

# Resourcing the Biggest Influencers: Parents (You!)

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Mental Health, Illness, and a Crisis: What's the difference?

MENTAL HEALTH	MENTAL ILLNESS	MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS
The <b>normative</b> way the brain works & understands the world.	<b>Long-term illnesses</b> that affect how the brain works and responds to stress.	A <b>short-term disruption of "normal"</b> that can be mild (concern) or severe (crisis).

## Depression

- Situational, seasonal, chronic, spiritual
- Depression speaks & saps: "You don't have value, nothing will ever work out, and you're a burden to those around you."

## Anxiety

- Anxiety/panic attacks, running thoughts, PTSD, social isolation
- Anxiety cripples: breathing, action, social behaviour, eating, and sleep
- Our conscious brains have very limited ability to change fear responses

## How To Help (in general)

- Seek to understand
- Normalize, encourage, & give grace
- Find what works for your son or daughter
- Distractions (even if not the healthiest) can be necessary supports during a crisis (better than the alternative)
- Get support for them and you

## How To Help (Panic Attacks)

- A physiological response coming from the amygdala (emotional centre of the brain). This part of the brain processes information before the conscious brain.
- **SPF: Spaces, Paces, Faces**
  - SPACES – If possible, move to a quieter location with less audio/visual stimulation and a more comfortable (cooler) temperature. If not possible, do what you can to create a sense of quiet & safety where you are.
  - PACES – Do some breathing or grounding exercises, or use a stress toy. The point of this is to provide something else for the brain to focus on, other than the overwhelming fears and feelings its experiencing. An internet search will provide a number of grounding exercises.
  - FACES – Limit who's around. Give privacy and dignity. Only one or two people should be present. Avoid hugs unless they're requested. Panic is often accompanied by feelings of claustrophobia. Remain for the 5-30 minutes needed to calm down.

## Holistic Care:

- **Body Health**
  - Find a doctor who cares (also consider paramedical practitioners)
  - Nutrition, exercise, and sleep are all a key part of this
- **Mind Health**
  - Find a therapist or counsellor (strongly recommend someone who specializes in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) or Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT))
  - Have them create their own response plan for when they experience overwhelming emotions (including grounding/breathing exercises)
- **Soul Health**
  - Find a pastor or mentor they feel comfortable connecting with
  - If they aren't engaged with their faith, don't push it; focus on supporting other healthy relationships they have instead

## Suicide Warning Signs

- Preoccupation with death, absence, or meaninglessness
- Facing significant loss or pain, or a significant transition/change
- Reckless behaviours including unsafe sex
- Withdrawal from friends and things enjoyed activities/hobbies
- Self-harm may not be a suicidal behaviour

## Risk of Suicide: What Do I Do?

- Suicide conversations can be very hard with your own family. You will likely need another healthy adult to have these conversations with your child. This is normal.
- Talking about suicide does not cause suicide. As long as the conversation isn't punitive or shaming, talking about suicide almost always *decreases* the risk of suicide.
- Your child needs someone to assess the risk to their safety and help them build a safety plan that works for them. Finding a counsellor or supportive adult who's trained in suicide intervention is needed.
- Always take suicide seriously, even if it's an attention tactic. Sometimes crying wolf is the only way a person knows how to ask for and find help and support.
- Increase the safety of your home and gently explain why. Lock up medicines, cannabis, and hard alcohol. If you own a firearm, sell it or arrange for it to be safely stored at another address. Your child's safety is more important than your hobby.
- If you are concerned about your child's safety, call your local crisis line (see resource page).

## Resources

### Crisis:

- Kids Help Phone (up to age 18)
  - 1-800-668-6868 (24/7) Text “Connect” to 686868 (24/7)
  - [www.kidshelpphone.ca](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca)
- Canada Crisis Services (18+)
  - 1-833-456-4566 (24/7) Text 45645 (4 pm – midnight ET)
  - [www.talksuicide.ca](http://www.talksuicide.ca)
- Always call 911 when there’s an immediate and serious risk to safety

### Non-Emergency & Learning:

- Brett Ullman
  - [www.brettullman.com/mental-health](http://www.brettullman.com/mental-health)
  - Parenting: Navigating Everything (book, course)
- Mental Health Commission of Canada
  - Mental Health First Aid (two day general mental health course)
  - [www.mhfa.ca](http://www.mhfa.ca)
- LivingWorks Education
  - START (two hour online suicide course)
  - [www.livingworks.net/start](http://www.livingworks.net/start)
- Mental Health Access Pack (Medication & Faith)
  - [www.mentalhealthaccesspack.org/what-does-bible-say/medication-and-faith/](http://www.mentalhealthaccesspack.org/what-does-bible-say/medication-and-faith/)
- Centre for Addiction & Mental Health
  - [www.camh.ca](http://www.camh.ca)

### Community Supports:

- Family doctor, psychiatrist
- Counsellor, therapist, psychologist
  - Contact your local Canadian Mental Health Association
    - [www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca)
- Youth pastor/worker/mentor
- Coaches, teachers, guidance counsellors
- Parent or support groups (including a church small group)
- Your supports (pastor, trustworthy family & friends)

### Phone/Tablet Apps:

- PocketWell (companion app for Canada’s WellnessTogether)
- CalmHarm (tools for panic, running thoughts, and mood management)
- MindShift (tools for panic, running thoughts, and mood management)
- Lectio365 (reflective daily Christian devotional tool)
- Any colouring book app can be very helpful for anxiety reduction