

Understanding and  
Managing Your Mental Health:

# Resources for Youth

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CANADIAN CENTRE  
FOR VICTIMS OF TORTURE

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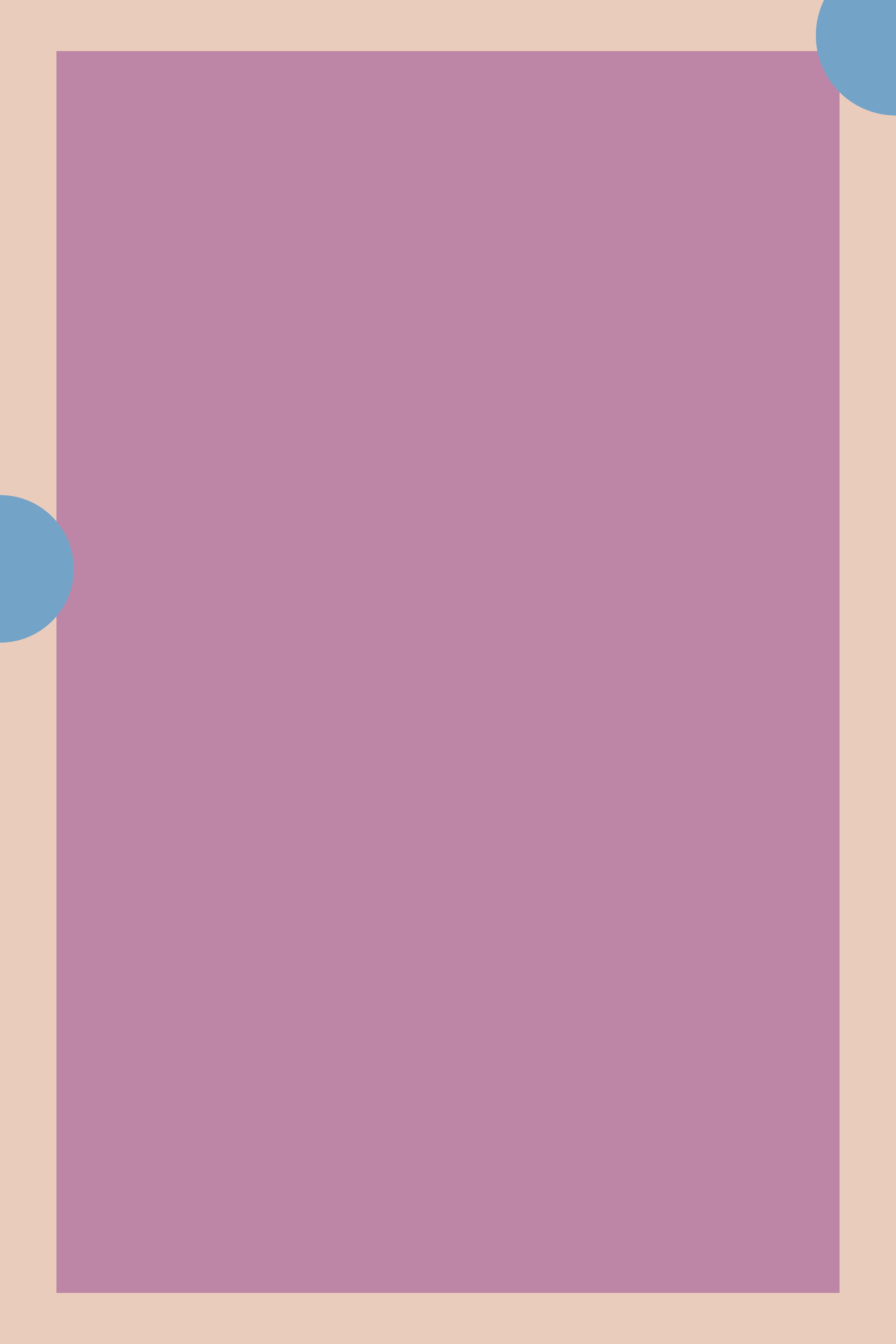
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# Table Of Contents

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Mission Statement	5
Land Acknowledgement	6
Introduction Letter	7
CCVT Disclaimer	8
Understanding Trauma	9
Symptoms of Trauma	10
Trauma Symptoms Throughout Life Stages	11-12
Trauma Effects on the Brain	13
Trauma Related Mental Health Disorders	14
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder	15
Acute Stress Disorder	16
Secondhand Trauma	16
Adjustment Disorders	17
Attachment Disorders	18
Reactive Attachment Disorder	19
Disinhibited Social Engagement Disorder	20



# ***Table Of Contents***

---

<b>Depression &amp; PTSD</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Depression</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Anxiety Disorder</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>PTSD Treatment Options: CBT</b>	<b>22-23</b>
<b>PTSD Treatment Options: CPT</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Coping Strategies</b>	<b>25-28</b>
<b>Journaling for Mental Health</b>	<b>29-30</b>
<b>Facing Your Fears: Fear Ladder</b>	<b>31-34</b>
<b>Sleep Diary</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Suicide Prevention</b>	<b>36-37</b>
<b>Mental Health Resources</b>	<b>38-46</b>
<b>Settlement Resources</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Acknowledgement</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>About the Author</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>CCVT Services</b>	<b>50-51</b>





# Mission Statement

**The Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) aids survivors of torture, war, genocide and crimes against humanity to overcome the lasting effects of torture and war. Working with the community, the Centre supports survivors in the process of successful integration into Canadian society, works for their protection and integrity, and raises awareness of the continuing effects of torture and war on survivors and their families. The CCVT gives hope after the horror.**

# Land Acknowledgment

**With gratitude, I begin by acknowledging that the land I am on is the traditional territory of many First Nations including the Mississauga's of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We are their guests and need to be better guests in solidarity with their struggles and the ongoing injustices they suffer. First Nations history of the residential school system, cultural genocide and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls give rise to similar health issues which we at CCVT deal with regarding the impact of genocide, torture, rape as an instrument of war and sex trafficking. CCVT stands in solidarity with indigenous people and communities and we have much to learn from their lived experiences.**

**I would also like to acknowledge that we are all treaty peoples including those of us who came here as settlers as migrants either in this generation or in generations past; and those of us who came here involuntarily as refugees and as a result of the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade. We honour the original intent of Two Row Wampum and are committed to foster respectful relations with Indigenous communities as we pursue the Truth and Reconciliation efforts.**

# Introduction Letter

**In a constantly evolving world, the mental health of young people is more critical than ever. Adolescence and early adulthood are times of immense change, marked by physical, emotional, and social developments, often accompanied by mental health challenges.**

**Our colleague Helen Asihk has written a book to help understand and support children and youth. This initiative explores youth mental health, highlighting factors like academic pressures, social media, identity, and self-esteem struggles.**

**The book is for parents, educators, mental health professionals, and young people, offering valuable information and practical guidance. By sharing research, personal stories, and actionable strategies, it aims to empower readers with the knowledge and tools to promote mental well-being.**

**We will explore youth mental health, early intervention, family and community support, and societal impacts. Effective treatment and prevention approaches will be highlighted, focusing on resilience, coping skills, and holistic well-being.**

**Our goal is to foster understanding and empathy for young people's mental health struggles. Youth mental health is a collective responsibility. Together, we can ensure young people feel seen, heard, and supported, prioritizing their mental health as vital to their development and success.**

**Mulugeta Abai  
Executive Director**



# CCVT Disclaimer

**The Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) has developed this mental health guidebook to provide educational resources and support to our children & youth clients. Our guidebook entails resources in understanding trauma, mental health disorders and effective coping strategies. Our goal is to help empower our youth in navigating their mental health with knowledge and resilience.**

**CCVT aids survivors of torture, war, genocide and crimes against humanity to overcome the lasting effects of torture and war. Working with the community, the centre supports survivors in the process of successful integration into Canadian society, works for their protection and integrity, and raises awareness for the continuing effects of torture and war on survivors and their families. The CCVT gives hope after the horror.**

**Disclaimer: the information in this guidebook is for informational purposes only and should not be used in place of medical advice. Please seek professional help if you are experiencing any of symptoms discussed.**

# Understanding Trauma

Trauma is the psychological response that comes from experiencing an event that is distressing or frightful.



Traumatic events can be hard to define because each person experiences things differently. What might be really scary for one person, may not be as bad for someone else.

Trauma can happen in many different forms. It can be one single event or on-going for a long period of time.

Many different things can cause trauma such as abuse as a kid, being a victim of torture/war, a car accident, a sudden loss, and much more.





# Symptoms of Trauma

**Trauma can change the way a person develops emotionally and psychologically. This is because experiencing a traumatic event can disrupt your emotions, memory, consciousness and sense of self.**



**Trauma can also affect your relationships and attachment to others. It can sometimes change the way your body and brain work. Often people with trauma blame themselves for what has happened.**

**Some populations are more vulnerable than others, putting them at a higher risk for trauma.**

**This population includes:**

- **children/youth**
- **older adults**
- **first responders**
- **youth experiencing house insecurity**
- **LGBTQ2s+ individuals**
- **people with intellectual/developmental disabilities**
- **people with financial stress**

# Trauma Symptoms Throughout Life Stages

## Pre-school Children:

- fear being separated from their parent/caregiver
- cry or scream a lot
- eat poorly or lose weight
- have nightmares



## Elementary School Children:

- become anxious or fearful
- feel guilt or shame
- have a hard time concentrating
- have difficulty sleeping

## Middle & High School Children:

- feel depressed or alone
- develop eating disorders or self-harming behaviours
- begin abusing alcohol or drugs
- become involved in risky sexual behaviour



# Trauma Symptoms Throughout Life Stages Cont.

## Adulthood:

- **flashbacks to traumatic event(s)**
- **panic attacks**
- **feeling numb & detached from your body**
- **trouble sleeping and/or nightmares**
- **suicidal thoughts**
- **drugs or alcohol abuse**



## Effects of Trauma on Daily Life for Youth:

- **neglecting self-care**
- **can not hold down a job**
- **not able to trust others**
- **difficulty maintaining relationships**
- **difficulty remembering things/ making decisions**
- **effects on sex life**





# Trauma Effects on the Brain



**The prefrontal cortex is the part of the brain responsible for decision-making/choice-making. When a person experiences trauma, their “fear circuitry” may kick in and their prefrontal cortex begins to function less effectively. This means during a traumatic experience, a person may not be able to think through the situation and make decision such as calling for help. This is not a matter of choice and their brain is in survival mode.**

**Trauma not only affects the pre-frontal cortex but the amygdala and hippocampus as well. The amygdala is your emotional centre and the hippocampus controls memory.**

**When you’re reminded of a traumatic experience, your amygdala goes into overdrive. This causes you to feel as if you were experiencing the trauma for the first time. This causes you to be less capable of controlling your fear. Your hippocampus also becomes reduced and your brain cannot tell the difference between the actual traumatic event and the memory of it.**

# Trauma-Related Mental Health Disorders

**Sometimes when people experience a traumatic event, it can lead to developing a trauma disorder. There are 7 trauma disorders: PTSD, ASD, secondhand trauma, RAD, DSED, adjustment disorder, and other/unspecified trauma disorder.**

**Experiencing a traumatic event may also cause you to develop other conditions such as anxiety disorders, substance use disorders, depressive disorders, personality and dissociative disorders.**

**The next few pages will go over different trauma disorders. The pages will highlight the definition of the disorder and symptoms associated with the disorder.**



# Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

**Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) occurs in people who have experienced trauma. PTSD is a treatable stress disorder and many people with PTSD are able to successfully manage their symptoms after receiving effective treatment.**

## **Symptoms include:**

- **intrusive thoughts about event, including nightmares & flashbacks**
- **avoidance of anything that reminds you of trauma**
- **withdrawal from loved ones**
- **engaging in reckless or self-destructive behaviours**
- **suicidal thoughts**
- **negative beliefs about yourself**
- **panic attacks**

## **Ways to Manage your Symptoms**

- **learn about PTSD to better understand your symptoms**
- **exercising / meditation**
- **journaling**
- **attending a support group**
- **having a strong network of loved ones**
- **reducing negative coping mechanisms such as misusing drugs and alcohol**

# Acute Stress Disorder (ASD)

**Acute stress disorder is similar to PTSD but the symptoms are shorter in duration. ASD symptoms often develop immediately after a traumatic event and last three days to one month. If the symptoms last longer than a month, the individual may have developed PTSD.**

## Secondhand Trauma

**Secondhand trauma or secondary traumatic stress disorder results from exposure to the firsthand trauma of other people.**

**Secondhand trauma can happen to anyone but it is commonly seen in professionals who work with trauma victims such as counselors, social workers, doctors, nurses etc.,**

### **Symptoms of secondhand trauma:**

- **feels like you can never do enough to help**
- **a sense of hopelessness or helplessness**
- **guilt / fear**
- **anger**
- **chronic fatigue**
- **negativity/cynicism**

# Adjustment Disorders

**Adjustment disorders are often temporary. They are triggered by stressful life events such as divorce, job loss, losing a loved one or being diagnosed with an illness. Some people are able to cope with the stress of these situations on their own, but others may need help from a doctor or mental health professional.**

**Symptoms of adjustment disorder may include:**

- frequent sadness or hopelessness
- crying often
- withdrawal from family & friends
- lack of appetite
- having trouble focusing
- difficulty functioning in daily life
- insomnia
- not enjoying your favourite activities
- suicidal thoughts or behaviours





# Attachment Disorders

**Attachment disorders are commonly used to describe conditions that cause children to have difficulty forming emotional attachments with others. Attachment disorders can either include a lack of emotional responses or overly emotional attachment.**

**These conditions may cause someone to have a hard time connecting and forming meaningful relationships with others. The cause of attachment disorders can vary, many believe it is the result of inadequate caregiving such as experiencing physical/emotional abuse, neglect or experiencing a traumatic loss.**

**There are two types of attachment disorders: reactive attachment disorder (RAD) and disinhibited social engagement disorder (DSED).**



# Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD)

**Reactive attachment disorder occurs in children who have difficulty forming stable attachments to their caregivers. This can occur if the child's basic needs are not met or if they are frequently placed with new caregivers. Children with RAD often don't look for or respond to comfort even when they are upset. Due to negative experiences with adults in their early life, they may experience difficulty expressing emotions and forming relationships with others.**

**RAD can also affect a child's life into adulthood, however, treatment can help and is effective. Children with RAD may be at an increased risk of developing hyperactivity, anxiety, and depression.**

## **Symptoms of RAD:**

- emotional withdrawal of inhibition**
- lack of response to comfort from caregivers**
- impaired emotional response to caregivers**
- limited ability to experience positive emotions**
- episodes of irritability, sadness or fearfulness, often without cause**

# Disinhibited Social Engagement Disorder (DSED)

**Disinhibited Social Engagement Disorder is often known to be the opposite of RAD. Children with DSED, are usually overly friendly with unknown adults. They often wander off, approach strangers with no hesitation, and hug or touch unknown adults.**

## Depression & PTSD

**It is possible that people can have both PTSD and depression simultaneously. Because their symptoms are similar, they are frequently confused for one another. Research suggests that people with PTSD are more likely to have depression and experience anxiety.**

**PTSD and depression can share these symptoms:**

- **trouble sleeping or sleeping too much**
- **emotional outbursts, including anger or aggression**
- **loss of interest in activities**



# Depression

**Depression is a chronic mood disorder that is more than just a day of sadness and lasts longer.**

## **Symptoms of depression:**

- **feeling sad or hopeless**
- **having a difficult time focusing & making decisions**
- **experiencing feelings of worthlessness**
- **getting no pleasure from activities that were once enjoyable**
- **contemplating suicide or thinking about death frequently**

# Anxiety Disorder

**Many people experience anxiety throughout their lives. It is a normal response to stressful life events (moving, new job, getting married). However, when anxiety symptoms begin to interfere with your daily life, this could be signs of anxiety disorder.**

## **Symptoms of anxiety disorder:**

- **excessive worrying**
- **feeling agitated (racing pulse, sweaty/shaky hands)**
- **restlessness (feeling “on edge”)**
- **fatigue**
- **difficulty concentrating / irritability**
- **panic attacks**

# **PTSD Treatment Options**

## **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)**

**CBT is a structured, time-limited, problem-focused and goal oriented form of psychotherapy. CBT helps individuals learn how to identify, question, and change how their thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs relate to emotional and behavioural reactions that may cause them difficulty.**

**CBT works effectively by focusing on the here-and-now - the problems that occur in day-to-day life. CBT is effective because it helps individuals examine how they make sense of what is happening around them and how these perceptions affect the way they feel.**

### **CBT Key Factors**

- sessions are structured**
- time-limited (often 6-20 sessions)**
- problem-focused & goal-oriented**
- teaches strategies & skills**
- based on a proactive, shared therapeutic relationship between therapist & client**

**Learn more about CBT from Dr.Zindel Segal at CAMH, discussing how CBT works, and client testimonies: [click here](#)**

# PTSD Treatment Options

## How does CBT Work?

CBT works by having the client monitor and record their thoughts during upsetting situations. This helps the client learn how they can contribute to emotional problems such as depression and anxiety.

### Benefits of CBT Therapy

- emphasizes building coping skills necessary to improve functioning such as:
  - ability to regulate emotions
  - tolerate distress
  - solve day-to-day problems
- helps clients see thoughts as ideas, rather than facts
- identify distortions in their thinking

Additional information about CBT:  
[click here](#)

# **PTSD Treatment Options**

## **Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)**

**Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) is similar to CBT and is another form of psychotherapy. CPT is often 12-sessions of psychotherapy to treat PTSD. It teaches clients how to evaluate and change the distressing thoughts they may have developed since their trauma. By changing their thoughts, they can change how they feel, and handle upsetting thoughts more effectively.**

### **What to Expect During Sessions?**

**The therapy sessions will begin with understanding what PTSD is, in order to better understand your symptoms. The following sessions will include writing about how your trauma has affected you. You will then begin to talk about any negative/unhelpful thoughts that you have been experiencing related to the trauma. Furthermore, you will work together with the therapist to learn alternative ways of thinking about the situation.**

**The therapist will assign you homework to help with this strategy. It may be difficult at first to share details of your trauma however, by the end of the sessions you will learn how to cope with emotions such as anger, sadness and guilt.**

# Coping Strategies

**It is important to remember that recovery from PTSD and trauma is a process and takes time. Recovery is an ongoing, daily process and it happens little by little. Below are some tips on how to deal with different situations and emotions.**

## **Practice Relaxation Methods**

- **muscle relaxation exercise**
- **breathing exercises**
- **meditation / prayer**
- **swimming / yoga**
- **listening to quiet music**
- **spending time in nature**

## **What to Do if You're Having Flashbacks**

- **keep your eyes open, look around & notice where you are**
- **talk to yourself - remind yourself where you are & that you are safe**
- **get up & move around, have some water & wash your hands**
- **call someone you trust & tell them what is happening**

## **Difficulty Falling/Staying Asleep**

- **keep a regular bedtime schedule**
- **avoid alcohol, tobacco & caffeine before bed**
- **do not lie in bed thinking or worrying - enjoy something soothing such as tea or a calm book**



# Coping Strategies Cont.

## **Dreams & Nightmares Related to Trauma**

- if you wake up in a panic, remind yourself you are reacting to a dream & there is no real danger right now
- you may want to get out of bed & regroup yourself
- engage in a calming activity
- talk to your doctor about your nightmares

## **Experiencing Irritability, Anger & Rage**

- walk away from the situation & take time to cool off
- get in the habit of exercising daily - it reduces body tension & stress
- remember that staying angry does not help - it increases stress & can cause health problems

## **Difficulty Concentrating/Staying Focused**

- slow down, give yourself time to focus on what you need to learn/do
- write things - make a "to do" list
- plan a realistic number of tasks for each day
- break tasks into small do-able chunks

# Calm Breathing Exercise

**Calm breathing is a technique that teaches you how to slow down your breathing when stressed or anxious. Practicing calm breathing can help lower your anxiety and give you a sense of control.**

## **Calm Breathing Technique**

- 1. take a slow breath in through the nose (for about 4 seconds)**
- 2. hold your breath for 1 or 2 seconds**
- 3. exhale slowly through the mouth (over about 4 seconds)**
- 4. wait 2-3 seconds before taking another breath**
- 5. repeat for at least 5 to 10 breaths**

**If you are having trouble effectively practicing calm breathing, you can try belly breathing**

## **Belly Breathing Technique**

- 1. inhale slowly for about 4 seconds through the nose**
- 2. pretend you are blowing up a balloon in the belly (belly should inflate when inhaling)**
- 3. wait 2 seconds & then slowly exhale through the mouth (pretending the balloon is deflating)**
- 4. wait 2 seconds, then repeat**

# 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Technique for Anxiety

Grounding techniques help you reconnect with your surroundings and divert your focus from distressing emotions/memories.

## When to Use Grounding?

- moments of heightened anxiety
- when feeling disconnected from your body
- when overwhelmed by memories or past trauma
- during a panic attack
- as part of your daily routine to wind-down

## Grounding Technique

1. first pay attention to your breathing, practice calm breathing
2. acknowledge **FIVE** things you see around you (i.e., a pen, a chair, the ground, a stain)
3. acknowledge **FOUR** things you can touch (i.e., a pillow, your hair)
4. acknowledge **THREE** things you can hear (i.e., your belly rumbling, the birds, the tv)
5. acknowledge **TWO** things you can smell (i.e., soap in the washroom, food)
6. acknowledge **ONE** thing you can taste (i.e., what does the inside of your mouth taste like - gum, coffee)



# Journaling for Mental Health

**Journaling is a common practice in psychotherapy. Research has shown that writing about stressful/traumatic events can significantly benefit an individual's mental and physical health. This is because journaling can help us accept, rather than judge our experiences. This allows for fewer negative emotions. Journaling can be used for depression, stress, anxiety, and personal reflection**

## **The Two Methods of Journaling**

**Expressive writing emphasizes the individual's innermost feelings and thoughts. With a focus on the emotional experience rather than the events. An individual may choose to write about how the event made them feel, or what they have been struggling with.**

**Gratitude journaling focuses on the positive aspects of life that occur in the day-to-day for which we are grateful for. This could be anything from someone holding the door open for you or getting a volunteer position.**

# Benefits of Journaling

**Research has shown that writing down our feelings and thoughts on paper promotes acceptance of negative emotions.**

## **Benefits of Journaling for Mental Health**

- **can reduce symptoms of depression**
- **helps achieve short-term goals**
- **reduces the risks of burnout**
- **an outlet for emotional release of conflicts through writing about negative feelings**
- **improves awareness & perception of events**
- **helps regulate emotions**
- **can break the cycle of nonstop obsessive thinking**
- **can help speed up physical healing**



# Facing Your Fears: Fear Ladder

A common exercise done to manage anxiety involves facing feared situations, places, or objects. It is normal to want to avoid the things you fear however, this can prevent you from learning that the things you fear are not as dangerous as you think.

The fear ladder exercise uses the process of facing your fears (exposure). Gradually and repeated you go into feared situations until you feel less anxious.

## Fear Ladder Exercise

### 1. Make a list

- make a list of situations, places or objects you fear. Example: if you are scared of dogs, some items on your list might include: looking at pictures of dogs, standing across the park from a dog, standing in the same room, petting a dog

### 2. Build your Fear Ladder

- once you have completed your list, arrange the items from least scary to most scary

# Facing Your Fears: Fear Ladder Cont.

## **3. Facing your Fears (exposure)**

- **begin with the situation that causes the least anxiety & repeatedly engage in that activity (e.g., saying hi to the bus driver every day)**

## **4. Practice**

- **it's important to practice on a regular basis. The more you practice, the faster the fear will fade. It's important to remember you will experience anxiety when facing your fears - this is normal**

## **5. Reward Brave Behaviour**

- **it's not easy to face your fears therefore, reward yourself when you do! It might be helpful to use rewards such as motivation to achieve a goal. For example, plan to engage in a fun activity (going to the movies) or purchasing a specific gift for yourself (a book, a new outfit) after you reach a goal. And most importantly, do not forget the power of positive self-talk (e.g., "I can do it!" or "I did it!")**

**The next two pages will contain an example of the fear ladder exercise and a blank copy to use.**

# Fear Ladder Example

**Fear ladder for social anxiety. The goal is to be able to interact socially with co-workers**

Step	Situation	Fear Rating
10	Attend a staff party	10
9	Share personal information about self with a co-worker	10
8	Go out for lunch with a group of co-workers	9
7	Ask a co-worker to go for coffee after work	7
6	Eat lunch in staff room & make small talk with co-workers	7
5	Eat Lunch in staff room	6
4	Sit in the staff room during coffee break	5
3	Ask a co-worker how their weekend was	4
2	Ask a co-worker a question about a task	3
1	Say “hi” to a co-worker	2

# Fear Ladder Template

**Goal:**

Step	Situation	Fear Rating
10		
9		
8		
7		
6		
5		
4		
3		
2		
1		



# Sleep Diary

If you are having trouble with sleeping, using a sleep diary will help you keep track of your sleeping habits. Having issues with your sleep can be caused due to depression, PTSD, anxiety and other mental health disorders.

Keeping track of your sleep patterns can help you identify the core issue. Not only that, it will also help your doctor identify how to help you best. Below are some key factors that will help you sleep better.

## Key Factors to Regulating Your Sleep

- keep a regular bedtime schedule
- avoid alcohol, tobacco & caffeine before bed
- do not lie in bed thinking or worrying - enjoy something soothing such as tea or a calm book
- avoid heavy exercise a few hours before going to bed

Click here for a sleep diary template with examples: [click here](#)



# **Suicide Prevention**

## **How to Stay Safe**

**Having a mental health crisis can look different for everyone. Part of a mental health crisis can be thinking about harming yourself or ending your life. Whatever you may be experiencing, you deserve help.**

**Sometimes experiencing trauma can cause you to no longer feel like living. Some people may have thoughts of wanting to end their life (suicidal ideation) without having a plan to do so. While others may be planning to end their life (suicidal intent). If you have experienced these thoughts, it is important to reach out for help, even though it may feel hard to do so. You can seek help from a trusted family member, a friend, or a mental health service provider. Helpline resources will be listed on page 37.**

**If you require immediate, in-person emergency care, please call 911 or go to your nearest emergency department.**

**Sometimes experiencing a crisis can cause a lot of difficult feelings all at once. This may include feeling overwhelmed, low, or suicidal. The next page will outline self-care tips for each of these feelings.**



# **Suicide Prevention**

## **How to Stay Safe Cont.**

**Sometimes a mental health crisis can cause overwhelming feelings. Overwhelming feelings can include sadness, anger, shame, anxiety, guilt, hopelessness or a lot of different feelings at once.**

### **Self-Care Tips for Feeling Overwhelmed/Low**

- journal about your feelings or things you are grateful for**
- call a trusted friend or family member to talk about your feelings or just as a distraction**
- engage in relaxing activities (listening to music, taking a bath, or mediating)**
- go for a walk or do some exercise**

### **Self-Care Tips When Having Suicidal Thoughts**

- use your comfort or safety plan - if you do not have one, ask a mental health service provider for help in creating one**
- call a trusted friend, family member or caregiver**
- reach out to a mental health service provider such as calling or texting a crisis line (resources on page 37)**

# Mental Health Resources

The next few pages will outline mental health/crisis resources among Ontario. The resources include distress lines, crisis services, lgbtq2s+ resources, senior resources, food/clothing banks and online application resources

## **Distress Lines (open 24 hours a day)**

- **9-8-8 Suicide Crisis Helpline: Call or text 9-8-8**
- **Toronto Distress Centres: 416-408-4357 or 408-HELP**
- **Gerstein Distress Centre: 416-929-5200**
- **Spectra Helpline: 416-920-0497 or 905-459-7777 for Brampton & Mississauga. Languages available: Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu, Spanish & Portuguese (10am-10pm)**
- **Assaulted Women's Helpline: 416-863-0511 or Toll-Free 1-866-863-0511**
- **Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868 or text 686868**
- **Distress Centre Halton: Oakville: 905-849-4541, Burlington: 905-681-1488, Milton/Halton Hills: 905-877-1211, Hamilton: 905-561-5800**
- **Distress Centre Niagara: 905-688-3711**

# Youth Mental Health Resources

**BounceBack:** A guided self-help program that effectively helps people ages 15+ who are experiencing mild-to-moderate anxiety or depression, feeling low, stressed, worried or angry. [Click Here](#)

**Children's Mental Health Ontario Centres:** Operates in every Ontario region, providing treatment and support to children, youth, and families. Free and no referral or health card required. [Click Here](#)

**Webbing with Wisdom:** Provides girls and young women with resources regarding online safety and online sexual violence. [Click Here](#)

**Starts With Me:** Free online guidebook for teens to develop resilience, emotional intelligence, & self-awareness. [Click Here](#)



# Youth Mental Health Resources

**Kids Help Phone:** Free games, videos and activities regarding mental health. [Click Here](#)

**FraserHealth:** Videos addressing mental health issues such as healthy relationships, body image, and anxiety, offered in several different languages such as English, Arabic, Mandarin/Simplified Chinese, French, and Punjabi. [Click Here](#)

**Caretoons Anxiety Canada:** Cartoons for children & youth normalizing anxiety in an entertaining way. [Click Here](#)

## Counselling Resources

**What's Up Walk-In:** Free mental health counseling offered in-person or virtually for ages 1-29. No health card required. [Click Here](#)

**Ig Vital Health:** Free/Low of cost counseling for newcomers & refugees. Offered 7 days a week and interpretation available. [Click Here](#)

# Specialized Mental Health Resources

**Toronto Community Crisis Service:** This program is run by the city of Toronto. The Toronto Community Crisis Service sends out mobile crisis teams to provide community-based support for people who are in crisis or in need of a wellbeing check without involving the police. You can access this service by calling 211. [Click Here](#)

**CAMH:** Provides high quality, client-centred care to meet the diverse needs of people facing addiction and mental health challenges at different stages of their lives and illnesses - from children to adults to seniors. [Click Here](#)

**Multilingual Distress Line:** Provides emotional support, crisis intervention & suicide prevention in English, Cantonese, Mandarin, Portuguese, Spanish, Hindi, Punjabi, and Urdu. Mon to Fri from 10:00am-10:00pm EST. Phone: 905-459-7777. [Click Here](#)

**Trans Lifeline:** Provides peer support by trans people for trans and questioning callers. Crisis and other support resources are provided in both English & Spanish from 10:00am-4:00pm EST. Phone: 877-330-6366. [Click Here](#)



# Specialized Mental Health Resources

**LGBT Youthline:** Provides peer support by and for 2SLGBTQ+ people 29 and under across Ontario. Youthline provides support for a range of topics such as questioning gender identity/sexual orientation, coming out, mental health, relationships etc., Phone, text & chat is available from Sunday-Friday, 4:00pm-9:30pm EST. Text: 647-694-4275, Phone: 1-800-268-9688. [Click Here](#)

**Naseeha:** International hotline that provides youth and particularly Muslim youth with the tools needed to address a range of issues such as mental health, drugs, alcohol, bullying, religion, marriage, domestic issues and pornography. Phone & Text support offered Monday-Friday 12:00pm-9:00pm. Phone: 1-866-627-3342, Text: 1-866-627-3342. [Click Here](#)

**Black Youth Helpline:** A multicultural youth helpline that specifically responds to the needs of black youth. The helpline can be accessed by youth, families, schools and other stakeholders. Service is provided in English, French & other languages. Helpline is open from 9am-10pm EST, 7 days a week. Toronto Phone: 416-285-9944, National Phone: 1-833-294-8650. [Click Here](#)

# Specialized Mental Health Resources

**Toronto Seniors Helpline/WoodGreen Crisis Outreach for Seniors:** Provides information about home care/community care & offers over-the-phone supportive counseling, de-escalation, and safety planning for seniors in emotional distress or crisis. Monday-Friday 9:00am-9:00pm EST or 10:00am to 6:00pm EST on Weekends. The helpline can also connect callers to WoodGreen's mobile crisis intervention service for adults 65+ with dementia, addictions or mental illness. Phone 416-217-2077. [Click Here](#)

**Talk 4 Healing:** Provides support & resources for Indigenous women by Indigenous women across Ontario. Services are available in Ojibwe, Ojibway, Cree, Algonquin, Inuktitut, Mohawk, Oneida, Odawa, Potawatomi, Micmac, Black Foot, Anishinaabe, Moose Cree, Swampy Cree, English & French. Phone: 1-807-346-4357 or Text: 1-855-554-4325. [Click Here](#)

**National Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line:** Provides support to former residential School students in crisis 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Phone: 1-866-925-4419. [Click Here](#)

# Specialized Mental Health Resources

**ConnexOntario:** Service resources for people experiencing problems with alcohol and drugs, mental health and/or gambling. Available 24/7. Phone: 1-866-531-2600 or Text: 247247. [Click Here](#)

**Toronto Rape Crisis Centre/Multicultural Women Against Rape:** Crisis intervention & support services available 24/7 to anyone who has been raped, sexually assaulted or experienced physical, sexual, emotional, ritual or financial abuse. Referrals can also be made to other services. Phone: 416-597-8808. [Click Here](#)

**Assaulted Women's Helpline:** Crisis counseling, safety planning, emotional support & referrals available 24/7 for all women in Ontario who have experienced any form of abuse. Services are also available for women who are deaf, deaf-blind, or hard of hearing. Phone: 1-866-863-0511 or TTY: 1-866-863-7868. [Click Here](#)

**Victim Services Toronto:** Provides immediate on-scene crisis response, intervention & prevention services to victims, survivors, family members and witnesses of crime and sudden tragedies available 24/7. Provides services in over 35 languages. Phone: 416-808-7066. [Click Here](#)

# Youth Online/App Mental Health Resources

**Below are mobile applications that can be downloaded to help manage poor sleep habits, anxiety triggers, and PTSD symptoms. There are many more apps that can be found on the app/play store that can help manage addiction, depression, and other mental health concerns.**

**Breathe, Think, Do with Sesame:** A resource app for children to help teach skills such as problem solving, self-control, planning and task persistence with the Sesame Street characters. [Click Here](#)

**Apart of Me:** A therapeutic game designed for children and youth experiencing grief or the loss of a loved one. Explore an island that was built to help guide you through your darkest feelings. [Click Here](#)

**Moshi Kids:** Offers soothing children's stories, meditations, and music. It can be used by educators during the day to promote calmness in the classroom and help students relieve anxiety, or by parents to help kids wind down before bedtime. [Click Here](#)



# Online/App Mental Health Resources

**Mindshift CBT App:** The Mindshift app uses Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to help you learn how to relax, develop more effective ways of thinking and how to take charge of your anxiety. [Click Here](#)

**Calm App:** This app is equipped with 100+ sleep stories and soothing nature sounds. Helping anyone who needs a mental break, a soothing sound, or a peaceful night's rest. They have free options and a paid subscription. [Click Here](#)

**PTSD Coach Canada:** PTSD Coach helps you learn about and manage symptoms that can occur after trauma. Resources include information about PTSD & treatment, tools for screening & tracking your symptoms & crisis support [Click Here](#)

**My Possible Self:** This app helps promotes CBT exercises and personalized activities to help address issues such as low mood, anxiety, and insomnia. [Click Here](#)

**Wysa:** AI-powered mental health app that provides emotional support. It offers an opportunity for anonymous and judgment-free conversations, offering mindfulness activities and therapeutic techniques. [Click Here](#)



# Settlement Resources

**Finding Family/Specialized Doctors:** The website [lamsick.ca](http://lamsick.ca) can be used to help find a family doctor, walk-in clinic or specialist doctors close to your home. [Click Here](#)

**Finding A Food Bank:** A food bank can be found using the Daily Bread Food Bank website. [Click Here](#)

**Volunteer Opportunities:** The volunteer Match Organization can be used to find volunteering opportunities near your home. [Click Here](#)

**SWAN Women's Clinic:** The Scarborough Women's Clinic helps refugee and uninsured women and girls who need medical assessments. The SWAN Clinic helps with: cancer screening, female genital mutilation (FGM), pap smears, pregnancy testing, partner violence support and much more. [Click Here](#)

**Free Children's Books:** The Children's Book Bank provides free books to children. Available Monday through Saturday. [Click Here](#)

**YMCA Language Assessment:** The YMCA provides language assessments free of charge for those who are interested in learning English. [Click Here](#)

# Acknowledgement

**From CCVT we thank you for taking the time to read our “Understanding and Managing Your Mental Health: Resources for Youth” guidebook. We hope this guidebook has provided you with valuable information and resources. Your commitment to learning about mental health is an important step towards well-being, and we appreciate your dedication.**

**Please note that this guidebook is intended for informational purposes only. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. If you are experiencing mental health issues or need support, we strongly encourage you to seek professional help.**

**If you have any questions, need further support, or wish to provide feedback, please do not hesitate to contact us. Your input is invaluable in helping us improve our resources and better serve our community.**

# About the Author

**The “Understanding & Managing Your Mental Health: Resources for Youth” guidebook was written by CCVT’s children and youth counselor Helen Asihk.**



**Helen has an educational background in developmental psychology focusing on youth developmental and mental health. Helen is a avid advocate for promoting mental health awareness. Helen aspires to further her education and become a registered psychotherapist.**

**Helen has a professional background in a variety of children’s services. She has experience as a daycare teacher, mental health youth worker, ABA therapist and is currently the children & youth settlement counselor at CCVT.**

**Helen recognized the lack of mental health resources and education for newcomers. She developed this guidebook to offer education and resources to newcomers, empowering them to better understand and manage their mental health**

# CCVT Services

## Mental Health

- **Trauma-Informed/ Language specific Counselling**
- **Individual and Group Therapy**
- **Crisis Intervention:** suicide prevention, breakdowns, family support, etc.
- **Coordinated professional services:** The Centre coordinates a network of physicians, psychiatrists, psychotherapists psychologists, lawyers, social service workers who provide treatment, documentation and legal support. Referrals of survivors are accepted and the staff will arrange for a client assessment

## Settlement Services

- **Orientation, information and referral**
- **Interpretation and escorting**
- **Assistance with filling government forms**
- **Assistance with addressing social determinants of health**
- **ESL and Language Instruction**
- **Computer and Skills Training**

## Children/Youth Program

- **March Break Field Trips**
- **Summer Quest**
- **Youth Mentorship Program**
- **Homework Club**
- **Youth Ambassador Program**
- **Wellness Wednesday**
- **Newcomer Youth for Truth & Reconciliation**
- **Youth Photography Project**



# CCVT Services

## Specialized Services

- **CCVT is associated with a coalition of Centres which support victims of violence, repression and torture, people in exile or in their own countries**

## International Projects

- **CCVT provides specialized services for women, victims of human trafficking and victims of domestic violence**
- **Women's Program**
- **Anti - Human Trafficking Project**
- **Torture, Trauma, Crimes of International Nature, Uprootedness, Psychosocial Impact & Mental Health Course**

## Public Education

- **To meet the complex and multiple needs of survivors, CCVT uses a community - integrated service approach to create an atmosphere of healing Research**

## Community Engagement

- **Language interpretation**
- **Mentorship program**
- **Tutoring program**
- **Befriending program**
- **Newsletter**
- **SAH: Sponsorship Agreement Holder**

## Volunteer Program



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