

Being Mentally Healthy

Why It's Important for You and Your Teen



The terms mental health and mental illness are often used to mean the same thing, but in reality, they are different. Everyone has mental health; not everyone has a mental illness like depression. Having good mental health helps us manage our emotions, care about others and cope with problems. It's important for teens and adults alike.

The importance of learning the social and emotional skills that help keep us mentally healthy are sometimes overlooked at school because of the emphasis on academic success. However, research shows a strong link between having social and emotional skills, being resilient and having school success. Teens who have developed social and emotional skills find it easier to manage themselves, relate to others, resolve conflict, do better in school and feel positive

about themselves and the world around them. Family life is our first "classroom" for social and emotional learning.

As a parent, you can be a strong positive influence on your teen's social and emotional growth and you can reflect and build on your own skills, helping you and your child in the process. Here are 5 areas you and your teen can learn more about and work to improve.

Self awareness: Know your emotions and recognize their impact on your behaviour.

Self-management: Know how to control your emotions and behaviours in challenging times and how to set and work towards goals.

Social awareness: Understand, respect and have empathy for all people and their perspectives.

Relationship skills: Know how to establish healthy relationships with others by communicating clearly, listening, cooperating, managing conflict, resisting peer pressure and seeking and offering help.

Responsible decision making: Understand how your choices impact you and others.

Adapted from www.parenttoolkit.com and www.casel.org

Electronic Cigarettes

What are e-cigarettes?

Electronic cigarettes, also known as e-cigarettes, are battery-operated devices that have cartridges with liquid chemicals in them. These liquid mixtures are commonly known as e-liquid, or e-juice. Many e-cigarettes look like regular cigarettes, and they come in reusable and disposable varieties. Heat from a battery powered vapourizer turns the liquid chemicals from the cartridge into a vapour that the user inhales. This is called vaping.

What is in e-liquid?

It is hard to know what is in e-liquid because there are no standards or labelling requirements for e-cigarettes. This makes it hard to know exactly what is in the liquid. Common contents can include a mix of water and propylene glycol, a man made product used in anti-freeze and theatre fog. You can also get e-liquid with, or without nicotine. Many e-cigarettes also have flavoured chemicals added (like chocolate or strawberry) that give the vapour a flavour. The flavoured e-liquid may be the first entry to smoking which could eventually lead to smoking cigarettes.

Are they safe?

Although e-cigarettes are promoted as being safe, they haven't been tested to see if they are safe. Because chemicals in the cartridges vary, it is important to know what e-cigarette users and the people around them are breathing in. To sell their product, producers of e-cigarettes describe the vapour as water vapour. However, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration found cancer-causing chemicals in some of the cartridges.

Health Canada warns that e-cigarettes may cause nicotine poisoning and addiction, and remind people to keep the products away from children to prevent nicotine poisoning and choking.

Alberta Health Services recommends talking to your teen about e-cigarettes and other tobacco-like products about the harm they can cause to their health and those around them.