

Tips for Parents



A self-esteem program of the
Canadian Mental Health Association/Prince Edward Island Division

Mental Health is ...

... something all of us want for ourselves. When we speak of happiness, or peace of mind, or enjoyment, or satisfaction, we are usually talking about mental health.

Mental health has to do with every person's daily life. It means the overall way that people get along – in their families, at school, on the job, at play, in their communities. It has to do with the way that everybody harmonizes their desires, ambitions, abilities, ideals, feelings, and their conscience in order to meet the demands of life as they have to face them.

One way to define mental health is by describing a mentally healthy person as one who:

Feels Comfortable About Themselves

...can usually cope with their emotions: fear, anger, love, jealousy, guilt, or worry; can take life's disappointments in stride; have self-respect and neither underestimates nor overestimates their abilities; and feels they are able to deal with most situations that come about.

Feels Good About Other People

...is able to give love; expects to like and trust others; does not push people around, nor allows themselves to be pushed around; and is able to establish personal relationships that are satisfying and lasting.

Is Able To Meet The Demands Of Life

...if possible, does something about their problems as they arise; accepts responsibilities; welcomes new experiences and new ideas; uses their natural capacities; is able to think for themselves; makes their own decisions; puts best effort into what they do and gets satisfaction out of it.



Whatever the characteristics used to describe mental health, it is as broad as life itself; different from one individual to another, from one viewpoint to another, and from one culture to another.

How To Get Your Child To Listen To You

Have The Child's Attention

Before giving instructions or starting an important conversation, be sure you have the child's attention. If the child is absorbed in another activity (playing, reading, watching TV) call their name and wait until they stop what they are doing before speaking.

Make Eye Contact

Get on your child's level. Speak eye-to-eye with them.

Keep It Simple

Don't expect your child to remember complicated directions. It's easier for them to follow simple instructions. Make only one request at a time to avoid confusion.

Make Your Expression And Tone Of Voice Match Your Words

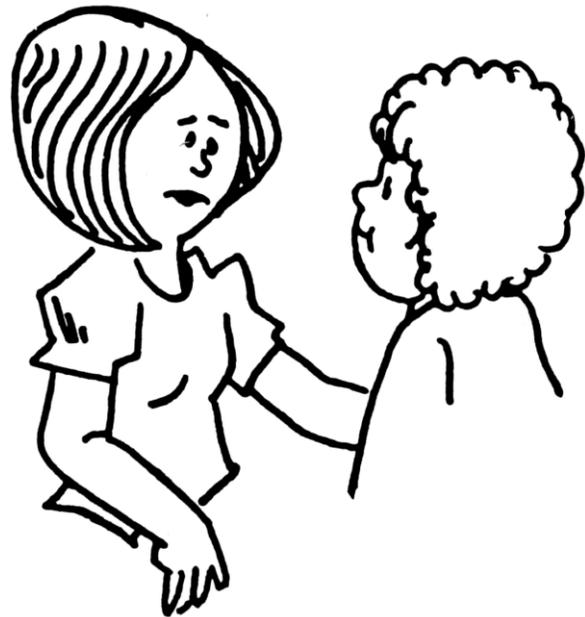
Don't smile when your message is sad or serious. When making an important request be direct, use a firm tone of voice and tell the child why they must cooperate. When praising them smile and show your pleasure openly.

Apply The Golden Rule

Treat your child the way you would like to be treated. Be polite and caring. Use "please," "thank you" and "you're welcome." Don't be rude or unkind. Avoid shaming, sarcasm, or ridicule.

Allow For Disagreement

Expect your child to disagree, question your wisdom, and even occasionally prove you wrong. You can set a good example and show how to compromise and back down when necessary. Your child will be more



eager to listen if they are allowed to give their own point of view in return.

Allow For Feelings

Accept that some things you have to say will provoke "pleasant" feelings in your child and others will bring "unpleasant" feelings. It doesn't help to tell a child they should feel differently or that they should not feel what they are feeling. Let the child know you can accept both "pleasant" and "unpleasant" feelings.

Avoid Labels

“stupid,” “silly,” “lazy,” “naughty,” “baby,” etc. are examples of labels that are hard to get rid of. Children often define themselves with the words they hear from the adults around them.



Use “I” Messages

“I messages” tell your thoughts and feelings and express your wishes. “I messages” are a way to let the child know how their behaviour affects you.

Examples of “I messages”:

- I’d like to rest for half an hour.
- I need you to help me clean up the kitchen.
- I have a lot of confidence in you.

Talk Positively

Use more dos than don’ts, more cans than can’ts. Whenever possible frame things positively.

Positive Examples:

- You can go out and play when your home work’s done.
- Please put your glass in the sink.
- You may play that game upstairs or outside.

Negative Examples:

- You can’t go out and play until your home work’s done.
- Don’t leave your glass on the table.
- Stop making all that noise.



“CRY BABY”

Talk “With” Children Not “At” Them

Conversation is two-way. Talk to your child and listen to what they have to say.

How To Listen To Your Child

Be Accepting

Demonstrate a willingness to see the world through your child's eyes. "Adult" communication styles of preaching, criticizing, giving orders, and threatening don't work well with children. Finding ways to communicate love and acceptance builds your child's self-esteem and confidence. When they feel accepted, they will find it easier to communicate openly and to seek out your help. Your child will be eager to develop and change, and pass those good feelings on to others.

Remember:

There will be times when you will accept your child but not approve of their behaviour. For example, while loving and accepting Judy, you do not approve of or allow her to hit other children.

Listen To Behaviour As Well As To Words

Tears, tantrums, laughs, and giggles tell you as much as words. Actions are all important forms of behaviour. Use your child's behaviour as cues to encourage them to express feelings in words.

Don't Interrupt

Allow children to tell their stories in their own words without being corrected or questioned. Never criticize your child's speech or use of language while they are telling you something that is important to them.



Example:

Jimmy came home from school excited about his class project. As he was describing the project to his mother, she noticed that his pants were ripped at the knee. Mother interrupted to ask how Jimmy split his pants. Jimmy became discouraged and reluctant to talk about school. It would have been better for Mother to ask about the pants after she and Jimmy had talked about the class project.



Demonstrate Your Interest

Listen attentively. Set aside the time to give your individual attention. Get rid of distractions – turn off the television set or put down your newspaper. If you can't stop what you're doing, tell your child, "I can't talk with you right now, let's talk about this later."

Use "Door Openers"

Door openers indicate your interest and encourage your child to tell you more.

Examples:

- "Oh, I see!"
- "Say more about that."
- "Tell me what you mean."
- "Mm Humm."
- "Really?"

Respond With Reflective or "You" Messages

"You" messages

1. reflect back to your child what you hear and
2. use feeling words to help your child identify what's going on "inside."

Examples:

- "You are disappointed because Dad's working late."
- "You are confused about your homework."
- "You are sad because we can't go to Grandmas."
- "You are angry because your brother won't share."

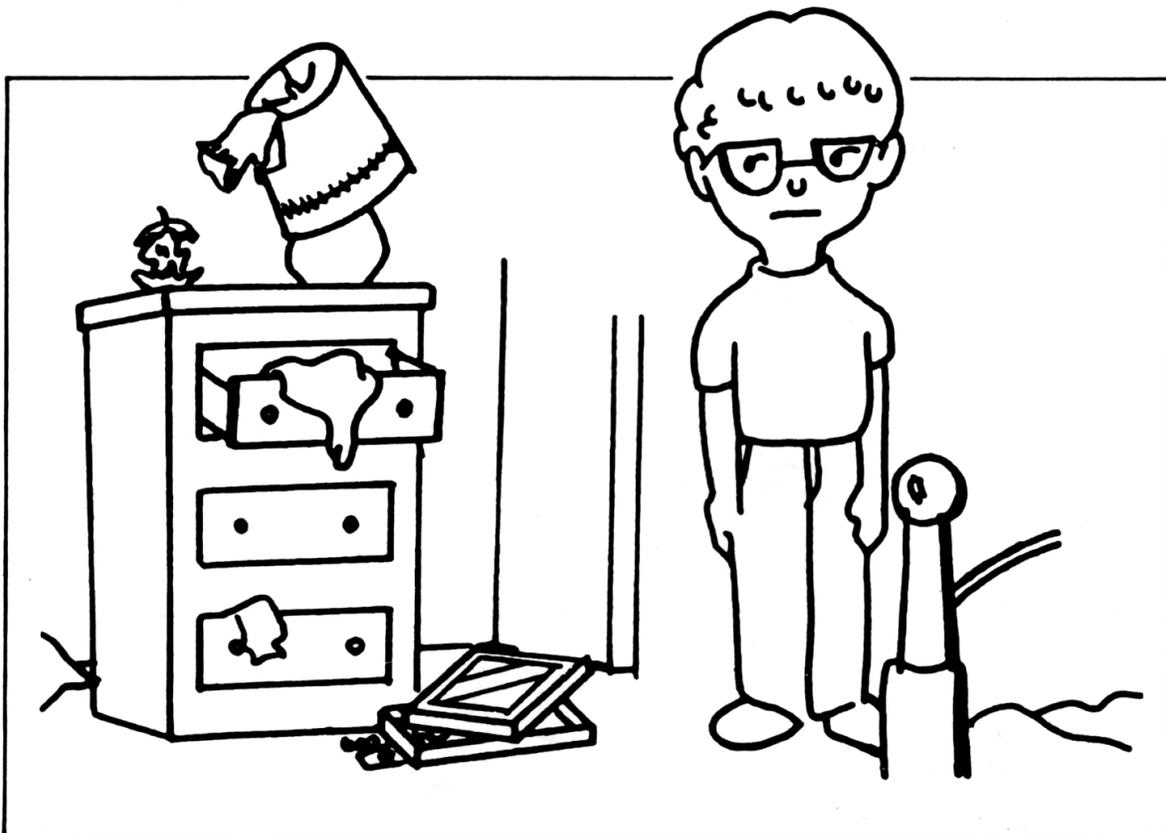


Developing Responsibility In Children

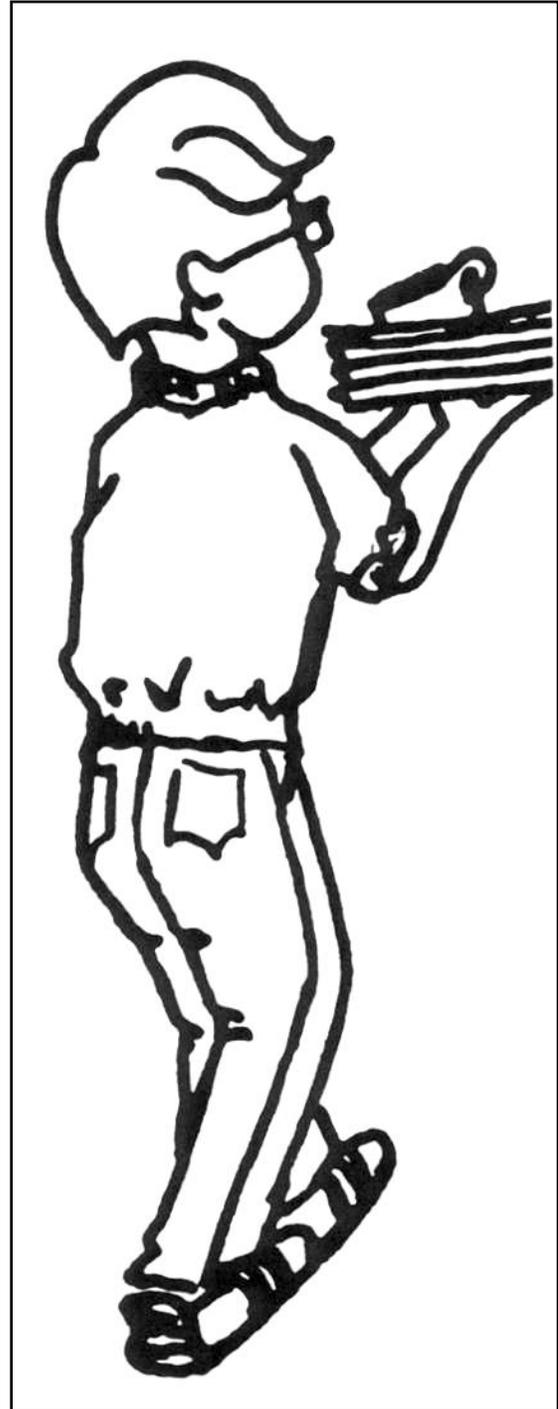
Responsibility cannot be “taught” – it **must be given**.

Some ways to do this are:

1. Put jobs on a **child’s level**. Give a child jobs they can do on their own and never do for a child what they can do for themselves.
2. **Encourage a child’s** first attempts to help you or to do things for themselves. (Remember: They are learning so they will not do the task as well as you can.)
3. Give a child credit for **trying** to help.
4. Give plenty of **time** to learn.
5. **Don’t criticize** or make fun of poor results. Encourage to try again and carefully steer toward a better way.
6. When a child is ready for larger **responsibilities**, let them take those things on.
7. Let a child know you **trust** and have confidence in them.



8. Give **hugs, love, warmth, pats, smiles** and **praise**. Praise more than you punish. Praise efforts as well as performance.
9. Let your child make mistakes without feeling guilty.
10. Be sure the child knows that they help the whole family.
11. Allow your child to explore, to try new things, visit new places and have many different kinds of experiences. Give them more chances to say, "I can" than "I can't."
12. **Admit** your own mistakes when you make them.
13. Don't keep punishing for the same offence. **Help** the child find a better behaviour.
14. **Don't demand** more of a child than they can give.
15. **Remember**, "a child needs encouragement just as a plant needs water and sunshine."
16. **Offer** your child realistic choices and be prepared to go along with their decision.



Self Concept Development

The following is a list of statements that contribute to the development of a poor self-concept. The list is provided to increase your awareness of the nature of discouraging remarks. Opposite the list of discouraging remarks is a list of encouraging remarks. These are remarks that help a child build a healthy self-concept. They are remarks that stimulate the development of self-confidence.



Statements That Discourage

- I'm ready to give up on you.
- You can't do anything right.
- Look at all those mistakes.
- That's a good paper, BUT...
- You are so clumsy.
- Here, let me do it for you.
- John can do it, why can't you?
- When are you going to grow up?
- I told you that would happen.
- Why don't you ever listen?
- I won't love you.
- Boys don't cry.
- You are driving me crazy.

Statements that Encourage

- Everybody makes mistakes.
- Failure is no crime.
- You are improving.
- Mistakes do happen.
- I like the way you are listening.
- You try it. You can do it.
- That is very nice work.
- Thanks so very much.
- That is really great.
- I appreciate your considerate behaviour.
- Keep up the good work.
- It's so nice to know someone like you.
- What a great idea.
- Your work is really improving.
- I feel so good inside when you work so nicely together.
- I understand how you must feel.
- Good work!



Canadian Mental Health Association

Who We Are

The Canadian Mental Health Association/PEI Division is a non-profit mental health agency promoting the mental health of all Islanders by providing information, strategies, supports and services designed to enable people to manage and take positive charge of their lives to the best of their abilities. CMHA/PEI has over 125 volunteers and more than 40 support staff to manage and deliver programs.

What We Do

CMHA/PEI delivers programs and services, provides education and information, conducts research, helps develop social policy and advocates on issues affecting individuals with mental illness.

Program Highlights:

- **Changing Minds**

An innovative, two day, mental illness education program designed for front-line responders that addresses a community need for mental health education and stigma reduction.

- **Clubhouse Program**

Provides over 1000 individuals experiencing persistent mental health problems with opportunities to become involved in residential, pre-vocation, employment, education and social-recreation programs. **Locations are: Fitzroy Centre-Charlottetown Notre Dame Place-Summerside Hope Centre-Alberton**

- **CMHA Resource Libraries**

Located in Charlottetown, Summerside and Alberton, provide individuals and families with information and support resources on mental health and mental illness.

- **Consumer Advocacy**

Through social action, CMHA/PEI influences government, other policy makers and funding agencies to improve legislation and services affecting the mental health of Islanders.

- **Consumer & Family Support Program**

Promotes mental health and social action through Self-Help/Mutual Aid, produces a resource directory annually, delivers presentations raising mental health/illness awareness and is the primary support program for the self-help community.

- **I'm Thumbbody Program**

A self-esteem program for Grade 3 students presented in the classrooms across the Island by trained volunteers.

- **'With Hope in Mind' Program**

A family-to-family program delivered by trained volunteers designed to educate and support family members of someone with a serious mental illness.

- **Mental Health Week**

National Mental Health Week, held the first week in May, offers activities aimed at raising the public's awareness of mental health issues.

- **Mental Health Works**

An award-winning program, delivered by HRA, that offers practical strategies to help managers effectively address complex issues with employees who may be dealing with a mental illness.

- **Suicide Prevention Program**

Delivers the Signals of Suicide program in junior high schools and provides Applied Suicide Intervention Training (ASIST) for caregivers. Also helps coordinate suicide prevention, intervention and post-vention efforts that strengthen supports and enhance resiliency in Island communities.

- **White Cross Program**

Provides regular social-recreation programs and an Island-wide Christmas gift program to people with mental and emotional disorders. Over 500 gifts are delivered each Christmas.

The Canadian Mental Health Association has three offices located on Prince Edward Island:

CMHA/PEI Division

178 Fitzroy Street

P.O. Box 785

Charlottetown, PE

C1A 7L9

Phone: (902) 566-3034

Fax: (902) 566-4643

email: division@cmha.pe.ca

web page: www.pei.cmha.ca

facebook.com/CMHAPEIDivision

CMHA/Prince County

61 Duke Street

Summerside, PE

C1N 3R9

Phone: (902) 436-7399

Fax: (902) 436-2209

email: division@cmha.pe.ca

CMHA/West Prince

1 College Street

P.O. Box 537

Alberton, PE

C0B 1B0

Phone: (902) 853-4180

Fax: (902) 853-3877

email: division@cmha.pe.ca



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