



BACK TO SCHOOL

Mental health resources for your children – and you

We can all remember it – those butterflies on the first day of school. A new school year brings excitement – and anxiety – for almost all students, from young children to teenagers. But this school year will be like no other. COVID-19 routines and concerns can create new stresses for many kids. In addition, family stress – from health, to finances to relationships – can also affect a child's resilience. This can hamper their ability to adapt to this new and different school year.

Parental resilience may also be low. Many people have been stretched for months, balancing work or layoff stress with home schooling and COVID-19 concerns. For all family members, it can feel overwhelming.



Don't go it alone – help is available

Before any family member reaches the breaking point, access the quality information and professional support that's available to you. There are many resources that can support your family's mental and physical well-being in the new school year.

These resources can help in many ways.

- **Helping you stay healthy.** Resources are available to help you cope with your own mental health challenges.
- **Helping your child cope.** They can help anxious children learn coping skills to better manage their anxiety on their own.
- **Meeting a child's emotional needs.** They can help you address your child's social and emotional needs. This might include connecting with classmates, developing or enhancing social skills, or identifying activities for stimulation.



Where you can start

Here are two recent Sun Life resources to help you get started.

This article, [How to prepare your kids for going back to school or daycare after quarantine](#), provides helpful tips for parents of younger children.

Our recent recorded live webinar, [This year's back to school conversation](#), features mental health professionals speaking about how to prepare for the new school year, including:

- Talking with your kids about their feelings.
- Ways your family can stay safe during the school year.
- Triggers of anxiety and methods to cope.

There are many great resources that can support you and your family throughout the new school year.

For the resources like Kids Help Phone – consider posting the phone number and website on your message board or fridge door. Let your kids know it's there for them to call, text or live chat.

Here are some resources to consider.



Resources for parents

- **Employee Assistance Program (EAP).** If your employer provides you with an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), this is a great place to start. Many people who have an EAP don't know about the service or don't put it top of mind. If you're unsure about what's available to you, reach out to your HR representative to find out. EAPs offer employees and their family members confidential free counselling and advice. This can include sessions with a psychologist, or general help in managing stress and anxiety.
- **Your benefits plan.** Your extended health care plan through Sun Life offers coverage for psychological services. This can provide much-needed help for both you and the dependents covered under your plan.
- **Lumino Health.** [Lumino Health](#) is Canada's premier network of health resources. It's free and available to all, 24/7. [The Stress and Anxiety Guide](#) helps you find and navigate mental health resources that are right for you. The search tool makes it easy to find health care providers near you, including mental health professionals. The site also has a dedicated COVID-19 resource page.
- **Canadian Mental Health Association** <https://cmha.ca/find-your-cmha>. The CMHA website lets you search for the CMHA branch near you. These branches offer community mental health services and supports. The website also has information on a variety of specific mental health topics – including child and youth supports.
- **Mental health commission of Canada.** [External resources children & youth](#) covers all ages, with links to a variety of resources.
- **Caring for Kids** <https://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/the-2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19>. Developed by the Canadian Pediatric Society, this site has a wealth of useful information specific to COVID-19. It includes resources that specifically address returning to school.



Resources kids and teens can reach out to directly

- **Kids Help Phone.** kidshelpphone.ca has [tips to support youth with back to school during covid-19](#), plus other great resources and services in a variety of languages.
- **Teenmentalhealth.org** <http://teenmentalhealth.org/>. This resource is focussed on teenage mental health. While the site has a lot of information for teens, it also has valuable resources for parents.

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