**Health & Wellness Toolkit for Kids**

**Introduction to Health and Wellness Toolkit**

Our goal is for youth, families and caregivers to come away with a set of research-based strategies and skills that they can integrate into their relationships and use to build a resilient, positive and healthy lifestyle. This toolkit will be helpful to youth, families and caregivers who are looking for effective ways to deal with stress and increase health and wellness. Self-care is about being a champion for your own mental and emotional well-being.

Media Release

**Mindfulness and Gratitude**

Explore how mindfulness and gratitude can impact our thoughts, body and brain. This session will describe what gratitude is, how it can impact happiness and assist youth to identify what they are grateful for. Studies have shown that when we practice gratitude, happiness goes up and stress and depression go down.  With it, we can build stronger relationships with those around us. You will explore:

Why gratitude is good for the brain and how gratitude improves our health and well-being?

What does a grateful brain look like?

How does gratitude work in the brain?

Why gratitude is a relationship-strengthening emotion?

How does gratitude relate to bonding and empathy?

How does mindfulness help you focus on the present moment and what happens to our brains when we practice mindfulness regularly?

How can be mindfulness relieve stress and increase creativity and memory in our brains?

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**Art and Music Therapy**

Art and musical therapy have far-reaching benefits in a variety of environments. Examine how music and art therapy improve self- expression, communication, social skills, emotions, sensory skills, coordination and personal growth. It can provide emotional support for youth and families and be an outlet for expression of feelings during this uncertain time. Research has found that your heartbeat changes to mimic the music that you listen to. Music triggers activity in the same part of the brain that releases dopamine (the “pleasure chemical”). You will examine how music impacts the brain’s ability to produce neurons. Listening to music will enhance the frontal lobe which is used in thinking, decision-making and planning. You will explore:

How can youth strengthen their coping skills and explore ways to share their stories through the power of music, relaxation, journaling and visual art?

How can art and music therapy help youth to be able to deal with feelings of anger and isolation?

How does music therapy reduce anxiety and physical effects of stress, and how does it improve healing?

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**Physical Activities**

Discover how regular exercise can have a profoundly positive impact on depression, anxiety and stress. It also improves your overall memory, helps you sleep better and boosts your overall mood. People who exercise regularly tend to do so because it gives them an enormous sense of well-being and promotes higher self-esteem. Exercise is a powerful tool to help you feel better physically, but also leads to all kinds of changes in the brain to promote a feeling of calm. It can also serve as a distraction from your problems and boosts positive mental energy. Regular activity is an investment in your mind, body and soul. Even if you are starting at “ground zero,” you can still workout. It is okay to start small. In fact, it is smart! You will explore:

Have you ever noticed how your body feels when you are under stress?

Are you wondering just how much activity will give you a mental boost?

How does your body and brain connect to increase wellness?

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**Nature and a Green Environment**

Examine how being in nature can reduce your stress and impact your body and mind. Examine and discover how looking after the environment can help you feel better. When you are experiencing being in nature, what are you seeing, hearing and being in the moment? How can being in nature change your mood? You will explore:

How does nature impact your well-being?

How does being in nature heal your body, both physically and mentally?

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**Resilience**

Examine and identify how resilience can help build skills to endure hardship. Examine how you need resilience to be able to adapt to life’s misfortunes and setbacks. Explore some tips to improve resilience, such as staying connected to your friends and family, making everyday meaningful and hopeful, and proactively taking care of yourself. You will explore:

How to find resilience and reduce anxiety during this stressful time?

How can you cope in a healthy way, when faced with mental or emotional challenges in life?

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**Relationships**

Identify strategies to improve communication with friends and family. How to build positive social and behaviour skills to improve team building and trust? Examine how self-reflection is a powerful tool to improve communication and relationships. You will explore:

How youth can improve connecting with their peers at this Covid-19 Pandemic time?

What research-based strategies can help to bridge differences in our relationships during difficult times?

What are some effective strategies to help families treat one another with respect and integrity?

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**Self-care**

Examine and identify how a self-care plan can help you enhance your health and wellbeing and manage your stress. Examine and understand self-care and develop a self-care plan to put into action. You will explore…

How can a physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual self-care plan impact youth?

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