

## Feeling stressed about Back to School? Keep these tips in mind

Back-to-School season can be a stressful time for youth and their families, but Canadian Mental Health Association of York Region and South Simcoe (CMHA-YRSS) has shared some tips on how to cope with the stress and anxiety.

First and foremost, according to CMHA-YRSS' Kylee Goldman, Director of Services ? Youth, Innovation, and Interprofessional Practice, is to tell somebody what you're feeling.

?Tell somebody and talk about it. Don't keep yourself hidden. Don't feel like you can't go out and share this. Find somebody you trust ? a parent, a family member, a friend, a teacher, a professional, and share it,? says Goldman. ?The more we start talking about it, the more it helps to normalize the experiences for us. The more we might hear from others on what they have experienced in their life it will help to normalize that we're not alone in this.?

Another key tip is to think about what Goldman describes as ?our own self-talk,? which can often be negative.

?We get to thinking the worst-case scenarios, we maybe don't like something about ourselves and then it spirals into more, and then we start to feel really badly about ourselves. We feel really sad and struggling to manage and to engage in our daily life. One of the important things we can do anytime, anywhere is to really think about the words we're telling ourselves in our heads. If we're telling ourselves that things are negative, things that don't make us feel good about ourselves, it's something we can do to start training our brains to replace those negative thinking patterns with more positive thoughts.?

Another tip, as simple as it may sounds, is breathing, adds Goldman.

?A lot of people have been learning and practicing mindfulness skills and the basics of mindfulness is to start with the breathing and focus just on yourself, where you are in the moment, and feeling what your body is feeling in that moment. Just take deep breaths in and out, taking a moment to pause everything else around you, and just be present in yourself and your body to really help re-ground us.

?Experiencing mental health challenges is normal and it's okay and, in fact, it is healthy to experience it because it helps them to build healthy coping skills so as they navigate the rest of their life, they're really going to be equipped with great tools to be able to keep themselves well.?

**By Brock Weir**