

Children's Mental Health: It's never too early or too late to reach out!

One of the most important facets of overall health is mental health. Mental health affects how we feel, think, and behave, our self-esteem and self-image, and how we cope with stress. Feeling sad, worried, afraid, or angry are normal responses to events or situations that may be negative and/or unexpected in our lives, and usually do not last very long. If we have these feelings for an extended period of time, or if they impede our daily lives and become overwhelming, then a more severe mental health problem may be happening. According to [The Hincks-Dellcrest Centre](#), a Toronto-based children's mental health centre, one in five Canadian children suffers from a mental health problem, affecting families, schools, and sometimes entire communities.

There are many things that we can do to reach out to children and youth in our community, including:

- Be mindful of bullying, and firmly address the problem as it happens
- Volunteer at children's programs such as camps, youth groups, outreach programs, etc.
- Reach out to parents as well, because parent's mental health influences that of the child
- Educate yourself so that you can recognize symptoms of mental health problems/disorders
- Encourage healthy self-esteem by praising desirable behaviors and promoting positivity
- Lead by example- take care of your own mental health, be positive, and active in the community
- Break the stigma of mental health disorders
- Realize that the causes and symptoms of mental health issues can be very different depending on the person and circumstances
- Have meaningful conversations with children

Research indicates that the more positive, healthy and *attentive* adults children have in their lives, the chances of overall success, resiliency and good mental health increase exponentially; in fact, it is the number one factor in resiliency (another important aspect of mental health).

There are many supports available for mental health in the community and around the province, including:

- Alberta Health Services Mental Health & Addictions
- Kids Help Phone 1.800.668.6868 or www.kidshelpphone.ca
- www.kidshealth.org
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- Private Counselling Services

It can be a chat, a high-five, a shared interest, or as simple as a big smile! Reach out to a child and make a difference for mental health (both theirs and yours!!)

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