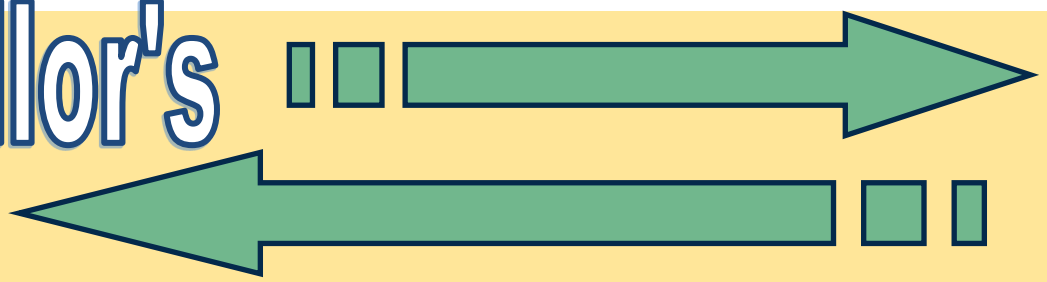


Counsellor's Corner



Hi there!

Happy Mental Health Awareness Month!! Miss. S here with this month's mental and emotional health information for you and your family during this unique time of COVID-19.

While a lot of things are different, one thing remains the same for our basic human needs that has become more difficult to gain while we are cooped up in our homes... and that is connection!

Social connection can lower anxiety and depression, help us regulate our emotions, lead to higher self-esteem and empathy, and actually improve our immune systems. By neglecting our need to connect, we put our health at risk (<https://cmha.ca/blogs/the-importance-of-human-connection>)

We may have a few people in our home to connect with, but often we forget about how to connect on a deeper level with these people because we are navigating a new normal. We may also be forgetting that and we need to connect with the people we would normally connect with outside of our home. Previous to COVID-19, when big things happened we would reach out for emotional support to our figurative "village" or support systems in our lives. However, with physical distancing of coronavirus this doesn't allow us to access such support and contact in the same way. We can't give or receive a hug and we miss being in the presence of our extended loved ones and friends. Many of us may feel more alone than ever.

To help, I am going to give you some ideas to create your own *Quarantine Connection Kit*

⇒ Connection Re-boot with family members

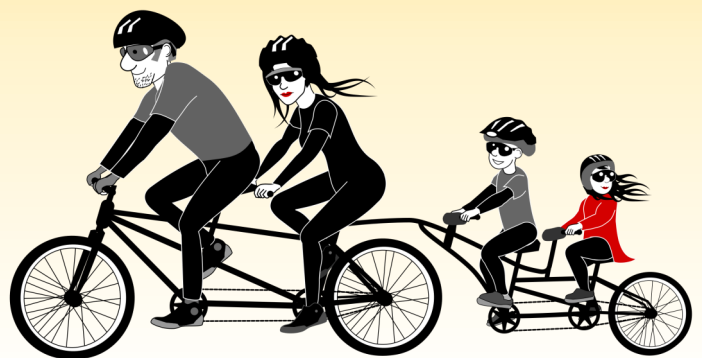
Communication is at the root of developing deep and healthy connections! Being a good communicator isn't simply about choosing the right words. It's actually about being a good listener and learning how to ask questions while giving others a safe place to be heard, seen, and known. Children who feel their parents are engaged listeners develop a positive sense of self and trust their parents more.

Family Meetings. Hold family meetings at a time when everyone is well-rested and relaxed. Use these meetings to establish family rules and routines. Let everyone get an equal share of the talking time. Be sure to process conflicts, acknowledge progress, and set shared goals! Try and start each meeting with a round of gratitude before you delved into the tough stuff.

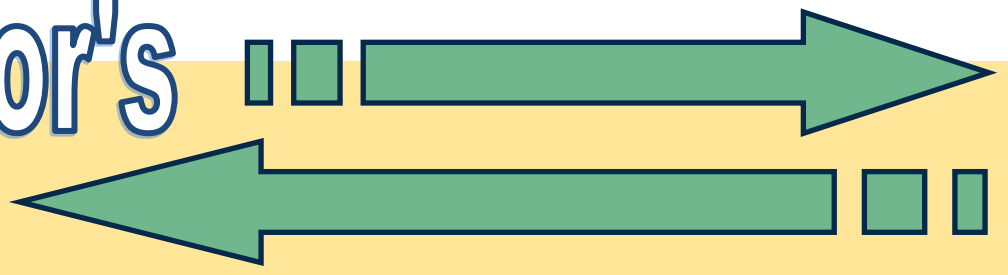
#Healthy Family Activities. Step away from technology, house work and academic concerns. Every family needs healthy activities that they enjoy together. Consider the following five kinds of healthy family activities:

- Physical activities, such as bike riding or family walk.
- Creative activities, such as making art or googling places with historical art and galleries.
- Intellectual activities, such as finding a video or movie to learn from online, play, or reading a novel together.

Spiritual activities, such as tuning into your local religious gatherings over live streaming or practicing prayerfulness and meditation.



Counselor's Corner



⇒ Create family traditions!

Studies show family traditions are the basis in creating family culture – you are nurturing bonds between siblings and parents, developing a sense of belonging and helping to create a memorable childhood. A [review in the December issues of American Psychological Association's \(APA\) Journal of Family Psychology](#) found that “family routines and rituals are alive and well and are associated with marital satisfaction, adolescents’ sense of personal identity, children’s health, academic achievement and stronger family relationships.” (<https://rockitmama.com/the-importance-of-family-traditions-and-ones-you-can-start-today/>)

Traditions can be any simple daily, weekly, or seasonal activities your family can come to expect and look forward to. Simple tasks like a bedtime routine we stick to each night, having breakfast for dinner or Taco Tuesday. Every month, having a movie night stay up late and have popcorn. And of course seasonal items like driving around to see Christmas lights, and decorating cookies!

And what better time to start adding new rituals than now?!

⇒ Reach out!

Don't forget, keeping in touch with your “village” for support and to be of support to them, is going to be good for everyone’s mental and emotional health – even if touching base with them means you have a phone call or a physically distant chat from your car!

Reach out to an old friend you’ve lost touch with

Make time to call friends; reconnect with old high school or college buddies. Now's also a good time to check on elderly neighbors and offer to help them out with shopping, etc.

We are all in this together, so I hope this provided some ideas on how to stay connected to our family and friends during these tough times! As always – please don't hesitate to be in contact with me if you have any questions, or would like to connect J

Miss. S

