Talking About Mental Health December 2017 – Taking Care of Ourselves and Our Families

As we head through December and towards the holidays, it is important to be aware that this can be a very exciting time of year, but for some it is also a difficult time of year. Here are some tips and resources to make sure that you and your family have a safe and mentally healthy holiday season.

**Self-care**

*What you do to support or take care of yourself? What do your children/youth do?*

It is important to look after yourselves:

* exercise
* sleep well
* eat well
* reach out to and spend time with family & friends
* reading, writing
* music, art
* spend time with pets
* spend time outside

**Stay connected**

* Have dinner together as a family, no phones or devices
* Plan a family outing to a friend’s or a park or a local event
* Have friends or family over for a game night
* Have a family movie or game night
* Take a few moments each day as a family to say what you are all grateful for
* Volunteer at the foodbank or other community organization as a family

**Signs to look for that someone is struggling**

* *Sometimes it’s hard to tell that someone is suffering. Here are some signs that someone is struggling.*
* not coming to school or work
* not engaging with friends or family
* not participating in activities that they used to enjoy
* withdrawing
* feeling hopeless
* increase use of drugs or alcohol
* changes in behaviour
* anger/irritability

**Getting help**

If you, your child/youth or someone you know if struggling, it is important to know where to reach out for help.

Who would you talk to if you were distressed, overwhelmed or struggling? Take a moment to make a list of at least 3 people or resources you would reach out to.

Who would your child/youth talk to if they were upset, overwhelmed or struggling? Take a moment to sit down with your child/youth and ask them who they would talk to. Put the kidshelpphone and HERE247 or DCAFS number in their phones (see below).

All children and youth need caring adults in their lives to talk to about their feelings. Parents/guardians can be some of those caring adults, but it is important for the children/youth to have other caring adults in their lives such as:

Family members, friends of the family

School staff (teachers, guidance counsellors, principals, child and youth counsellors, social workers, librarian, custodial staff)

Coaches, instructors

Spiritual or religious community

Community members (police, family doctors, librarians, etc.)

**Who you can call for mental health support:**

* Here 24/7 (for crisis and support with mental health or addiction concerns in Guelph/Wellington) <http://here247.ca/> 1.844.437.3247
* Dufferin Child and Family Services (DCAFS) (for crisis and mental health supports for children/youth in Dufferin) <https://dcafs.on.ca/> 519 941 1530
* Kids Help Phone <https://kidshelpphone.ca/> 1 800 668 6868
* Your family physician or family health team

Have a mentally healthy holiday season!

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