

What the YDI Measures

- General Mental Health
- Life Satisfaction
- Depression (PHQ-8)
- Generalized Anxiety (GAD-2)
- Disordered Eating (InsideOut Institute Screener)
- Positive Childhood Experiences
- Coping
- Positive Mental Health
- Attitudes to Mental Health
- Mental Health Literacy
- Mental Health Access



Mental and emotional well-being are important for everyone. Emotional wellness is having the ability to successfully handle life's stresses and to adapt to change in difficult times. How we feel can impact our ability to participate in daily activities, our relationships and our mental health (National Health Institute).

Adolescence is a particularly important time to promote mental health and emotional well-being, as 70% of people living with a mental illness report their symptoms begin before age 18 (Mental Health Commission of Canada). Research shows that prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 20% of Canadian children and youth experienced mental illness (Canadian Paediatric Society, 2023).

Youth reports of symptoms of mental illness have continued to increase since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (Samji et al., 2022). On the YDI 2022 survey, 30% of youth reported a pre-existing mental health issue. Approximately 50% of youth screened positive for moderate to severe symptoms of depression and/or anxiety and 25% were showing signs of an eating disorder. Since the launch of the YDI survey in 2020, students are reporting that their emotional well-being has been declining year after year.

Demonstrating **care and empathy towards students** can promote mental health and well-being (Sorgenfrei et al., 2022).



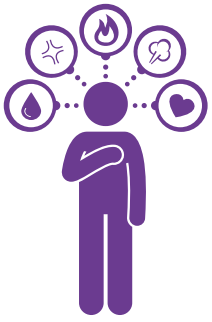
Action Ideas: Some practices that have evidence for developing positive relationships between students and teachers include (Kincade et al., 2020):

- greeting students by name at the door
- having brief chats with individual students to check and see how they are doing
- using active listening with students
- sharing some information about yourself
- being consistent and following through
- acknowledging students strengths and successes

In a review of programs that improved people's mental well-being, **arts-based programs** were found to have some of the largest impacts on participant well-being (Blodgett et al., 2020). YDI 2023 findings confirm that the majority of youth who participated in arts-based programs at school reported the programs contributed to their well-being.

Action Idea: Include arts programs in school for credit and as extracurricular activities at school. These include visual arts, performing arts, and music.





A review of school mental health programs found that teaching **emotion regulation skills** had a large impact on youth's well-being (Laurenzi et al., 2023) and may reduce mental illness symptoms (Helland et al., 2022). Emotion regulation is an individual's ability to understand, monitor, and modulate their emotions. One's ability to regulate emotions is associated with reduced anxiety and depression among youth (Schäfer et al., 2017). Adolescence is a particularly important time for the development of emotion regulation (Silvers, 2022).

Action Ideas:

Encourage students to be aware of and acknowledge their emotions. Emphasize that it is okay for students to talk about their emotions through role-modelling. Encourage students to think about why they feel a particular way, and use emotion check-ins in the classroom. Support the development of emotion regulation skills, such as cognitive re-appraisal (re-framing events from a different perspective) and relaxation techniques. Teach students how to manage problems through building their problem-solving skills and encouraging them to seek support when they are experiencing difficult emotions (Sorgenfrei et al., 2022).



Stress is a natural response to a perceived threat. The right amount of stress can improve students' performance. Too little stress can result in feeling bored and unmotivated. Too much stress can lead to fatigue, anxiety, anger, or burnout (Sorgenfrei, et al., 2022).

Action Ideas:

- Teachers can help students manage stress by reassuring students that occasional stress, anxiety and low mood are normal and manageable. Help students think through their problems and validate their feelings. Inquiring about the intensity and duration of their emotions can help identify students who may be facing mental health challenges (Sorgenfrei et al., 2022). Follow your school's policy to connect youth with mental health supports.
- Emotion regulations skills, positive self-talk, and connecting with trusted adults can also help youth manage stress (Sorgenfrei et al., 2022).



Spending time in nature is good for mental health! Youth who live in closer proximity to green spaces have better mental health outcomes (Mueller et al., 2023). Youth with more frequent exposure to woodlands have a lower risk of emotional and behavioural problems (Maes et al., 2021). School-based nature programs contribute to better cognitive functioning (Vella-Brodrick & Gilowska, 2022). On the YDI 2022 survey, 53% of youth suggested that spending time outdoors was a helpful coping strategy when faced with stress.

Action Idea: Include nature-based programming and provide opportunities to spend time outdoors within the school day.

References

Blodgett, J., Kaushal, A., & Harkness, F. (2022). *Rapid review of wellbeing evaluation research using the Warkwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scales*. What Works Centre for Wellbeing.

https://whatworkswellbeing.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/WEMWBS_Rapid_Review_final.pdf

Canadian Paediatric Society. (2023). *Strategic Priorities: Child and Youth Mental Health*.

<https://cps.ca/en/strategic-priorities/child-and-youth-mental-health>

Helland, S. S., Mellblom, A. V., Kjøbli, J., Wentzel-Larsen, T., Espenes, K., Engell, T., & Kirkøen, B. (2022). Elements in mental health interventions associated with effects on emotion regulation in adolescents: a meta-analysis.

Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research, 49(6), 1004-1018.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-022-01213-2>

Kincade, L., Cook, C., & Goerdt, A. (2020). Meta-analysis and common practice elements of universal approaches to improving student-teacher relationships. *Review of Educational Research*, 90(5), 710-748.

<https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654320946836>

Laurenzi, C. A., Mamutse, S., Marlow, M., Mawoyo, T., Stansert Katzen, L., Carvajal-Velez, L., Lai, J., Luitel, N., Servili, C., Sinha, M., & Skeen, S. (2023). Critical life course interventions for children and adolescents to promote mental health. *Cambridge Prisms: Global Mental Health*, 10, e4.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/gmh.2022.58>

Maes, M. J. A., Pirani, M., Booth, E. R., Shen, C., Milligan, B., Jones, K. E. & Toledano, M. B. (2021). Benefit of woodland and other natural environments for adolescents' cognition and mental health. *Nature Sustainability*, 4, 851-858.

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41893-021-00751-1>

Mental Health Commission of Canada. *What we do: Children and Youth*.

<https://mentalhealthcommission.ca/what-we-do/children-and-youth/>

Mueller, M. A. E., Midouhas, E., & Flouri, E. (2023). Types of greenspace and adolescent mental health and well-being in metropolitan London. *Cities & Health*, 1-20.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/23748834.2023.2175410>

National Institutes of Health: Health Information. *Emotional Wellness Toolkit*. <https://www.nih.gov/health-information/emotional-wellness-toolkit>

Samji, H., Wu, J., Ladak, A., Vossen, C., Stewart, E., Dove, N., Long, D., & Snell, G. (2022). Review: Mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and youth – a systematic review. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, 27(2), 173–189.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/camh.12501>

Schäfer, J. Ö., Naumann, E., Holmes, E. A., Tuschen-Caffier, B., & Samson, A. C. (2017). Emotion regulation strategies in depressive and anxiety symptoms in youth: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 46(2), 261–276.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-016-0585-0>

Silvers, J. A. (2022). Adolescence as a pivotal period for emotion regulation development. *Current opinion in psychology*, 44, 258-263.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2021.09.023>

Sorgenfrei, M., Gross, J., Smith, J., Liverpool, S., Motiani, S., Mulcahy, J. & Clarke, A. (2022). *Classroom wellbeing toolkit*. Anna Freud Centre & Early Intervention Foundation 2022.

<https://www.annafreud.org/media/17009/classroom-wellbeing-toolkit.pdf>

Vella-Brodrick, D. A., & Gilowska, K. (2022). Effects of nature (greenspace) on cognitive functioning in school children and adolescents: A systematic Review. *Educational Psychology Review*, 34(3), 1217–1254.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-022-09658-5>

Suggested Citation: Maloney, J., Herring, J., Maluf, G., Blake, J., Goossen, R., Whitehead, J., Long, D., Low, B., Samji, H. (2023). Youth Development Instrument mental health quick sheet. Simon Fraser University. <https://chartlab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/YDI-2023-Mental-Health-Quick-Sheet.pdf>