

Return to play



Jumpstart
Bon départ

camh
mental health is health

A conversation with
CAMH experts



Three takeaways

- 1. Mental health is health.** At CAMH, this is our core belief. 1 in 5 Canadians experience mental illness in any given year. And yet, one of the biggest issues in our health care system—and society at large—is that mental health is not taken as seriously, and treated as urgently, as physical health.
- 2. Physical activity can help improve our mental health.** Even getting outside 30 minutes a day can improve your mental health. Organized sport—over and above improving our physical health—also allows us to create social connections, which are key to maintaining good mental health. Young people are resilient, but youth mental health has declined over the past year with the loss of sport and play.
- 3. Create safe environments.** There is an incredible opportunity in sport to create safe environments that support our mental health through equity, inclusion and the language we use. Many youth are eager to have conversations and have many questions, but they need to feel safe. One way to create safe environments is to increase your own mental health literacy.



Signs someone is struggling with their mental health

Most of us experience times when we feel off in some way. These feelings can become a challenge if they last longer than two weeks or get in the way of our daily lives. Mental health challenges can affect anyone. The signs may be visible to other people (like changes in behaviour) or invisible (like thoughts and feelings).

- Sleeping or eating either more or less than usual.
- Feeling annoyed, restless or withdrawn.
- Keeping to yourself more than usual.
- Avoiding school, work or activities.
- Feeling confused or disoriented.
- Thinking about self-harm or suicide.
- Drinking or using other drugs excessively.
- Feeling or acting not like yourself.

[Lean more](#) about signs that someone might be at risk for suicide and ways to provide help.

In conversation with Jumpstart Charities Ambassador **Brock McGillis**, CAMH experts **Dr. Araba Chintoh** and **Chloe Camacho** discuss youth mental health and steps to creating psychologically safe and inclusive spaces. [Watch the full conversation.](#)

“When I was going through this I was struggling in silence and it was that person who came up to me and saw that I wasn’t the same person as I was. They took me to a safe place and asked me if I wanted to talk about what was happening. If I didn’t get that support, I don’t know where I would be today. That person who believed in me and helped me get support was life changing.”

Chloe Camacho, CAMH Youth Advisor

Start a conversation with someone you think is struggling

Sometimes it can be hard to start a conversation because we are afraid of how the person will react, or we are afraid to say the wrong thing. It’s important to remember that you’re not a mental health professional. Your role is to ask questions, listen and validate the person’s feelings. Sometimes feeling heard can be a big help to a person’s wellbeing, but in other cases, you may need to help them find professional support.

Here is an example of how to gently ask about a young person’s wellbeing:

“I’ve noticed that you’ve been late to practice or games lately and when you’re here, I don’t see that same energy as usual. Is there anything you want to talk about?”

Be ready for the possibility that someone isn’t ready to talk and don’t take it personally. Stigma has made it very difficult for people to talk about mental health and illness. Keep the door open.

Dr. Chintoh’s tip:

When you aren’t sure what to do, ask a trusted friend or supportive person for help. You don’t need to have all the answers.

More resources

Youth Wellness Quest: A youth-friendly resource that explores the kinds of mental health and substance use services that may be available in your community. [Learn more.](#)

Mental Health Courses: A series of free online courses offered by CAMH on addictions and mental health. [Learn more.](#)

Canadian Sport Helpline: Offers support to victims and witnesses of harassment, abuse and discrimination. [Learn more.](#)

Game Changers for Mental Health: A series of resources to support youth mental health, created by young people and mental health professionals. [Learn more.](#)