

SchoolFinder.com

Prioritizing Your Mental Health

All I do is **STRESS**

School can be stressful — everyone knows it! In recent years, **talking about struggles with stress and mental health** has become a lot more normalized. This is great, because talking through a problem is one of the best ways to address it — or at least feel a bit better.

Recognizing the struggle

The **first step** to recovery is **realizing you're having a rough time**. Stress manifests differently for everyone, but here are some **common signs** that your mental health might be suffering:

- difficulty **concentrating**
- disruptive **eating patterns** — eating too much or too little
- feelings of **anxiety** or insecurity
- **irritability**
- social **isolation**

This list isn't comprehensive, and the presence of a symptom or two in your life isn't the end of the world — but if you **recognize yourself** in a lot of these, you might be suffering undue stress.

The things that cause you stress are called, well, **stressors**. Assignments and exams are common stressors, but Snap and Insta can be stressors too. Do your best to **identify the stressors that affect you**, and if you can, reduce or remove them from your daily life. Some stressors can be minimized; others you'll just have to live with.

Speaking up when times are tough

The best thing you can do when you're feeling overwhelmed is to **talk with someone you trust**. It may be a family member, a friend, or a professional — it doesn't really matter, so long as you're comfortable.

Ask if you can borrow some of their time, and find a **quiet, private place to chat**. Can't meet in person? **Zoom** works almost as well.



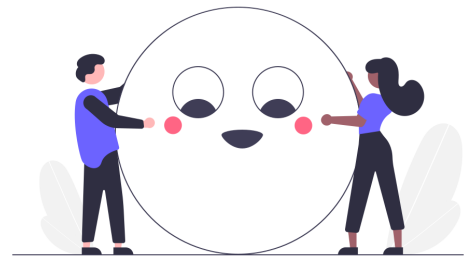
Texts and DMs aren't ideal. **Real-time communication** is best, but feel free to use whatever tech you prefer. It's important to be comfortable, not add more stress to your day.

How to talk about your mental health struggles

Opening up about personal challenges isn't easy for a lot of people. It might **feel weird at first**, and it may not go exactly as you imagine, but taking this **first, important step** will provide a little relief.

Try to be as **honest and forthcoming** as you can. Consider laying out some or all of the following:

- what you've been **feeling**
- **how long** you've felt this way
- what you're **struggling** with specifically
- how **speaking about it** makes you feel now
- **why** you're opening up
- what you need in terms of **support**



Expect to **get questions**, but don't get caught up in an interrogation. Only **be as open as your comfort level permits**, and remember that this conversation is just the beginning of a long process. Even so, you'll probably feel a **lot better** afterward.

If you get a **negative response**, try not to take it personally. Next time, consider opening up to someone else. Not everybody's comfortable discussing tough topics.

Just say no thanks — taking a mental health day

A mental health day is just like a sick day — if you're overwhelmed, and suffering, and you've got a thousand things to do, and the stress keeps piling up — eventually, you just have to say **"No thanks!"**

Take some time to yourself in a calm, nurturing environment, and give yourself the care you deserve. We all need a little time to ourselves to rest and recover, so don't feel ashamed about doing what you need to for your own health and wellness. **Remember**, though; a mental health day is a **short-term solution**, not a long-term fix.

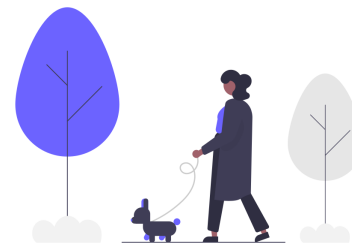
If you're in **high school**, coordinate with your **guidance counsellor**. They're lovely people who live to serve! Your guidance counsellor will help you understand your school's rules and regulations around mental health days.

If you're in **college or university** already, check out your school's **Accessibility department** for info and advice on prioritizing your mental health while you study.

Classic stress-busting activities

When you've got some **free time**, here are a few tried, tested, and true activities for **bringing down your stress levels**. Give them an honest shot — even if some are a little outside of your comfort zone — and you may find a few that help you **feel more calm and collected**.

- grab a **20 minute nap**
- take a **walk or jog** around the block
- **read** a favourite book — or something random off the shelf
- sit down for a short **meditation**
- enjoy a **cup of tea**
- listen to your **favourite music** — or relaxation tunes on Spotify
- **doodle** or sketch your surroundings
- play with a **friendly pet**



Getting help

If you're really suffering, you may want to **visit a professional** therapist or counsellor. You'll find resources online, both in-person and remote. Talking to a pro can help you get **on track to recovery**.

Below are a few **popular options** in Canada. Don't hesitate to reach out if you need help. If you feel unsafe, or you're in a crisis, **call 9-1-1**.

Kids Help Phone

<https://kidshelpphone.ca/>

Call 1-800-668-6868

Crisis Services Canada

<https://www.crisisservicescanada.ca/en/>

Call 1-833-456-4566

Youthspace

<https://www.youthspace.ca/>

Text 778-783-0177

Togetherall Canada

<https://togetherall.com/en-ca/>

