

## KIDS AND MENTAL ILLNESS WHAT EVERY PARENT SHOULD KNOW

When our kids have a physical illness or injury we seek professional help and get any medical attention they might need. When our kids have symptoms of a mental illness they need us to respond in the same way.

*Mental illness, like physical illness, can happen to anyone.*

*1 in 7 kids in BC have at least one mental illness (over 140,000 children and teens).*

Listen to your instincts if you are worried about your child. Collect as much information as you can. You are probably in the best position to know if your child's behaviour requires further attention. Arrange to meet with a well-trained and trusted professional. Help that works is available.

It can be confusing trying to tell the difference between symptoms of mental illness vs. normal problems that all kids experience from time to time. As parents we can use observable behaviours to help us decide what action we need to take.

### SOME CONCERNING BEHAVIOURS

- decrease in enjoyment and time spent with friends or family
- significant fall in school work and performance
- strong resistance to attending school or absenteeism
- problems with memory, attention or concentration
- big changes in energy levels, eating or sleeping patterns
- lots of physical symptoms (stomach aches, headaches, etc.)
- feelings of hopelessness, sadness, anxiety or crying a lot
- frequent aggression, disobedience or lashing out verbally
- excessive neglect of personal appearance or basic hygiene
- substance use
- dangerous or illegal thrill seeking behaviours
- acting overly suspicious of others
- seeing or hearing things that others don't see or hear

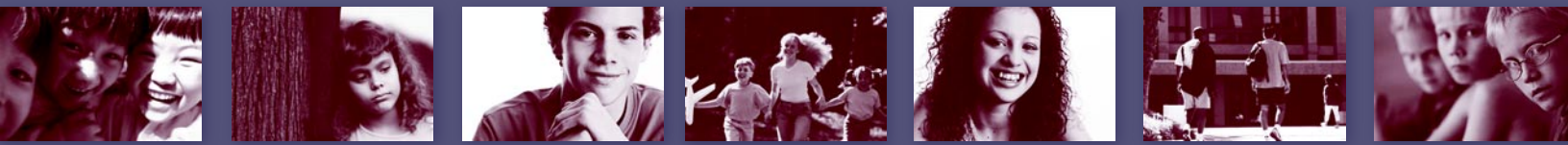
***If your child has persistent thoughts of dying, hurting themselves or hurting others do not wait to seek help.***

***Contact your family physician or go to the emergency room at the nearest hospital.***



**BC Partners for  
Mental Health and  
Addictions Information**  
EMPOWERMENT THROUGH INFORMATION

# Tips for Parents



## WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

1. Circle the behaviours from the list that concern you (especially those lasting a few weeks or more).
2. Speak to your child regarding your main concerns (no more than 3 and keep it brief) and listen to their response (for an uninterrupted 3 minutes if you can).
3. Let your child know you will help work out difficult problems together.
4. Arrange to meet with a trusted and trained professional about your concerns and how to access help (you don't have to do this alone).

## HELPFUL RESOURCES

### Trained Professionals

Physicians, mental health teams, school counsellors, psychologists, psychiatrists, registered clinical counsellors, faith community leaders or any professional with quality training and expertise in child and youth mental health issues.

### BC Partners Mental Health Information Line

Provides automated information 24 hours a day and referrals to agencies in your community during business hours. Just call 1-800-661-2121 or 604-669-7600.

### BC Nurse Line

Provides health information 24 hours a day (available in 130 languages). Just call toll free 1-866-215-4700 or 604-215-4700. For deaf/hearing-impaired help call 1-866-889-4700. Help is also available at [www.bchealthguide.org](http://www.bchealthguide.org).

The information provided through BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information is not intended to provide, nor is it a substitute for, professional medical advice or other professional services.



**BC Partners for  
Mental Health and  
Addictions Information**  
EMPOWERMENT THROUGH INFORMATION

For more information for you or your family contact us at [www.heretohelp.bc.ca](http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca) or 1-800-661-2121  
**We're here to help**