

Feeling stressed, low, anxious? Need support and info?

Beyond the Blues Events Help Educate About Depression, Anxiety, Risky Drinking and Good Mental Health

As the leaves fall, people's moods can too. That's why October is the ideal time for the 22nd annual Beyond the Blues: Education & Screening Days, which have helped 85,000 people across BC since 1995.

"October is a ripe time to talk about mental health," says Sarah Hamid-Balma, Director of Mental Health Promotion for the Canadian Mental Health Association's BC Division and provincial coordinator for Beyond the Blues. "Families are in the thick of school and work schedules and stresses, and daylight changes can affect routines. Beyond the Blues offers an ideal opportunity to work on prevention, catch mental health problems early and connect to local help in a fun and interactive way".

Held during or near Mental Illness Awareness Week (October 2-8), Beyond the Blues is an annual awareness day to engage people to learn more about mental health and mental health problems and related issues like risky drinking. For Beyond the Blues 2016, more than 80 local events will be set up across BC this fall.

At an education and screening site, attendees can take part in fun and engaging activities such as videos, games and adult colouring books to learn more about stress, mood and anxiety problems, effective treatments, supports and self-care. They can then fill out short self-tests on well-being, depression, anxiety and risky drinking and talk privately with a clinician about next steps, and find out about local community resources and supports. They can also fill out a well-being self-test that look at features of good mental health like vitality, social support, healthy thinking, and self-esteem.

The events are free, anonymous, confidential and walk-in. Most sites also host presentations and/or health fairs. Anyone is welcome to attend—whether they want to fill out a self-test or not.

"One of our commitments in organizing Beyond the Blues is to create friendly, engaging, and safer spaces for people to start and continue conversations about their mental health—and encouraging reflection on what good mental health looks like. We're also committed to supporting people in finding and navigating community

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supports that can help. We want Beyond the Blues participants to leave feeling empowered, better informed, hopeful, and supported,” says Hamid-Balma.

There are specially-tailored screening forms available for adults, older adults, youth, new or expectant mothers, and people who are concerned about a friend or family member. Brief risky drinking screens also help people see the links between their alcohol use, possible harms, and impacts on their mental well-being.

“This event is for anyone, whatever your experience of mental health,” says Hamid-Balma. “The screening and debriefing activities at Beyond the Blues are designed to support people in educating themselves so that they can see what’s going well for them, where their strengths are, and also recognize the signs and know what to do next if they or someone they care about *is* affected down the road.”

To see all 80+ BC events in October and beyond, please visit www.heretohelp.bc.ca/beyond-the-blues

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5 tips to help stay beyond the blues this fall

Cold bugs aren’t the only thing we should be thinking about keeping at bay; our mental immune system can use a boost. CMHA BC offers five common-sense tips for protecting your mental well-being this fall:

- 1. Embrace routines** – For many of us, getting back to the grind of work and school can be challenging but our routines can actually be very healthy for us, says Hamid-Balma, and especially for kids. “If you build healthy habits now—including regular slots for exercise, clubs or social outings—you’re less likely to drop them when it gets cold and dark,” she says.
- 2. Build some outside time in** – As daylight changes begin to really sink in, people can find themselves commuting both ways to school or work in the dark, and retired people may find themselves not leaving the house much. Finding small ways to take breaks and get outside during the day is a good idea, even more so if you’re prone to winter blues. Add a quick brisk walk with a friend and you’ve added two more mental health boosters: exercise and social support.
- 3. Get more face-time with people** – Social media, texting, and video-calling can be great ways to stay in touch with loved ones or make new friends. Use them to enhance rather than replace face-to-face interactions. Make a date to talk to someone in real life at a regular time each week or month. If you don’t have a close friend or relative nearby, see if there’s a local Meetup group or club you’d like to join, walk your dog with a neighbour, or try tai chi at the mall.
- 4. Little more water, little less caffeine** – Water replenishes brain cells and helps you concentrate and feel less tired. Most of us don’t drink enough of it. While you’re drinking more water, try to also limit caffeinated drinks because they can dehydrate you, make you anxious or reduce the quality (and quantity) of your sleep. Try more often to have herbal tea, decaffeinated black tea, or smaller cups of coffee.
- 5. If you can’t solve your problem, solve a different one.** If you’re stressed out by a problem that just doesn’t seem to budge, it could be that you’re trying to solve the wrong problem. “A common example,” Hamid-Balma says, “is when we frame our problem as one of how to change someone else’s behaviour when our own behaviour is all we really have control over. Sometimes just by reframing the problem, we might be able to do something about it and reduce our stress.”

For more tips and strategies, visit a local Beyond the Blues event.

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**NOTE TO MEDIA ABOUT VISUALS: Media are asked not to attend these events for photos or interviews to respect the anonymity and confidentiality of attendees. For visuals, see stock photos of a person filling out a screen online at www.heretohelp.bc.ca/about/media or contact your local site planner to see about getting photos/footage before the event day, such as of shots of displays or speakers; or having a journalist go through a mock screening interview.*

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About the Canadian Mental Health Association BC Division (CMHA BC) CMHA BC is a part of Canada's most established mental health charity and the nation-wide leader and champion for mental health. CMHA helps people access the resources they need to maintain and improve mental health, build resilience, and support recovery from mental illness. Each year in BC alone, CMHA serves more than 100,000 people all across the province.

About HeretoHelp CMHA BC is proud to be affiliated with HeretoHelp. HeretoHelp is a project of the BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information, a group of non-profit agencies providing good-quality information to help individuals and families maintain or improve their mental well-being. The BC Partners are funded by BC Mental Health and Substance Use Services, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority.