easily startled
 - Anticipating the worst outcome for any situation
 - Excessive concerns and worries about usual daily activities
- 3 These symptoms prevent you from being able to do well at school, at work, or in your relationships and are not due to an obvious cause.

For More Information



www.teenmentalhealth.org/learn/mental-disorders/generalized-anxiety-disorder/



www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/transitions/



www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/parent-anxiety-disorder/

Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia affects approximately 1% of people over the course of their lifetime and usually begins prior to age 25.

Symptoms

- 1 Delusions:** Belief in something that is not true, even when confronted with proof
- 2 Hallucinations:** Hearing, seeing, or otherwise sensing something that is not actually happening
- 3 Other symptoms:**
 - Disorganized thinking or speech that is difficult to understand or follow
 - Abnormal movement (repetitive or strange movements) or lack of movement (completely rigid)
 - Lack of emotions
 - Loss of goal-directed or purposeful activity
 - Loss of speech
 - Loss of pleasure
 - Lack of interest in social interaction

For More Information



www.teenmentalhealth.org/learn/mental-disorders/schizophrenia/



www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/transitions/



www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/parent-schizophrenia/



Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) affects approximately 1-2% of Canadians in their lifetime. It often begins in late childhood for boys and slightly later for girls. Someone with OCD experiences obsessions, compulsions, or both, which can cause a lot of distress, take up a lot of time, and prevent you from being able to do well at school, at work, or in your relationships.

1

Obsessions are frequently occurring thoughts that feel out of your control and cause you significant distress and anxiety. They may or may not be realistic. Some examples include:

- Contamination by germs
- Doubt about whether a particular action was performed (e.g., was the front door locked?)
- Having things in a particular order
- Impulses to commit a violent act
- And more

2

Compulsions are repetitive and frequent behaviours or rituals. Although compulsions are performed as to decrease the anxiety caused by an obsession, they actually make the obsession worse in the long-term. Compulsions are very difficult to resist. Some examples include:

- Washing or cleaning
- Checking if something was done
- Putting things in a specific order
- Counting objects
- Repeating actions
- Asking for reassurance

For More Information



www.teenmentalhealth.org/learn/mental-disorders/obsessive-compulsive-disorder-ocd/



www.teenmentalhealth.org/product/tmh-speaks-ocd/



www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/transitions/



Grief & Loss

Everyone experiences loss at some point in their life. Although grief can be very painful, it is a natural and normal part of life. There is no right way to grieve – everyone grieves in their own way. For some people, the grieving process may last a few weeks or months until they have time to adjust and adapt to the loss. Other people may not show any outward signs of grief, and appear to move on quite quickly. Still others may grieve for much longer periods of time and need professional help to move on.

1

If you are grieving a loss and the pain that you feel doesn't weaken or diminish as time goes on, consider talking to your doctor about how you're feeling. You may benefit from talking to a trained mental health professional or your parish priest.

2

For More Information



www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/transitions/

.....



www.cmha.ca/mental_health/grieving/#.V2mF0tIrlIdU

? WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

If you are in crisis or need immediate help

- 1 Call 911 or go to the Emergency Room
- 2 Call Kids' Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868
- 3 Call Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team: 1-888-429-8167

Other local resources

- 1 Laing House: (902)-425-9018
- 2 IWK Central Referral (under 19 years): (902)-464-3008
- 3 IWK Grief and Bereavement Resource Nurse: (902)-470-8942
- 4 IWK Regional Poison Centre: 1-800-565-8161
- 5 IWK Suspected Trauma and Abuse Response Team (under 16 years): (902)-470-8222
- 6 The Youth Project: (902)-429-5429
- 7 Avalon Sexual Assault Centre: (902)-425-0122
- 8 Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre: (902)-420-1576



Phoenix Centre for Youth: 1-866-620-0676

Phoenix Youth Shelter: 1-888-878-5088



Native Council of Nova Scotia: www.ncns.ca

More information related to mental health can be found at:



www.teenmentalhealth.org

Help Seeking Tips

If you're concerned about your mental health or the mental health of someone you know, the first and most important thing you should do is tell a safe and trusted person. A doctor (general practitioner/family doctor) can help you determine what is going on and help you access the appropriate treatment. Many people find it helpful to tell a family member, teacher or school counselor, coach, or friend first so that they have a support person to go with them to the doctor.

Mental illnesses are very treatable, provided the person receives evidence-based care:



www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/evidence-based-medicine-patients/

For more information on evidence-based medicine, check out:



www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/evidence-based-medicine-youth/

For questions to ask your doctor or health care provider, check out:



www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/communicating-health-care-provider-every-person-ask/

CHAPTER 6

HUMAN SEXUALITY

Sexuality affects all aspects of the human person in the unity of his body and soul. It especially concerns affectivity, the capacity to love and to procreate, and in a more general way the aptitude for forming bonds of communion with others" (CCC, 2332) For people who are not married, human sexuality entails abstinence, because God's design is that sex belongs in marriage. When two people are dating, being chaste allows them to concentrate on what is important and to avoid "using" each other. Together they can see what authentic love means and can learn to express feelings in a mature way. It means saving the sexual expression of love exclusively for one's spouse.



Chastity

Our faith takes with joyful seriousness the mystery of the Incarnation: that the Son of God took flesh for our salvation. Jesus' body scourged, crucified and risen for us, tells us that God uses the human body to make his love present in our world. The body is our doorway to salvation, and so how we treat it matters. From the dawn of creation God gave us more than one language to speak. Besides the gift of speech, he gave us our body. This body expresses itself through gestures that are themselves a language. Just as our words reveal who we are, so also does our body language. The Lord intends that we speak this "sexual language" truthfully because it is the way to live our sexuality joyfully. This truthful living out of the sexual language of our bodies is what the Church calls chastity. Today, chastity is often mistakenly associated with being old fashioned, with a fear of passion or with sexual inhibition. But in reality it is much more than simply the absence of sexual relations. Chastity calls for purity of mind as well as body. If we are not working to develop a pure heart or a pure mind, then our bodily actions will reflect this. If we have no control over our desires or passions, then we cannot be trusted in either the big or the small things. We will remain slaves of our own passions and weak in spirit. If we cannot say "no," then our "yes" will mean nothing.

Further, sexuality is a gift from God and a fundamental part of what makes us human. Each of us is called to acknowledge this gift and the One who gave it. When this gift is used as the Father wills, we give him glory and build up his Kingdom. When we live our sexuality in the proper way, according to our state in life, others will be able to find God through us. Living chastity is no easy business in the sex-saturated world of contemporary Western culture. It is impossible to walk through a shopping mall, turn on a computer or television, glance at an advertisement or browse through a bookstore without being bombarded by sexual imagery of every kind. Pornography has never been more widespread, reaching almost epidemic proportions. It denigrates authentic sexual expression

and encourages masturbation, sexual intimacy outside of marriage and the separation of the life-giving and love-giving meaning of sexual relations.

For people who are not married, chastity entails abstinence, because God's design is that sex belongs in marriage. When two people are dating, being chaste allows them to concentrate on what is important and to avoid "using" each other. Together they can see what authentic love means and can learn to express feelings in a mature way. It means saving the sexual expression of love exclusively for one's spouse. When a couple is not chaste, their understanding of love may be reduced to the physical dimension of their relationship. This weakens their ability to move forward towards marriage, putting the relationship at risk. Persons who experience attraction to those of the same sex are also called to chastity. They too can grow in Christian holiness through a life of self-control, prayer, and the reception of the Sacraments.

Indeed, Chastity expresses respect for persons and their capacity for self-giving. It assures us that we are being loved for ourselves and that we are loving others for themselves and not only for the pleasure they can give us. In a culture that wants things immediately, chastity also teaches us to wait. Do we want sexual activity right now or do we want something more, even though it will take more time to achieve? To live chastely means not to give in to pressure which can come from friends who think that engaging in sexual activity defines masculinity or femininity. Today's prejudice against chastity is especially disturbing because of the view of sexuality it implies: that we "hook-up" with each other for pleasure. Not only is this an offense against the dignity of the person being used but it also holds the user in bondage to practices that cause physical, emotional and psychological harm. Moreover, despite its prevalence, the enslaving and addictive effects of pornography, especially on the Internet, cannot be minimized or made light of. Chastity requires constant discipline. It means the right ordering of our hearts: put God first, and everything else will follow. To live chastely means to live according to the design for which God has created us. The efforts to control one's sexual drives can be difficult, even painful. Yet control over them gradually leads men and

women to sexual maturity and brings inner peace. Chastity is a challenge – but it is not impossible. We can surround ourselves with friends who also want to live in a chaste manner: people who will support us on our journey (Adapted from the Episcopal Commission for Doctrine, CCCB).

Consent

Sexual relationships are not based solely on consent and pleasure, but rather on the understanding that they are to occur in an authentic life-giving relationship embedded within the sacrament of marriage. The marital covenant is dignified as a sacrament for it is elevated by Christ. The partnership of the whole of life is intimately connected to the special conjugal bond of the parties who constitute themselves as spouses. Although consent is always necessary for any sexual activity to be healthy, it is not the only threshold that needs to be met when considering choices regarding sexual activity and other important decisions. Integrity between a person's choice and their personal, family and faith values and legal requirements results in healthy decisions which, in turn, lead to emotional, social, spiritual and physical health. Consent is a human act that can only originate in the will and is impossible to supply. Nothing else can take its place. It is exclusive to the particular person.

Contraception

The Catholic Church believes that sexuality and the sexual act are sacred. We also believe that both the unitive and the procreative elements of sexual intercourse must not be separated from each other; marriage is the ideal place for sexual intercourse. Couples who engage in the sacrament of marriage give of themselves in free, total, faithful and fruitful love. The Church therefore urges couples to welcome their fertility as central to the

total gift of themselves to each other; to become knowledgeable about their fertility and to use this knowledge to plan their family responsibly. Modern methods of Natural Family planning allow couples to regulate the size and spacing of their families with a high degree of accuracy, without rejecting their bodily relationship with its God-given cycle of fertility and infertility. But this challenges them to cultivate chastity within marriage and to find ways of expressing intimacy during those times when sexual intercourse is imprudent. It also challenges the rest of the Church and community to find ways of supporting them, especially when struggling against temptation or other difficulties. When, through contraception, the couples block one dimension of their marital act; they are not re-consummating their marriage through their body-language. In deliberately rendering their sexual acts sterile – through contraceptive pills, condoms or surgical sterilization – the couples diminish the meaning of their intimacy and fail to fully respect not only their commitment and their bodies, but also the law of God.

Gender

The Catholic Church places high value on the dignity and respect of our bodies as created in the image and likeness of God. It teaches that the body and soul are so united that one's gender identity is rooted in one's biological identity as male and female. In Catholic teaching, one's sexual identity is considered a reality deeply inscribed in man and woman (1). It is the conviction of the Catholic Church that genetically and anatomically, the body reveals the divine plan, and that humans are "obliged to regard their bodies as good and to hold them in honor since God has created them" (CCC 364). Gender and gender identity are always linked to one's natal or birth sex. Newly popular definitions of gender or gender identity, however, are viewed in terms of modern gender theory. These different understandings

of the nature of gender identity place gender theory in direct conflict with Catholic teachings. For Catholics, sexual relationships are not based solely upon pleasure or consent, but rather on the understanding that they are to occur in an authentic life-giving relationship embedded within the sacrament of marriage. At the same time, Catholic teaching is committed to supporting inclusive communities that teach care and compassion for every person, regardless of age, race, sex, gender or sexual orientation, and that every person be treated with dignity and respect.

Same-Sex Relationships

The Church has a foundational teaching that all people created in the image of God have inherent dignity and worth. Thus each individual is to be treated with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. All persons deserve to feel welcome, safe, included and respected. Therefore, the Church never condemns persons with same-sex attraction. The Church recognizes that individuals can and do experience same-sex inclinations, and that all people are created good and loved by God. Same-sex inclinations in no way diminish the full human dignity or intrinsic worth of the person. At the same time, scripture, tradition and natural law teaches that sexual relations between persons of the same sex are not part of God's natural order intended for creation. The Catholic Church teaches that sexuality and sexual expression are deeply connected to our creation as a unity of body and soul in the image of God. We believe that in the sacrament of marriage, both the unitive and procreative elements of sexual intercourse must not be separated from each other.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT & ASSAULT

Sexual assault is not about sex. It is an act of violence and power over another person. 1 in 4 women in North America may be sexually assaulted in her lifetime. 1 in 6 men may be sexually assaulted before age 18. 82% of reported sexual assaults are committed by someone known to the victim. Statistics for sexual assault are believed to be an underestimate of how often sexual assault actually occurs, as many cases do not get reported.

What is it?



www.srhweek.ca/healthy-sexuality-healthy-relationships/navigating-consent/

What to do if you think you have been sexually assaulted?

Common after-effects — what you may be feeling and/or experiencing.



www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/transitions/

Page 45

? WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

Tell a safe and trusted person in your life who can help you seek medical attention and/or help from the authorities.

You can also seek help by calling 911 or visiting your local emergency department or clinic. Most importantly, tell someone so that you are not dealing with this on your own. See Transitions under the subheading “How to Start Feeling Better”:



www.teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/transitions/

Page 46

An emerging concern in the area of sexuality is the posting of sexually explicit pictures online. Remember that if you send or post a picture of anything electronically, you have little or no control over what will happen with that image. Before you send an electronic image it is a good idea to ask this question:

“Am I comfortable with having everyone in my family seeing this?”

If the answer is no, you may want to reconsider sending it. Remember, sometimes that picture you think is cute or sexy or funny can be used in harmful ways. If you or someone you know needs help regarding harmful images/videos that have been posted online visit:



www.needhelpnow.ca/app/en/



Your life is changing...

Transitions are a normal part of life. Each transition can be an exciting time with many new challenges and opportunities for you to experience and explore. Change can also be a stressful time because of the many uncertainties that lie ahead. Knowing what to expect can help, so before you go, here are some things you should know...

