



# EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE FOR ENTREPRENEURS

Participant Workbook



Youth Employment Services - YES

[www.yes.on.ca](http://www.yes.on.ca)

## Emotional Intelligence for Entrepreneurs

### Overview and Purpose

This workshop explores how to manage the emotional challenges of entrepreneurship, including stress caused by risk, ambiguity, isolation, rejection, failure and fear. Participants hear real life stories of entrepreneurs who have navigated the emotional ups and downs of launching and running a business. Participants learn strategies for building their resilience, persistence, perseverance and grit.

### Time

The workshop is between three to six hours long.

### Learning Outcomes

At the end of this workshop you will be able to:

1. Understand emotional intelligence for entrepreneurs.
2. Recognize the signs of *stress* and apply strategies for managing it.
3. Identify the emotional challenges of *risk, ambiguity, isolation, rejection, failure, and fear* as an entrepreneur and apply strategies for managing them.
4. Understand the importance of *resilience, persistence, perseverance and grit* for entrepreneurs.
5. Identify and use strategies for building resilience, persistence, perseverance and grit, including *emotional awareness, realistic optimism and whole person health*.
6. Identify the emotional challenges your entrepreneurial activities will present to you and the strategies that will help you manage these challenges.

### Leading Questions

As you complete this workshop, you will think about and answer the following questions:

1. What are some of the possible emotional challenges of being an entrepreneur?
2. What strategies might help you manage the possible emotional challenges of being an entrepreneur?
3. What experiences in the past have required you to use emotional resilience? Persistence? Perseverance? Grit?
4. What emotional challenges do you think you might encounter specific to the type of business you want to start?

## Workshop Agenda

1. Emotional Intelligence for Entrepreneurs
2. Stress
3. Risk
4. Ambiguity
5. Isolation
6. Rejection
7. Failure
8. Fear
9. Resilience
10. Emotional Awareness
11. Realistic Optimism
12. Whole Person Health: Mind, Body, Emotions, Spirit
13. Assess the Potential Emotional Challenges with Your Business
14. Review and Wrap-Up
15. Additional Resources

## 1. Emotional Intelligence for Entrepreneurs

### 1.1 What is Emotional Intelligence?

“Emotional intelligence is the capacity to be aware of, control, and express one's emotions to then handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically.” - Daniel Goleman



### 1.2 What are the Emotional Challenges of Entrepreneurs?



Watch the videos below. As you watch, answer the following questions: What emotional challenges of entrepreneurs do the speakers share and discuss? What strategies do they suggest for managing these challenges?

1. The Making of a Young Entrepreneur: Gabrielle Jordan Williams (5.5 min) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EblQj\\_pZFIQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EblQj_pZFIQ)
2. 60-Second Entrepreneur: Sam Gudewill (1:01 min) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=55&v=DdPK4cgQhs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=55&v=DdPK4cgQhs)
3. 60-Second Entrepreneur: Andrew Barnicke (0:58 min) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=53&v=f\\_ev6788kAg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=53&v=f_ev6788kAg)

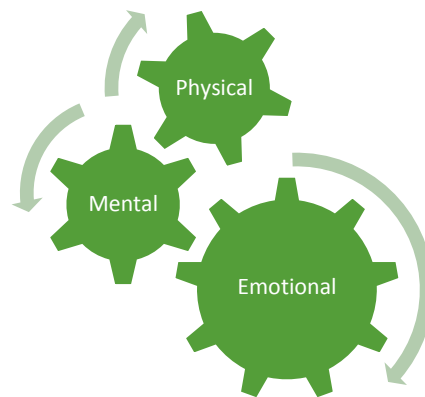
### 1.3 What is the Emotional Balancing Act of Entrepreneurs?



## 2. Stress

### 2.1 What is Stress?

**Stress** is mental or emotional tension that can result from new, challenging circumstances or events. In small amounts, stress can be productive. It motivates us to take action and get work done. In large amounts, however, stress affects us emotionally, physically and mentally. We feel excessive stress when we believe that we will not be able to manage the new circumstances or events.



Stress manifests itself **emotionally** as anxiety, worry, frustration and anger. Our emotions are negative, exaggerated, volatile and quick to change.

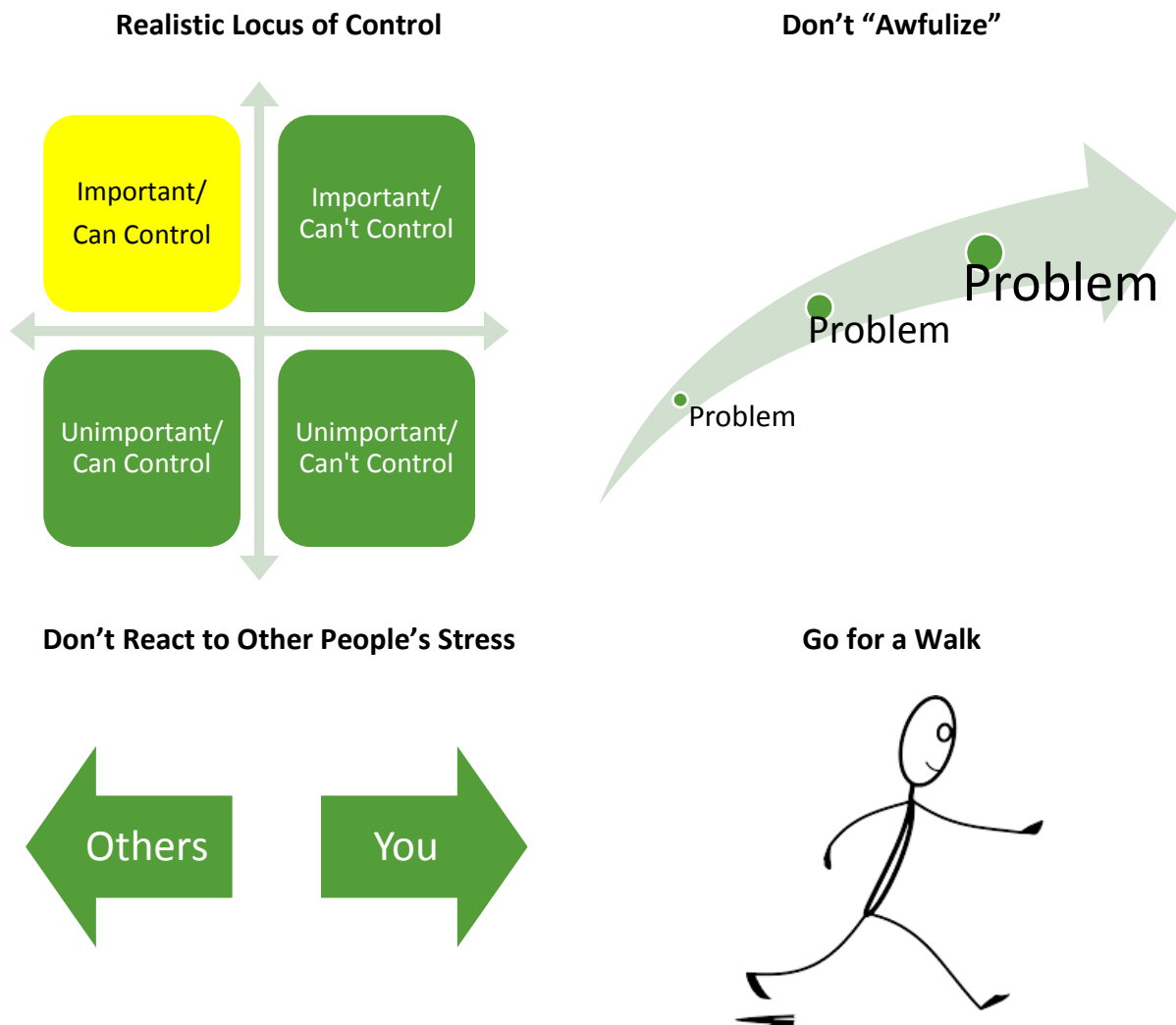
Stress manifests itself **physically** through an elevated heart rate and blood pressure, difficulty sleeping, and changes in appetite.

Stress manifests itself **mentally** as an inability to think clearly and focus, and a decrease in efficiency and effectiveness.

Prolonged stress results in emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion.

As an entrepreneur we can experience stress for many reasons, including **risk, ambiguity, isolation, rejection, failure** and **fear**. We will look at each of these in turn after we finish discussing stress.

2.2 What Strategies Can We use for Managing the Stress of Being an Entrepreneur?





Watch the video and note down additional stress management strategies suggested by the speaker.

*How to Make Stress Your Friend* by Kelly McGonical (14:28 min)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcGyVTAoXEU>

### 3. Risk

**Risk** is the exposure to the chance of loss, danger or hazard. As entrepreneurs we face risk every day: not getting paid by customers, not finding financing, changing regulations, product or service risk, and random events. We have to manage risk strategically as an entrepreneur:

1. Know the risks in your business.
2. Have a plan for your business to eliminate, mitigate or manage each of these risks.
3. Scan your environment for changes to the risk to your business.
4. Continually gather information about your industry.
5. Stay connected to others running similar businesses.
6. Keep your skills current.

Living with risk on a daily basis can be a source of stress for entrepreneurs, particularly if we are not comfortable with risk in general. To manage risk emotionally, we first have to be aware of how comfortable we are with risk.



Where would you place yourself on the risk tolerance continuum below?

Very comfortable  
with risk

Very  
uncomfortable  
with risk



There is one other important thing to know about risk. It is possible to be too comfortable with risk, so that we take chances that we shouldn't be taking, often with negative results. Being on the far left on the continuum above is not a good thing. We should aim to sit somewhere in the

middle as entrepreneurs. We should be comfortable with risk, but not so comfortable that we are reckless.

#### 4. Ambiguity

**Ambiguity** is when we don't have enough information or clarity in a situation in order to make a good decision, but we have to make a decision anyway. This is the daily reality of entrepreneurs. Every day we make decisions in ambiguous situations, without enough information. This ambiguity represents a significant challenge to entrepreneurs. Perfectionists in particular often struggle with the ambiguity inherent in entrepreneurial decision-making. As with risk, we have to manage ambiguity strategically as an entrepreneur:

1. Know the areas of ambiguity in your business.
2. Have a plan for your business to eliminate, mitigate or manage each of these areas of ambiguity.
3. Continually gather information about your industry.
4. Stay connected to others running similar businesses.
5. Keep your skills current.

Emotionally, entrepreneurs have to be comfortable with the idea that sometimes there is no right decision. Sometimes there is just a decision. We have to follow the old saying, "Don't make the right decision. Make a decision and make it right." If we are not comfortable with ambiguity, this can be a source of stress.



Where would you place yourself on the ambiguity tolerance continuum below?

Very comfortable  
with ambiguity

Very  
uncomfortable  
with ambiguity



#### 5. Isolation

As entrepreneurs, all responsibility for the business stops with us. Our staff, our friends and our family can support us to a certain extent, but they can't share the experience of being ultimately responsible for everything in the business. For this reason, being an entrepreneur can be very isolating.



We need strategies to mitigate this isolation, otherwise it will significantly increase our stress level.

1. Make the time to build and maintain a personal support network of friends and family.
2. Build a team of business experts around you who can advise you on different aspects of your business.
3. Join an entrepreneur network so that you can interact with other entrepreneurs.



What strategies can you use personally to decrease the amount of isolation you may have as an entrepreneur?

## 6. Rejection

Running a business is about selling our products or services. And selling involves being rejected and people saying “no”. Over and over and over. As entrepreneurs, managing rejection is a crucial skill. If we can’t manage rejection, the stress of the repeated, and often not polite, “no’s” can paralyze us.



Watch the video. What strategies does the speaker recommend for managing rejection?

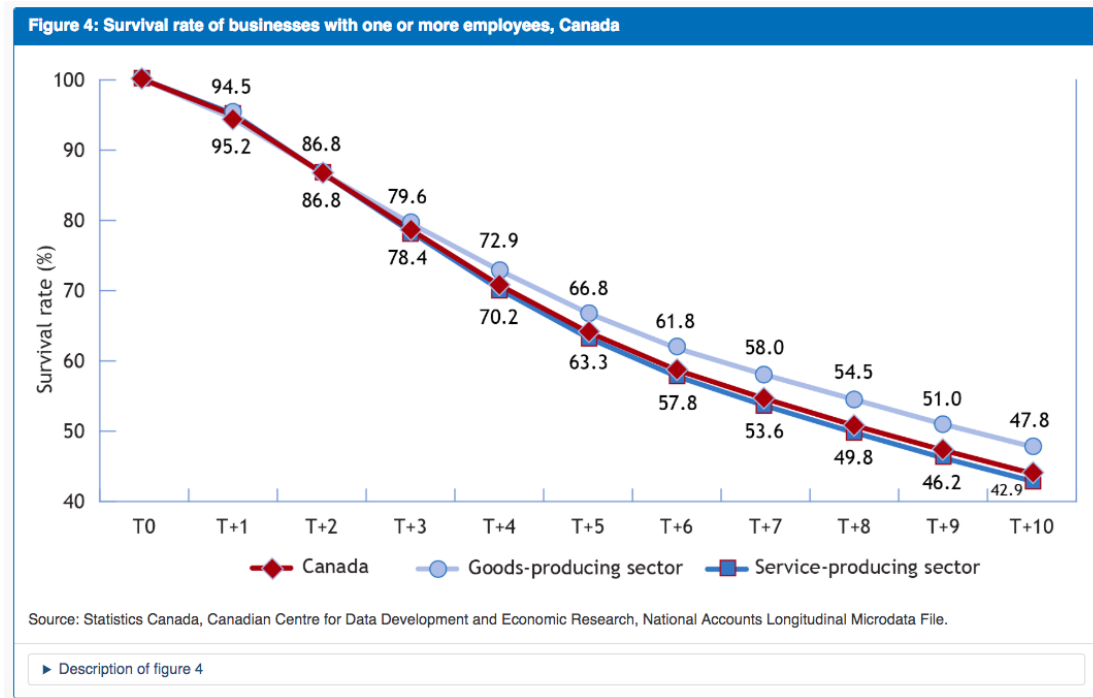
*What I Learned From 100 Days of Rejection* by Jia Jiang (15:31 min)

[https://www.ted.com/talks/jia\\_jiang\\_what\\_i\\_learned\\_from\\_100\\_days\\_of\\_rejection](https://www.ted.com/talks/jia_jiang_what_i_learned_from_100_days_of_rejection)

## 7. Failure

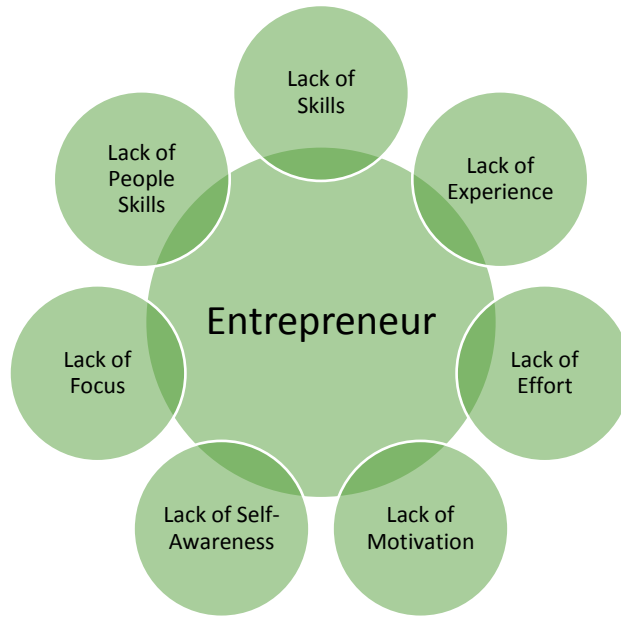
### 7.1 Business Failure

Perhaps the greatest possible stress that we entrepreneurs face is the possibility of the failure of our business or, the actual failure of our business. Starting and running a business is risky and businesses fail all the time. In Canada, only 80% of businesses survive for three years, only 60% survive for five years, and only 40% survive for ten years.



Businesses don't usually fail because of one single reason. They usually fail because of an accumulation of many reasons over time that either wear the business down or come to a head in a perfect storm. By understanding why businesses fail, we can better understand what we need to do to ensure our own success.

Some of the reasons businesses fail lie directly with the entrepreneur:



And some of the reasons businesses fail lie with how the business is run or structured:

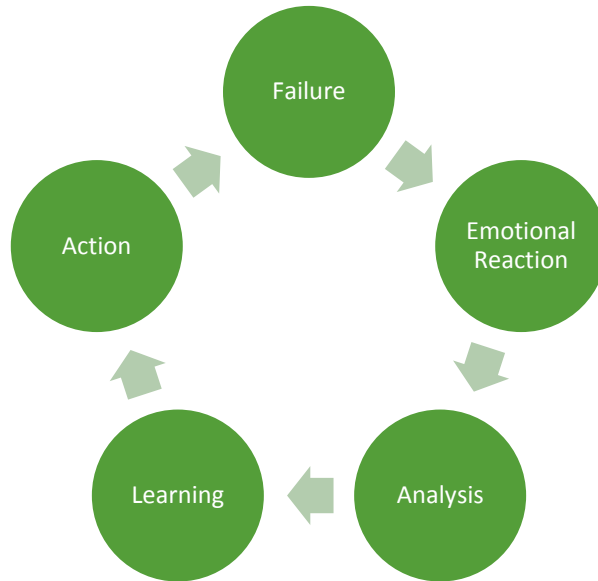


### 7.2 Daily Failure

Failure is much more than the risk of our entire business failing. As entrepreneurs we actually fail regularly, on a daily basis, sometimes in large, spectacular ways and sometimes in small,

insignificant ways. We have to become comfortable with daily failure and view it as a way to learn, rather than as a source of stress.

In order to manage our failure on a daily basis, we need to consciously follow an experiential learning process so that we learn from our failure, rather than experiencing stress from it.



Think about a recent failure you had, large or small. Use the experiential learning process above to analyze what you learned from the failure.

## 8. Fear

**Fear** is an unpleasant emotion caused by our belief that someone or something is dangerous or a threat, and is likely to cause us pain or harm. (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)



Watch the video. What key ideas about fear does the speaker share? How do these ideas relate to you as an entrepreneur?

*What Fear Can Teach Us* by Karen Thompson Walker (11:30 min)

[https://www.ted.com/talks/karen\\_thompson\\_walker\\_what\\_fear\\_can\\_teach\\_us](https://www.ted.com/talks/karen_thompson_walker_what_fear_can_teach_us)

## 9. Resilience

Now that we know some of the negative things that can contribute to our stress as an entrepreneur we need to look at how we become resilient in order to persevere through the stress caused by risk, ambiguity, isolation, rejection, failure and fear, and every other negative emotion or event that can impact us as entrepreneurs. There are four words that are important to this discussion: resilience, persistence, perseverance and grit.

**Resilience** is the ability to recover from a negative event.

**Persistence** is continuing our effort and not giving up.

**Perseverance** is continuing our effort regardless of the difficulties or obstacles we face.

**Grit** is courage, resolve, and strength of character.

As entrepreneurs, all of these characteristics are important determining factors in our success. Many cultures have sayings about resilience, persistence, perseverance and grit to emphasize their importance in success in life. For example, from Chinese culture we have, “Seven times fall down, eight times stand up”. In other words, stand up more times than you fall down.



Watch the video. What does the speaker say about the reasons for success? How does this apply to you as an entrepreneur?

*Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance* by Angela Lee Duckworth (6:09 min)  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/angela\\_lee\\_duckworth\\_grit\\_the\\_power\\_of\\_passion\\_and\\_perseverance](https://www.ted.com/talks/angela_lee_duckworth_grit_the_power_of_passion_and_perseverance)

Here are other strategies can we use to build our resilience, persistence, perseverance and grit:

1. Use your personal relationships with family and friends for emotional support.
2. Keep things in perspective. Don't exaggerate negative events or emotions.
3. Accept that challenges, negative events and negative emotions are part of life.
4. Have clear goals for your business and yourself, and keep these goals in mind all the time.
5. Take action rather than procrastinating hoping that challenges will go away.
6. Maintain a positive view of yourself and trust your abilities to manage challenges.

From American Psychological Association [www.apa.org/helpcenter/road-resilience](http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/road-resilience).

## 10. Emotional Awareness

The first step in building resilience is being aware of our emotions. We all experience emotions differently. We have different triggers for emotions. We also have different physical reactions when we feel the emotions, particularly negative emotions, for example sweating, nausea, or headaches.



Think about yourself emotionally. Select five negative emotions. Fill in the chart on the next page with your triggers and physical reactions for those emotions.

Emotion	My Triggers	My Physical Reactions

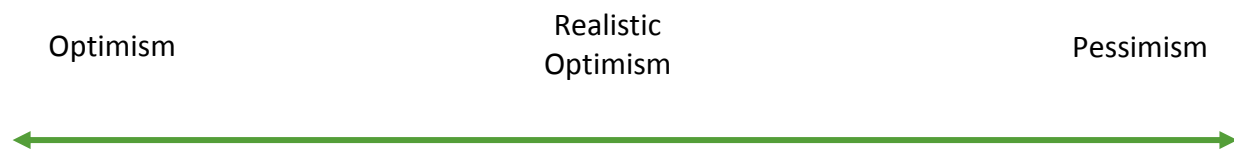
### 11. Realistic Optimism

We might think that people who are optimistic will be good entrepreneurs because they will always be positive and see the good side of events. However, interestingly, this is not the case. Optimists fail to see risks to their businesses and therefore fail to adjust to the changing environment. Pessimists also don't make good entrepreneurs. In order to be an entrepreneur we need to have hope that our new venture will succeed, which pessimists don't have.

The most successful entrepreneurs practice **realistic optimism**. Realistic optimism is when we are aware of the reality of a situation, particularly the challenges that exist, but we are also optimistic we have the strategies and skills to manage them. We are both realistic about our situation and confident that we can navigate it.

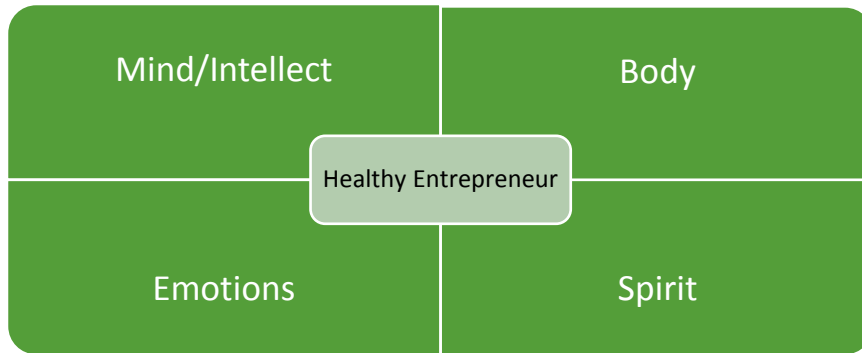


Where are you on the continuum below? What can you do to move yourself towards realistic optimism?



## 12. Whole Person Health: Mind, Body, Emotions and Spirit

In order to be healthy as an entrepreneur we need to be healthy in all dimensions of being human: in our mind (intellectually), body (physically), emotions and spirit (soul, personal identity). We need to make time in our schedules to consciously ensure we are healthy in all of these four dimensions.



List at least five things that you can do on a regular basis to keep each of the four dimensions of your life healthy as an entrepreneur.

Mind/Intellect	Body	Emotions	Spirit

## 13. Assess the Potential Emotional Challenges with Your Business



What do you foresee as the emotional challenges you will have when running your business? What strategies will you use to manage these emotional challenges, based on the information presented in the module? Complete the chart on the next page.



Potential Emotional Challenges	My Strategies

## 14. Review and Wrap-Up

### 14.1 Review

In this module we discussed the following:

1. Emotional Intelligence for Entrepreneurs
2. Stress
3. Risk
4. Ambiguity
5. Isolation
6. Rejection
7. Failure
8. Fear
9. Resilience
10. Emotional Awareness
11. Realistic Optimism
12. Whole Person Health: Mind, Body, Emotions, Spirit
13. Assess the Potential Emotional Challenges with Your Business
14. Wrap-Up and Review

14.2 Complete the concept checking quiz as a class.

14.3 Ask any final questions.

## 15. Additional Resources

**Bell Let's Talk (Toolkit):** [letstalk.bell.ca](http://letstalk.bell.ca)

Bell Let's Talk is a nation-wide campaign which aims to start a conversation about mental health across Canada, working to educate others about mental health and break the stigma that currently exists around the issue. This campaign has a tools and resources that can aid in creating a safe space and open environment in which people feel comfortable discussing and learning about mental health.

**Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA):** [www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca)

The Canadian Mental Health Association promotes mental health and supports the recovery process of those living with mental illness. This website is full of resources and information that will help one better understand mental health, mental illness, and the process of recovery.

**Center for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH):** [www.camh.ca](http://www.camh.ca)

CAMH works to support those living with mental health and addiction issues through clinical care, research, education, policy development, and health promotion. This website is thus filled with resources, guides, workshops, and information about mental health, wellness, and support services.

**Here to Help (BC):** [www.heretohelp.bc.ca](http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca)

Here to Help is a group of non-profit organizations in BC that are working together to support people better manage their mental health, through prevention and teaching wellness practices. On this site you can find many self-help resources and personal stories of others' personal journey with mental health.

**Jack.org:** [www.jack.org](http://www.jack.org)

Jack.org is an Ontario based youth organization working to reshape the way society, specifically youth, think and talk about mental health. This website is filled with unique programs and initiatives that aim to spark conversations about mental health and end put an end to the stigma in the young people's generation.

**Mental Health Works:** [www.mentalhealthworks.ca](http://www.mentalhealthworks.ca)

Mental Health Works is the Canadian Mental Health Associations social enterprise whose main objective is to provide capacity building workshops on mental health in the workplace to both employers and employees. This website is filled with resources for both employers as well as employees on how to create a positive workplace environment that supports everyone's unique mental health needs.

**Mind Your Mind:** [www.mindyourmind.ca](http://www.mindyourmind.ca)

**mindyourmind** is an online platform for mental health and wellness, which works to engage

youth ages 14-29 living with mental health challenges and provide them with a space filled with resources, activities, and stories of others' personal experiences to help support them with their own mental health journey.

**National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) (US):** [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

NAMI is one of the largest mental health organizations in the United States and is dedicated to assisting and supporting those affected by mental illness. This site has information on mental health and resources developed specifically for those living with mental illness, their families, as well as teens/young adults who are affected by mental illness.

**Ontario Shores Foundation for Mental Health Sciences:** [www.focusedonrecovery.ca/](http://www.focusedonrecovery.ca/)

Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health is a hospital in Ontario that is focused on supporting and providing treatment to those living with mental illness. Their foundation supports and funds innovative programs that focus on mental health promotion and their website is filled with mental health facts and patient stories that can be useful resources for fostering hope with those who are on their mental health recovery journey.