

Supporting your Child's Mental Health and Wellbeing



**Family and
Community
Engagement**

Ottawa-Carleton District School Board



**OCDSB Parent
Involvement
Committee**



**OTTAWA-CARLETON
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**

Family Conference 2023

*Educate, Engage, Empower -
Enhancing Learning Together*

Overview and facilitator introductions

In today's Parenting Workshop we will discuss:

- Group Agreements
- Our 'Why:' *OCDSB Indigenous and Human Rights Roadmap*
- Equity, mental health, oppression, and racial trauma
- How to access the school support team
- Strategies to add to your parenting toolkit and how to talk to your kids about their mental health and experiences of oppression and racial trauma

Stay Engaged

Expect to Experience Discomfort

***Human Rights Are Non Negotiable!

Expect and Accept a Lack of Closure

Beginning Courageous Conversations

Who are we and what brings us to this work?

unapologetic enough
snatched bold
authentic beautiful
blueprint kind breathtaking
valid fierce strong
resilient
excellent

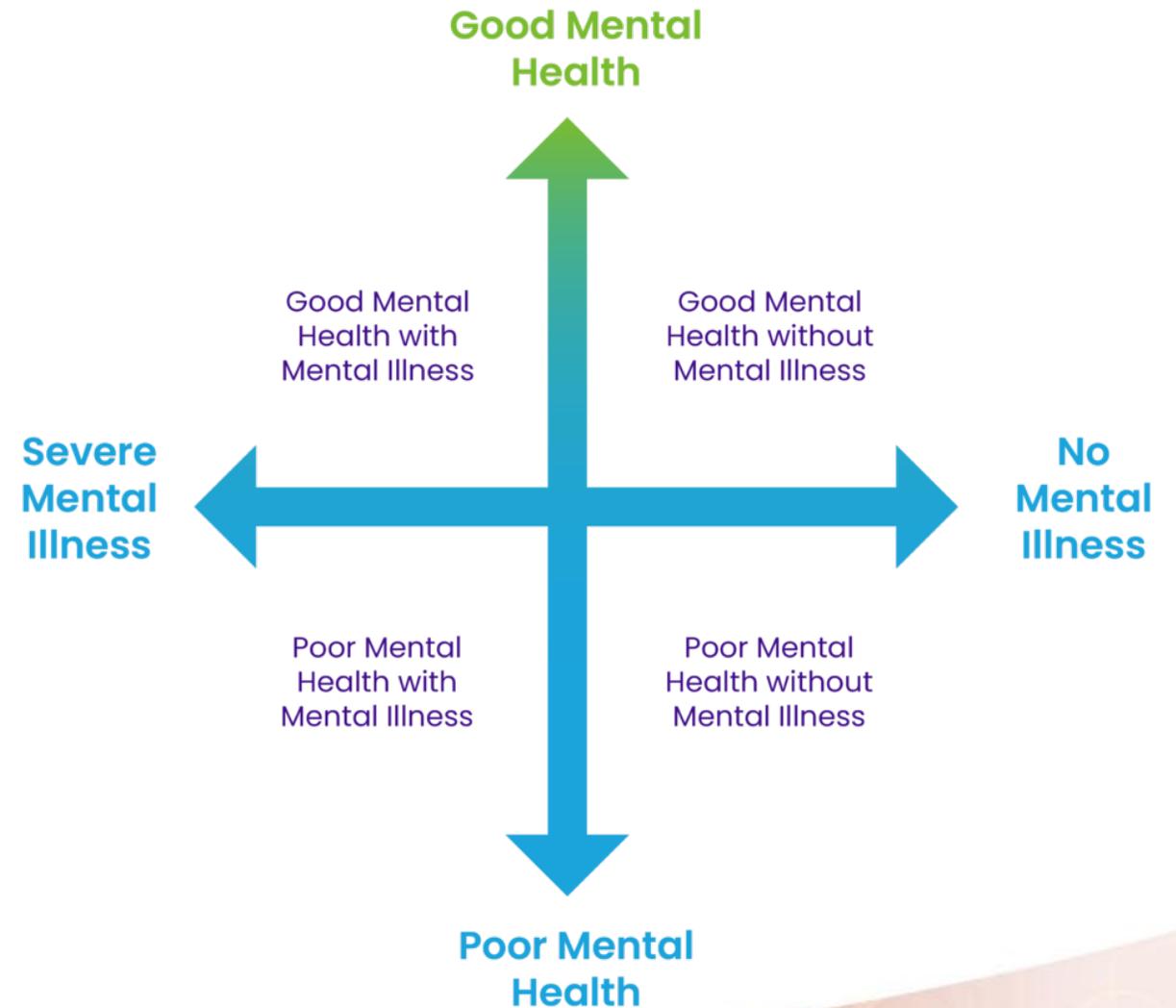
**Schools won't be locations of learning until they are
locations of healing**
-Dr. Bettina Love



What is mental health?

A state of well-being in which every individual realizes their potential, can cope with normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to their community (WHO).

The Dual Continuum of Mental Health and Mental Illness



What is Racial Trauma and how does it show up?

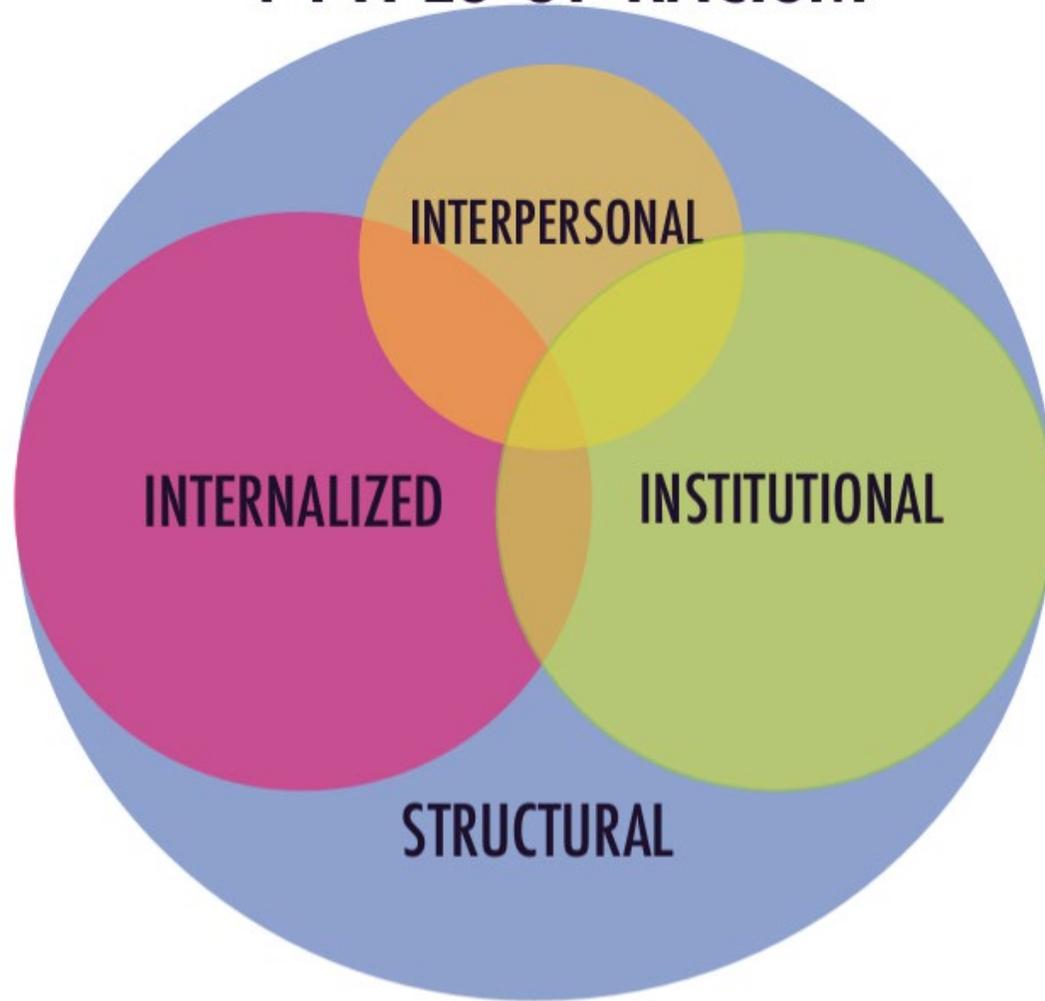
"Racism is a socially-contracted mental illness that is not always direct or blatant, but rather, can be insinuating and subtle. It can be concealed by the manipulation of language used to dissimulate and deceive."

— Dr. Lorne Foster, York University, Ontario

Dear Black Parent



4 TYPES OF RACISM



What is Oppression

- Oppression is not simply something that one individual person does to another.
- Oppression is a system of organization that shapes material reality and ideological landscapes such that one group receives benefits over another group.
- Within the document OCDSB Valuing Voices findings:
 - Found that disproportionately students who identify as black, indigenous, or 2SLGBTQ+ youth were more likely to have less success in school, less connectiveness, reported a lack of representation and staff awareness
- In OCDSB suspension data found that Black, Indigenous, Middle Eastern and 2SLGBTQ+ students were disproportionality suspended and/or expelled.

What do ALL students need at school?



- Connection to caring adults
- A place to belong and feel included
- A chance to learn
- Someone who notices and reaches out when something is wrong
- Someone who listens to them, believes them and acts on the information provided
- Someone who instills hope

How to work together with your child's school

- Communication is key!
- Start with your child's classroom educators; be specific about your concerns.
- Ask the educator what they've noticed at school.
- You can request a meeting with other school staff as needed.
- Discuss options for ongoing communication.



Noticing changes in your child's mental health & well-being

Think about your relationship **WITH** your child....

- W** When did the concern start?
- I** How **Intense** is the concern for my child?
- T** What is the **Timing** and how often does it happen?
- H** **How** is the concern impacting my child in their daily life?

Early identification to know if your child/youth is experiencing a mental health problem

Ask yourself:

- Are these behaviours and emotions out of character for my child?
- Are they having a negative impact on my child's ability to enjoy everyday life?
- Are they having a negative impact on our family life?
- Are they getting in the way of my child's progress at school?
- Are these concerning behaviours happening more often?
- Are they more intense?
- Are they lasting longer?

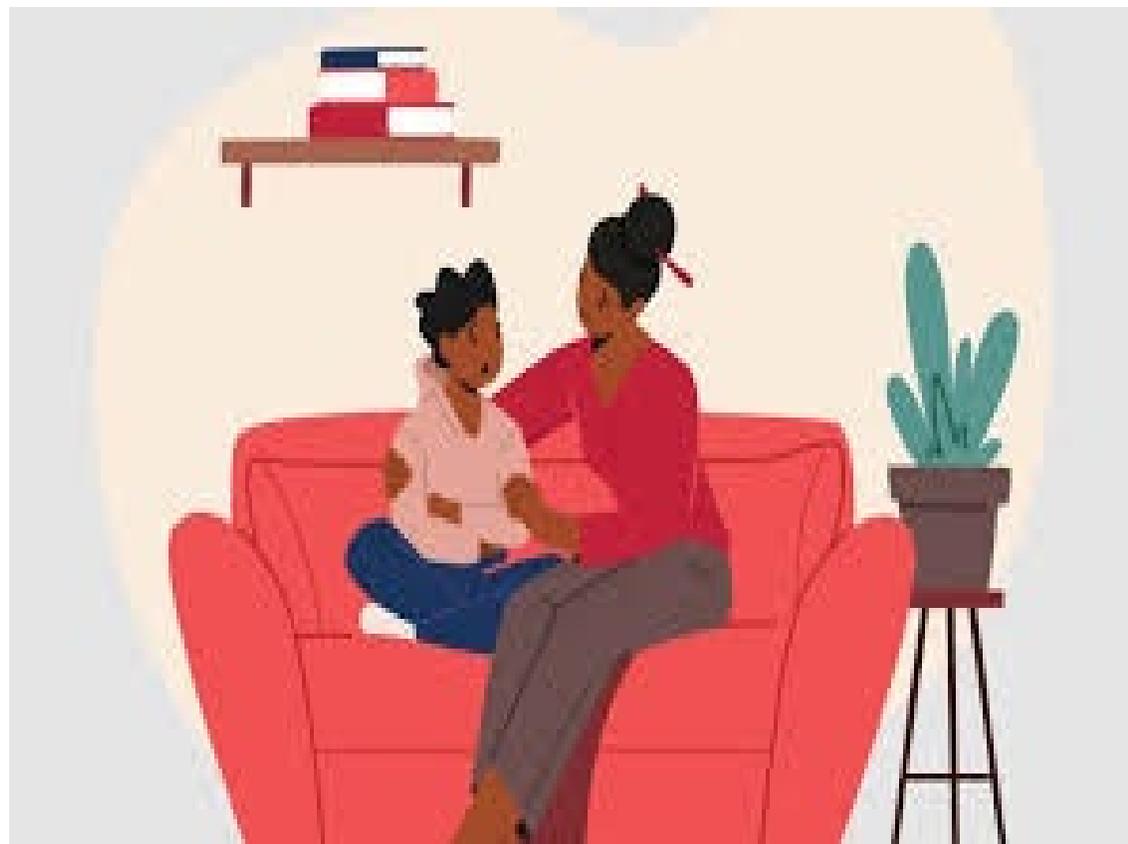
Signs that may indicate a mental health problem in **younger children**

- frequently changing mood/emotions
- easily hurt feelings, crying, anger
- ongoing temper tantrums, throwing things, hitting people, etc.
- ongoing sadness and lack of interest in things they normally enjoy
- withdrawal from friends and family
- little motivation or interest in schoolwork, activities
- difficulty concentrating
- low frustration tolerance, irritability
- increase in headaches, stomach aches, other aches and pains
- decreased energy, problems with sleep or appetite changes
- increased need for contact and reassurance

Signs that may indicate a mental health problem in older children and teens

- outbursts of anger or distress
- frequent irritability
- feelings of anxiety and panic
- excessive worries and fears about the safety of family, friends, self
- increased defiance and opposition
- school refusal
- use of drugs and/or alcohol
- withdrawal from family activities
- withdrawal from friends
- ongoing negative remarks about self
- interest in activities from younger years
- declining grades, low motivation to complete tasks
- changes in eating and sleeping
- frequent talk about death and dying
- giving away possessions

How to talk to your child/youth about their mental health



Tips to help you talk to your child/youth about mental health:

- Find a **quiet** time when you are unlikely to have interruptions to begin the conversation.
- **Reassure** your child that they can tell you anything and you will not get angry with them (even if you get scared).
- Start the conversation by **describing changes** you have noticed in their mood, behaviour, reactions .
- Give them time to answer
- If your child does acknowledge some concerns, tell them that you are glad they told you and that you are there to walk through this with them. Work together to discuss next steps and find a mental health professional for them to talk with

How to *ready yourself* to talk with your child/youth.

- **Prepare yourself** for a calm discussion
- You may feel anxious or worried **about what you have noticed** with your child
- Ground yourself, take time to **care for your own wellness.**
- **Think about** what you will say and possible setbacks/reactions
- Be open to tell them *'we will get through this together'*
- Even if you don't know the answers, **being open to hearing** them is key

How can I help when my child/youth is struggling with mental health?

- Try to take pressure off them where you can (reduce some expectations).
- Inspire hope -even if it feels hard for you.
- Spend 10-15 minutes of one on one quality time with your child each day (at least).
- Engage in identity-affirming activities that bring joy (art/sports/games/colouring/music/spiritual or religious activities)
- Open the lines of communication with others (school/community/family/student)



Flip your lid analogy

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the practice of being in the here and now, by bringing awareness to what is happening inside our bodies and around us. It teaches us to slow down, to notice what we're thinking and feeling without judgement, so we can treat ourselves with compassion and kindness.

Benefits of mindfulness:

- Less stress and worry better ability to stay calm,
- Better ability to stay calm
- Better memory
- Improved ability to focus, be creative, and solve problems More satisfaction with relationships

5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 GROUNDING TECHNIQUE

A Calming technique that connects you with the present by exploring the five senses.



5

things you
can see



4

things you
can touch



3

things you
can hear



2

things you
can smell



1

things you
can taste

Community Resources

- **Kids Help Phone:** kidshelpphone.ca or 1-800-668-6868
- **Youth Services Bureau:** (Ages 12+ and their families) YSB Crisis Line 24/7: 613-260-2360 or 1-877-377-7775 - -
<https://www.ysb.ca/services/ysb-mental-health/24-7-crisis-line>
- **Black Youth Helpline:** <https://blackyouth.ca/> or (toll free) 1-833-294-8650
- **Youthline:** LGBTTTQQ2SI: Youth Line offers confidential and non-judgmental peer support through our telephone, text and chat services (4-9:30pm) - youthline.ca or text 647-694-4275
- **Naseeha Helpline (Muslim Helpline):** 1-866-627-3342 (Call or Text, 12pm-9pm)
- **Walk-In Counselling Clinics:** 613-725-3601, dial 0
- **1 Call, 1 Click:** <https://1call1click.ca/en/index.aspx>
- **Counselling Connect (Virtual):** <https://www.counsellingconnect.org/>

