

NEWS RELEASE

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

Beyond the Blues Events this Fall Add a Dose of Fun and Games to Help Educate about Depression, Anxiety and Good Mental Health

Vancouver, BC - (September 24, 2018): As the leaves fall, people's moods can, too. Come autumn, families are in the thick of school and work schedules and stresses. Reduced daylight can affect routines. Also, people affected by the wildfires may be noticing the lingering effects of stress. That's why it's an ideal time for the 23rd annual Beyond the Blues: Education & Screening Days, which have helped 102,000 people across BC since 1995.

"People sometimes think talking about mental health has to be depressing or boring, but it doesn't," says Sarah Hamid-Balma with the Canadian Mental Health Association's BC Division and provincial coordinator for Beyond the Blues. "Beyond the Blues is about prevention, catching problems early and connecting to local help in a fun, friendly and interactive way. We've got stress bingos, emoji activities, colouring and more. We're competing for people's time and attention just like everyone else so it has to be engaging and creative."

Held during or near Mental Illness Awareness Week (October 1-7), Beyond the Blues is an annual awareness day to engage people to learn more about mental well-being and mental health problems. There are at least 70 events set up across BC.

The events are free, anonymous, confidential and drop-in. At the event, attendees can take part in fun and engaging activities such as videos, games, presentations, or resource fairs to learn more about stress, mood and anxiety problems, supports and self-care. They can fill out short self-tests on depression, anxiety and risky drinking and talk privately with a clinician about next steps and local resources. 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.

"We want to create friendly, engaging, and safer spaces for people to reflect on their own mental health and have a conversation about how to prevent problems or feel better," says Hamid-Balma. "We want Beyond the Blues attendees to leave feeling empowered, better informed, hopeful and supported."

There are specially-tailored screening forms available for adults, older adults, youth, new or expectant mothers, Aboriginal adults 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.

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“Our research shows anyone can benefit from attending,” says Hamid-Balma. “The information and activities are designed to support people in educating themselves so that they can see what’s going well for them, and also know what to do next if they or someone they care about *is* affected down the road.”

To see all 75+ BC events in October and beyond, please visit www.heretohelp.bc.ca/beyond-the-blues

[SIDEBAR]

4 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.

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

Provincial media contact:

Sarah Hamid-Balma | Canadian Mental Health Association | 1-800-555-8222 or 778-372-5078

**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.*

About our Supporters: Funding for provincial coordination of Beyond the Blues has been provided by BC Mental Health and Substance Use Services, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority, with additional support from the Ministry of Children and Family Development. Special thanks also to provincial media sponsor Black Press, and to our vast list of provincial endorsing agencies.

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 Substance Use 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.