

# Children's Mental Health Week



## Nurturing Healthy Minds: Family & Social Wellbeing

**Did you know?** A sense of belonging through social connections assists in building and strengthening children's social and communication skills, self-esteem, problem solving, and emotional temperament.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, a child's relationships with family and friends, both inside and outside the home environment, can affect their development and mental health. Our first relationships are built with family and close friends. These initial relationships help us learn how to trust others and be yourself.<sup>1</sup> When we continue to interact with our family and friends in trusting and healthy ways, our mental health can also improve. Think about some of the best moments you've had with family and friends. How have these moments made you feel?



### LET'S GET ACTIVE!

#### **One Word at a Time**<sup>2</sup> (all ages)

Sit in a circle or around a table with your family or a group of friends. Tell a story by going around the circle with each person saying one word per turn.

The idea is to keep your thoughts and the story flowing. Don't try to guess what is coming next or force the story to go according to your expectations. It's okay if the story doesn't make sense, because that's part of the fun!

Another variation is to throw or roll a ball around the circle in any order, and add your word as you pass the ball to the next person. This can make people more attentive. Make sure everyone is included and gets a turn.

#### **Kindness Jar**<sup>3</sup> (all ages)

Each member of the family gets a jar or bowl with their name on it. Beans or beads are added to the jar for each act of kindness. To encourage family members to notice kind actions, anyone in the family can nominate another to have a bean added to their jar. Set an acknowledgement ahead of time that will happen when the jar reaches a certain level. You can have fun decorating the jars too!

Here are some examples of acts of kindness:

#### **For younger children:**

- Saying Thank You
- Picking up their toys

#### **For older children/youth:**

- Sharing with their siblings
- Paying someone a compliment
- Doing a chore without being asked to

#### **For parents/guardians:**

- Patience
- Putting a special note in their lunch
- Volunteering to help someone

### Feeling Stressed or Anxious? Try This!

Deep Breathing is a simple technique for managing our emotions. Sit back or lie down and get into a comfortable position. Breathe deeply and try to notice your stomach rise and fall with each breath.

1. Inhale for three seconds
2. Pause
3. Exhale for five seconds
4. Repeat

\*For children, use props like bubbles, a pinwheel, or a stuffed animal to practice alongside with

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## Gratitude Thought of the Day

What relationships are you grateful for? Think of two people you are grateful for and why you are grateful for them.



## *Captivating Connections*

When times get tough, it can be helpful to talk to people we trust. This can be hard to remember when our emotions take over. Take a moment to think about the people you can talk to when you are feeling upset. On a piece of paper write "My Support System" at the top, and then list the names of those you can turn to.

## Looking for More Information/Ideas?

- Social Skills Activities (various age groups): <https://www.parentingscience.com/social-skills-activities.html>
- *The All Our Kids* (AOK) Early Child Development and Parenting Programs (age 0-6): <https://www.york.ca/wps/wcm/connect/yorkpublic/79a3c5ea-73f8-40d4-8a45-d7ddb0214b3b/AllOurKids+Program.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=mLVPIRG>
- Contact your local Parish for information on Youth Groups at your local church.
- Boys and Girls Club of York Region: <http://www.socialenterprise.ca/boys-and-girls-club/Contact-boys-and-girls-club-york-region>

## References

<sup>1</sup> McAdam, K., Dobson, W., Morales, R., & French, S. (2018, March). Understanding the Determinants of the Mental Health of School-aged Children and Youth: A Rapid Review. *Region of Peel*.

<sup>2</sup> Farmer, D. (2019, September 11). One Word At A Time. Retrieved from <https://dramaresource.com/one-word-at-a-time>

<sup>3</sup> Darling, R. (2013, June 26). Peaceful Parenting: Make a Kindness Jar. Retrieved from <https://kidsactivitiesblog.com/10849/peaceful-parenting-kindness-jar>

*This Mental Health Week Activity Package is brought to you by:*

