



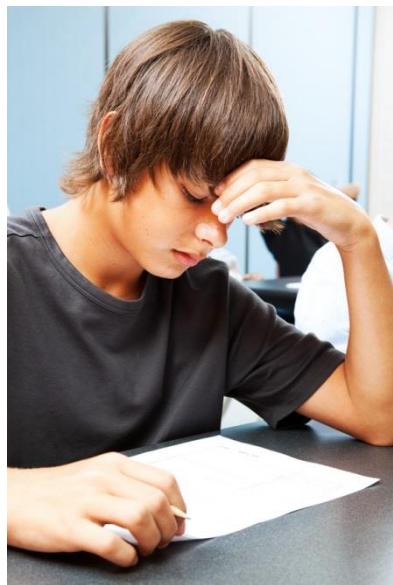
# PCC Celebrates Children's Mental Health Week 2014

May 4–10, 2014 was Children's Mental Health Week, a national annual campaign that aims to increase awareness of the signs of child and youth mental health challenges, and promote understanding that help is available and treatment works. Over the course of the week, Peel Children's Centre participated in a number of initiatives to help raise awareness about child and youth mental health in our community, including attending school and community mental health fairs and participating in a Twitter chat hosted by Children's Mental Health Ontario and the Canadian Mental Health Association (Ontario chapter).



We also used Facebook and Twitter as platforms for sharing information about common child and youth mental health challenges, including anxiety disorders, depression and behavioural challenges. Read on to learn about how you can identify the signs of a mental health challenge in your child or young person, as well as the treatment options that are available.

## How does anxiety affect children?



Imagine yourself standing backstage at a concert. On the other side of the curtain is a full-house of strangers, waiting for the show to begin - your show. You wait quietly in the wings, your hands clammy with sweat, your heart pounding in your chest and your stomach humming like you just swallowed the entire Niagara Parks Butterfly Conservatory whole. You're nervous because you're about to perform for an audience of thousands, but you know your songs by heart and you know that once the music starts, the sweating, heart pounding and stomach fluttering will cease and you'll be able to enjoy yourself.

In the situation we've just described, feeling a little nervous is normal. But imagine you are a child who experiences those exact same physical feelings every morning before school, or when the teacher calls for volunteers to solve a math problem on the board, or when your mom asks you to take the dog to the park for an hour. Feeling excessively worried or uneasy about any of these everyday situations could indicate that you're suffering from an Anxiety Disorder.



An Anxiety Disorder is defined by Children's Mental Health Ontario as "when the level of anxiety is great enough to interfere with every day activities." Some Anxiety Disorders are a response to social situations, such as attending school or meeting new people, while others present as a constant feeling of worrying that something bad or embarrassing is going to happen.

Children and youth who experience anxiety may feel tense, sweat or blush uncontrollably, and in some cases the feelings are so overwhelming they feel like they're having a heart attack. You may notice your child repeating behaviours, like hand-washing and touching doorknobs. This can also be a sign that your child is dealing with anxiety.

Six percent of children have an Anxiety Disorder that is serious enough to require treatment, but the good news is that with treatment, anxiety can get better. Some options for treatment include medication to help regulate chemicals in the brain, supportive counselling, and education. By learning to identify what causes him/her to worry or feel distressed, your child can develop strategies to calm himself/herself down when he/she starts to feel anxious.

## What are the signs of depression in children & youth?

When you hear the word "depression", what comes to mind? Perhaps you can recall a period in your life when you found it difficult to get out of bed in the morning, or when you had a hard time focusing on tasks at work. Or maybe you remember feeling tired, alone and sad all the time for no obvious reason. These are all symptoms of depression in adults, but did you know that children and youth can experience depression, too?

Symptoms of depression appear differently in children and adolescents than they do in adults. For example, very young children lack the knowledge to clearly explain their feelings, so they may complain of physical symptoms like a headache, stomach ache or other aches and pains. Older children and teens will exhibit moodiness and behaviours like not paying attention in class and fighting with their parents. When these behaviours are accompanied by persistent crying or feelings of sadness, it's a sign that your teen is experiencing depression. If you notice your child is no longer interested in his or her favourite activities, avoiding spending time with friends, or eating or sleeping more or less than usual, it could be another sign he or she is suffering from depression.



There are many causes of depression, including family history and life events, such as the death of a friend or family member. As your child grows, changes in his or her body and brain chemistry can also cause depression. The good news is that with appropriate treatment, recovery from depression is possible.



Depending on your child's needs, treatment may include counselling, medication and/or support groups. Self-care is another important part of treating depression. Encouraging your child or teen to eat well, exercise and have fun with friends and family can help support their recovery.

## When is challenging behaviour a sign of something serious?

Challenging behaviour is a common issue that many parents face. It's normal for a child to struggle with managing their behaviour, such as when they're stressed, hungry or tired. Irritability and tantrums are ways for younger children to let you know that they don't feel well or are frustrated. But what if your child frequently hits others, lies or steals despite your best efforts to help them stop?

There are many factors that can contribute to a child struggling to manage their behaviour, either for a short or ongoing period of time. Sometimes a child may feel frustrated, angry or sad because they have difficulty understanding and communicating with others, or they may act impulsively without thinking or because they're anxious or depressed. For older children, bullying, deliberately annoying or hurting others, breaking things, lying and frequent tantrums are some of the signs that your child may need help.

Counselling and social skills training can help a child learn how to understand, manage and control his or her thoughts and behaviour. Programs that involve the entire family are often the most effective at helping a child and his or her family to address and manage behaviour. As a parent, you are in the best position to know, understand and support your child.



## Treatment works and help is available!

If you are concerned that your child or teenager may be suffering from a mental health challenge such as anxiety, depression or a behavioural challenge, there is help available. With appropriate treatment, your child can learn how to cope and the impact of a mental health challenge on his or her daily life can be significantly reduced.

Peel Children's Centre offers a range of programs and services that can help your child or youth learn to cope with their anxiety, depression or behavioural challenges. To access these services, call Mental Health Services for Children and Youth at 905-451-4655 to begin the intake process.



Free walk-in counselling is also available throughout the week in Peel Region - learn more by visiting <http://tangerinewalkin.com>.

In a crisis, you can call our Crisis Response Line at 416-410-8615 - this service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days year.



## Thank you for supporting Child & Youth Mental Health!

Mental health is not just the absence of mental illness. It's a balanced state of well-being in all aspects of life: social, physical, spiritual, economic and mental. Mental health enables us to form loving relationships, feel and express a range of emotions, and regulate our behaviour. It empowers us to develop our strengths, learn from our mistakes, solve problems, cope with stress, bounce back from hard times, and feel optimistic about the future.

Mental health challenges are struggles with feelings, relationships or behaviour that have a significant, negative impact on a person's daily functioning at home, at school, at work or in the community.

1 in 5 young people will have a mental health challenge. With your support, Peel Children's Centre continues to provide help to the children, youth and families in Peel Region in need of mental health support. Thank you!