



Alberta Home Visitation Network Association

Vol. 17 Issue 2

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Message from the Director

COVID-19 has played havoc with our mental health and well-being over the past couple of years. In this issue we touch on various aspects of mental health and mental illness. The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) indicates that approximately one in five people in Canada will experience a mental health problem or illness.

Mental health refers to "a state of well-being that includes our emotions, feelings of connection to others, our thoughts and feelings and being able to manage life's highs and lows," according to the CMHA. Mental illness affects a person's ability to function over a long period of time. Usually, mental illnesses are diagnosed by a professional and might involve taking medication.

This issue has articles related to mental illnesses such as depression, post-partum depression, postpartum psychosis, seasonal affective disorder, and borderline personality disorder that provide a definition and things to consider regarding the disorder. Frontline staff may work with families where one of their members is experiencing a mental illness. It is helpful for staff to have some understanding of the disorder to support the individual and to encourage them to seek assistance when necessary.

The National Home Visiting Resource Centre indicates that home visitors stay in their

positions two to four years on average. They cite burnout and low job satisfaction as reasons for leaving. Staff working in human services with families experiencing multiple stressors need to be aware of the impact this may have on their own mental health. It is important to pay attention to how the family's story affects the home visitor. Compassion fatigue is very real and something that shouldn't be taken lightly. Dyan Eybergen provides some suggestions on how to care for yourself to avoid and overcome compassion fatigue if you should experience it.

Agencies can support staff by reducing job stressors. Providing ongoing training and coaching as well as reflective supervision is important, as is promoting self-care strategies such as stress management and reduction by providing time and space to support strategies such as mindfulness. In addition, a positive workforce culture can improve staff well-being, mental health, and retention.

As we turn our calendars to 2022, what will you do for your wellbeing?

On behalf of AHVNA, we wish you all the best in the New Year!



Lavonne Roloff is the provincial director of the Alberta Home Visitation Network Association (AHVNA). Connections Vol. 17 Issue 2 page 2

IMPACT STATEMENT:

What difference did our support make?

by Tannis Pollard

Family: W

The W Family was referred to Midwest Family Connections (MFC) as Meaghan* was experiencing feelings of being overwhelmed along with suicidal ideations with a history of depression and postpartum depression. MFC's objectives were to enhance parenting knowledge and skills, to connect her to local resources, to foster a relationship with her son, and to promote family wellness.

Noted signs of positive change:

The W Family was approved to receive services through Home Visitation for four visits per month at 60 minutes per visit.

Once supported and a relationship was fostered, Meaghan quickly became interested in many of the supports offered in Lloydminster and reached out to try those she found appealing. With support and encouragement, Meaghan felt confident to connect with professionals to access services. These opportunities created growth in Meaghan's confidence; soon she was accessing services with little encouragement or support needed for follow-through.

The relationship with her son was challenged at times as Meaghan was not always confident in her ability to raise her son; however, once she was able to accept the responsibility, the challenge was less. It was clear that growth was being made. Meaghan soon developed a connection with her son. A nurtured relationship was forming, she had improved knowledge, and skills were emerging. Healthy child development was noted in her connections with her son and day-to-day living was less of a challenge. Meaghan was able to see the possibilities for her family and was eager to make a difference in their life.



Her son is now enrolled in kindergarten for the fall of 2021. Meaghan has upgraded her high school grades and graduated in June 2021. She is registered to attend college in the fall of 2021 in a University Transfer to attain her Bachelor of Physics; their future looks bright.

Meaghan's gained knowledge is evident in her increased confidence and connection with new relationships of support she has formed to advocate for her family. Meaghan reports that social anxiety once controlled her and affected her decisions. She still shares that she experiences moments of stress, but is now confident and able to navigate the challenge ahead of her. She shares a sense of self-worth and confidence. This motivates her to meet the challenges to successfully control her anxiety.

The family's comments by phone conversation:

"It's quite hard for me to believe just how far I have come and how different things are now compared to when Tannis and I first started meeting three years ago. My son and I have an amazing relationship and are very close. This is something I would have never imagined after he was born. I had so many negative health and situational problems going on. I was sure that there was no way I could ever be a parent. I was pretty sure I didn't even want to be a parent. But working with Tannis really

helped change that aspect of my life around. She helped me to find confidence in myself and my own abilities to parent my son, with skills she would introduce, or sometimes things that she helped me realize I already knew. I felt comfortable being honest about my shortcomings with someone who can show such empathy.

At first, I felt a lot of embarrassment surrounding being a parent and how I was doing at it, but even so I felt safe to share with Tannis my feelings, and my struggles. I hug my son, kiss his forehead, chase him around the house and wrestle. My son and I have cried over the death of a pet and also had amazing conversations about the stars and planets surrounding us. These simple interactions are beautiful things I never would have imagined a few years ago.

I would even go as far to say that combined with other support systems, Tannis is one of the main reasons I'm here today. She has helped me so much as a parent and a person, I can't really put it into words. I hope this jumbled essay shows at the very least my extreme appreciation and thankfulness for Tannis and Midwest Family Connections for all the work she has done."

Submitted by Tannis Pollard with Midwest Family Connections.

* Name has been changed

5 ways to Avert and Overcome Compassion Fatigue

by Dyan Eybergen

Home care visitors run the risk of experiencing detrimental effects on their mental health due to the very nature of their profession. Secondary trauma or traumatic stress (also known as compassion fatigue) is an unfortunate consequence of working with traumatized families. The repeated trauma experienced by others, which home visitors subject themselves to daily, can cause emotional stress for the visitor and, if left unchecked, their psychological wellbeing can become compromised. Risk factors associated with secondary traumatic stress not only include the trauma of the people home visitors work with, but also the inability to recognize their own experiences of vicarious trauma, and the hazards of an unhealthy work culture.

Home visitors suffering from compassion fatigue may notice they that they feel emotionally vacant—that they have nothing left to give to anyone else, including themselves and their families—and as a result feel very disconnected from others. They may experience a "blunting of affect" or emotional numbness, like they no longer have the capacity to experience any extreme emotions—they appear and feel "flat." They may also grapple with an increase in feelings of fear and anxiety.

Burnout is a term often used interchangeably with the concept of compassion fatigue. However, burnout is specific to a state of physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion

related to an overwhelming discontent with one's employment situation. It usually resolves once those working conditions are altered or improved, such as with a job change. Compassion fatigue doesn't take a break on vacation or resolve with a change to vocation. It is generally long lasting and requires more intentional intervention.

Intentional interventions require autonomous, reflective work. They promote agency, where an individual taps into their own strengths and uses behavioural strategies to help themselves. Here are five intentional ways a person can safeguard against compassion fatigue and recover if they do experience symptoms.

- 1. Setting personal boundaries are what you establish to protect yourself in relationships; they help you define what you want and how you would like to be treated by others. Boundaries help to regulate our responses to demands, responsibilities, opportunities, pleasures, and activities.
- 2. Participating in self-care, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), "is what people do for themselves to establish and maintain health....

 It encompasses hygiene (general and personal), nutrition (type and quality of food eaten), lifestyle (sporting activities, leisure etc.), environmental factors (living conditions, social habits, etc.), socioeconomic factors (income level, cultural beliefs, etc.) and self-medication (rational use of products and services)."
- **3. Engaging in humour**. Laughter increases the brain's release of endorphins (happy hormones). A good laugh promotes relaxation and relieves your stress response.

- **4. Exploring nature** has a proven impact on individuals through improved immune function, less stress, better mood, enhanced attention, and greater restful sleep.
- **5. Establishing a regular meditation practice** can give you a sense of calm, peace, and balance that can benefit your emotional, physical, and spiritual wellbeing.

Home visitors are at a greater risk for developing compassion fatigue due to the consequence of vicarious trauma. There are intentional strategies that can be used both preventatively to safeguard against compassion fatigue, and when negative thoughts and feelings impede their ability to provide care and support to others. Through choosing to accept negative thoughts and feelings as a part of life and inherent to the work they do, home visitors can maintain good mental health through committed behavioural actions that are proven to enhance a person's biopsychosocial well-being.

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Dyan Eybergen, RN, is a certified parent coach, behavioural health consultant and an award-winning author of Out of the Mouths of Babes: Parenting from a Child's Perspective. Dyan is a respected professional speaker on mental health and appears regularly on Edmonton's CTV Morning Live show as a parenting consultant.





S.A.D. in a COVID World

by Pam Kollross

Everyone is tired of COVID. It is having a lasting impact on families we support as well as our own families. The last 20 months have been unsettling, which can cause a decrease in our sense of control. It is not unusual for people to feel sad, stressed, confused, or worried. People will react in different ways.

As the seasons change, we need to be aware of another stressor: reduced sunlight in fall and winter may cause winter-onset Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). This decrease in sunlight may disrupt your body's internal clock (your circadian rhythm) and lead to feelings of depression. SAD is a kind of depression that is more common in the winter months and, according to the Canadian Mental Health Association's British Columbia (CMHABC) division, affects about two to three per cent of Canadians. The incidence of this illness increases the further north you live. "Another 15 per cent of our population will experience a milder form of SAD that leaves them only slightly depressed, but still able to live their life without major disruptions" (CMHABC). As frontline staff, home visitors can provide support to lessen the impact of both the pandemic and SAD symptoms. Watch for possible signs that a person may need a mental health referral and share this article's self-care tips with the families you work with.

Symptoms

According to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), "The primary symptom is a sad, despairing mood that:

- is present most days and lasts most of the day
- lasts for more than two weeks
- impairs the person's performance at work, at school, or in social relationships"

Other symptoms of depression include¹:

- changes in appetite and weight
- sleep problems, fatigue
- loss of interest in work, hobbies, people, or sex
- withdrawal from family members and friends
- feeling useless, hopeless, excessively guilty, pessimistic, or having low self-esteem
- agitation or feeling slowed down
- irritability
- trouble concentrating, remembering, and making decisions
- crying easily or feeling like crying but not being able to
- thoughts of suicide (which should always be taken seriously)

Treatment

Treatment for SAD is like regular depression. A doctor may prescribe antidepressant medication. However, it is important to remind someone new to these medications that it takes several weeks before you feel the beneficial effects. Light therapy is another treatment for SAD. The SAD lights simulate sunlight, which helps trigger the brain to release serotonin, often called the feel-good hormone. Studies show that using a SAD light (light therapy) during periods when daylight hours are short can help adjust your circadian rhythm, which is the body's process for regulating your sleep-wake cycle. Anyone can buy a SAD light without a prescription. They are about \$100 to \$200, but usually, they go on sale around Christmas time.

Self care tips

What if you just get the blues and don't feel like you need mental health help? In times of high stress and low light, our usual coping skills may not be enough. It is essential to recognize signs you are having trouble coping, such as frustration, shock, denial, or anger, and develop a short-term self-care plan. Here are some tips to help you manage more successfully and build resilience²:

- Take care of your body Our bodies need predictability and structure. Make sure you are eating well, getting enough sleep, and exercising regularly.
- Take care of yourself Find time to unwind and step away from stressful situations. Take breaks, assess how you are feeling, and remind yourself that these feelings can pass. When you feel overwhelmed, stand in your doorway or at an open window and take a deep breath of fresh air.
- Stay connected Even in our COVID
 world, we can still connect. Spend time
 calling and emailing with supportive
 people. Social relationships are crucial
 to remaining strong and well. Make sure
 you share your concerns and feelings with
 someone you trust, and support your
 friends who need it.
- Maintain perspective Even in a situation where the world has changed so dramatically, try to determine what you have control over. Recognize what you can control and what might be beyond your control.
- Try to be self-aware If your mood is flattening and your sleep pattern is not improving, and you continue to struggle to eat, you may need some extra support. It is always better to get help as soon as you start to feel depressed. There are several resources to help you.

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Resources

24/7 Canadian Mental Health Association Helplines

 Toll free Northern Alberta:
 1-800-232-7288

 Crisis 24 Hours Edmonton:
 780-482-HELP (4357)

 Calgary Main Crisis Line:
 403-266-HELP (4357)

 Alberta South Region:
 1-888-787-2880

AHS Mental Health Services – Access 24/7 provides addiction and mental health services, including referral, crisis intervention, outreach, and short-term stabilization. For more information specific to your region, call 1-877-303-2642.

Togetherall.com is a free, online network that offers anonymous, peer-to-peer mental health services 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

EAP/EFAP – Many jobs have EAP (Employee Assistance Program) or EFAP (Employee & Family Assistance Program) benefits for free or reduced-cost private counselling.

¹ List shortened from CMHA website

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Pamela Kollross, BA, is a training coach facilitator with AHVNA.

² List adapted from LifeWorks website

Navigating Borderline Personality Disorder

by Pam Kollross

"Borderline personality disorder (BPD) is a serious, long-lasting, and complex mental health problem. People living with BPD have difficulty regulating or handling their emotions or controlling their impulses. They are highly sensitive to what is going on around them and can react with intense emotions to small changes in their environment. People with BPD have been described as living with constant emotional pain, and the symptoms of BPD result from their efforts to cope with this pain." - Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)

As a home visitor, you may work with someone who has been diagnosed with BPD. Here is a quick picture of what someone struggling with this diagnosis may experience.

What you might see: 1

- An intense fear of abandonment, even going to extreme measures to avoid real or imagined separation or rejection
- A pattern of unstable intense relationships, such as idealizing you one moment (an angel) and then suddenly believing you don't care enough or are cruel (the devil)
- Rapid changes in self-identity and self-image include shifting goals and values and seeing themselves as bad or as if they don't exist at all
- Periods of stress-related paranoia and loss of contact with reality, lasting from a few minutes to a few hours
- Impulsive and risky behaviour, such as gambling, reckless driving, unsafe sex, spending sprees, binge eating or drug abuse, or sabotaging success by quitting a good job or ending a relationship
- Suicidal threats or behaviour or self-injury, often in response to the fear of separation or rejection
- Wide mood swings lasting from a few hours to a few days, which can include intense happiness, irritability, shame, or anxiety
- Ongoing feelings of emptiness
- Inappropriate, intense anger, such as frequently losing their temper, being sarcastic or bitter, or having physical fights



Tips for working with someone with BPD: 2

- 1. Suppose the family you are working with has disclosed a diagnosis of BPD. In that case, you have an excellent opportunity to ask this person how they would like guidance/education statements phrased. What are their goals for their child?
- **2.** Create a sense of "us": we're building a team against the problem. Keep the focus on their child and what to do next and how it will help with early development.
- 3. Stay calm. Even though your client may be on an emotional roller coaster, that doesn't mean you have to be. As Great Kids Inc. put it, stay present and connect. If you can maintain a friendly, relaxed, and reassuring tone of voice and body language, then your client will often calm down as well.
- **4.** Focus on the future. If you focus on their past behaviour—or allow them to get stuck in the past—you will reinforce past problems and make them worse. Instead, acknowledge that the past was complicated, but focus on what the person can do now.
- 5. Don't focus on feelings. Since their emotions are so hard to manage, it's best to help them focus on their immediate thoughts and tasks. Avoid asking them how they feel because they usually feel helpless, vulnerable, weak, out-of-control, and like a victim-in-life. When making decisions, ask what they think about that, rather than how they feel about that.

"Supporting those with BPD requires us to find a balance between empathy and boundary setting." - CTRI

- 6. Don't try to change them. You might think that you see the key to solving many of their problems, e.g., stop doing this or that behaviour! But this will backfire on you. First, they have a barrier against having insight into themselves (that's part of the disorder) so that your "constructive feedback" will not get them busy thinking and reflecting on their past behaviour. Instead, it will get them busy defending themselves. Secondly, it will damage your working relationship with them because it will make them feel like you do not like them and do not accept them as they are.
- 7. Be empathetic. Those with BPD appreciate empathy because they often feel criticized, rejected, and alone. Use statements that show empathy and compassion: I see how frustrated you are; that must be hard; I'll work with you on this; this is a confusing situation; I know these are big decisions in your life; I want to help you.
- **8.** Try to remember their emotional state is likely not about you; it's about them and their challenges. Although people with BPD are often in a heightened state of emotion, abuse should not be tolerated. End visits early if they become abusive and discuss with your supervisor.
- Set and be consistent around boundaries. People with BPD see your setting boundaries with them as a form of rejection. It makes them feel bad about themselves, less than. They believe that if you love them, you will tolerate all behaviour on their part to prove it. For boundaries to work, they must have two parts. First, the boundary must be clear. For example, you might tell clients with BPD that calls will not be answered after work hours. It is not sufficient to ask them not to call "too late." They could argue that 2 AM is not too late for them. Second, the boundary must be consistent. Since the boundary will be tested, it must be made clear that there are no exceptions. If asked about an emergency, I suggest you tell them to call a 24/7 helpline or 911.

By following these tips, you, and the family you are working with will have the best working relationship, which will lead to raising a healthy child.

Pam Kollross, BA, is a training coach facilitator with AHVNA.

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¹ List taken from Ashley Boca Mindfulness Foundation website

² List adapted from "7 Tips for working with clients with borderline personality disorder"



"Mothers need just as much attention as a newborn because they too have just been born."

One of my favorite quotations about what it means to become a new parent is by an unknown author, but I feel it speaks to the paradigm shift that occurs when we become a parent: "Mothers need just as much attention as a newborn because they too have just been born."

When a baby comes into this world, the world focuses on that baby, usually at the expense of the mother. When the mother reaches out for help, and we start going into her home to support her, it becomes our job to create a space where she can start taking care of her needs at the same time as taking care of her baby. A good place to begin the conversation with her is by talking about what postpartum depression (PPD) is not, instead of what it is. The subject of PPD has been around for years, but what we are learning about it, and what we see in the families we support, is that it is so much more than "just depression."

We can start dismantling some misconceptions of what it means to struggle with mental health in the postpartum period. If we use the language of PPD, all the other areas a new parent is struggling with—hormone changes, anxiety, adjustment, intrusive thinking, guilt and shame, exhaustion, and an identity shiftare not given the space they deserve to be named and validated. There often is a struggle with depression, and this should be supported, but not at the cost of the rest of the range of experiences. Having a fuller conversation with a new parent helps us support them by building a language they can use to describe what their struggles look like. Anxiety can lead to them worrying about everything. Its effects range from 1) a lack of focus, 2) an inability to make decisions, 3) not letting their babies out of their sight, 4) not being able to eat because they feel a pit in their stomach, and 5) an inability to fall asleep when they are given the opportunity, all the way to 6) having angry outbursts towards people they love, 7) a sense of losing control, and 8) a fear that they

have made the worst decision of their lives by choosing to become a parent.

Another misconception is that only someone who is given a diagnosis of perinatal mood disorder can receive supports. The range of perinatal mental health can include a variation of what has already been discussed. It can also range from mild to moderate to severe. If a new parent is asking for help, instead of relying solely on an official diagnosis, all that needs to be considered is what does that help look like; one size does not fit all. Taking the time to hear their story—understanding what led up to where they are now—can help create a better understanding of what supports they may need. Common contributing factors that increase the likelihood of a parent struggling in their postpartum journey can include being new to Canada, a traumatic birth, a lack of social supports, a personal or family history of mental health struggles, generational trauma, isolation, perfectionism (unrealistic expectations), and other big life events that occurred during the pregnancy. Support can include peer support with someone who has their own lived experience, an in-home worker, PPD support groups, family doctors, social workers, public health nurses, psychotherapy, psychiatry, or a combination of any one of those resources.

This is a very vulnerable time in a new parent's life. Normalizing for them that it is okay if they don't feel okay can be a very important first step for them to ask for and accept the supports they need. Frequently when entering the home, we will focus on the baby and how/if their needs are being met. By taking some time to focus on the mother, we let her know that we see her too, and that when she takes care of her needs, she is better able to take care of her child's needs. Often, new parents feel there's a decrease in their perceived abilities as they are navigating this new paradigm of being called "mom." To encourage them to become experts in meeting their baby's needs, we can help build their self-esteem. We do that by giving

them the power of knowledge, along with the resources, to make the changes they want so that they can become the parent who they thought they had lost sight of.

Many new parents struggle with what it means to be a "good enough mom." Having those conversations challenging what a perfect mom looks like versus what they are already providing for their child can silence their inner critic, and provide a space for them to be in the moment with their family. If we can create space for them to share their struggles, we can begin to work together to bring joy back into their lives. We can show them that, in the words of Leo Buscaglia, "Worry never robs tomorrow of its sorrow, it only saps today of its joy."

Amanda McMillan BA, CPS (Certified Peer Supporter) is the manager of Perinatal Mental Health Programs with Families Matter in Calgary.

Handouts, resources and books:

Journey Resources | Pacific Post Partum Support Society (https://postpartum.org/the-journey/ journey-resources/)

Clinical Tools for Your Practice | The Postpartum Stress Center (https://postpartumstress.com/forprofessionals/assessments/)

Dropping the Baby and Other Scary Thoughts: Breaking the Cycle of Unwanted Thoughts in Motherhood | The Postpartum Stress Center (https://postpartumstress.com/books/dropping-the-baby-and-other-scary-thoughts-breaking-the-cycle-of-unwan=ted-thoughts-inmotherhood/)

Books | The Postpartum Stress Center (https://postpartumstress.com/books/)

Turn On the Switch!

Mental Health Tools to Empower Families

by Carla O'Reilly

The COVID blues have been extremely challenging for families, and now more than ever we need to support and to encourage with simple mental health tools. As a mother and mental health advocate, I created these simple, powerful tools to support and encourage. My hope is to inspire and help create a healthy world where we can find empathy and community as we navigate the storm together.

Check out my 15 wellness tools from my book, *T.U.R.N. O.N. T.H.E. S.W.I.T.C.H! Find a Passion and Obsess about it!* Read on and see how to help transform your family.

Turn on the switch! Choose your thoughts and change to positive!

Start your breakfast by making a list as a family by going around the table naming one thing that you are grateful for. Do this at every meal. You can even make a craft with hearts where your children write out what they are grateful for and put it on the fridge.

Use your imagination and creativity and visualize your success!

Start by teaching your children how to dream big. Ask them what they would like to be when they grow up, and where they would like to travel. Start planning a bucket list as a family.

Recognize the power of your thoughts. Positive energy is invigorating!

Encourage your family to be positive. When things go wrong make a habit of saying, "We can work through this as a team." There is truly no sense in "crying over spilled milk." Teach them to be positive by following the rule. See how easily your day goes.





Nurture your mind, body and spirit continually by doing activities that you love!

Make weekly plans as a family with either movie nights or board game nights, or head to the park or have a nature treasure hunt. These easy activities cost very little, and your children will love the family bonding.

Open your mind to the endless opportunities, set S.M.A.R.T goals and achieve them!

Your family is a team, and everyone needs to help out. This makes the house feel like a home and children will learn to take pride in themselves and their belongings. Set up a chore chart: everyone pitches in and call it "Team <Your Last Name>". Smart goals are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely. Have everyone pick a chore and have them pick a day and follow this weekly. Teach them the importance of goal setting and then reward them.

Never underestimate the power of your strengths. Find out what they are and use them!

Look for opportunities in your children's development to hone in on their strengths and encourage them; it could be sports, school, drawing etc. Sit them down and tell them to be proud and that they have been given a gift. Have them watch a motivational movie about a superhero or a person who has overcome adversity. Watch the lightbulbs glow as they realize they have the power to achieve anything they put their mind to.



The truth will set you free!

When you are struggling, the most important thing to do is to ask for help and talk about your feelings. Use your voice and destroy the shame. You will begin healing that much quicker.

Let your children know when you are having a bad day; they will understand if you make talking about it a normal experience. Make sure that you take time for yourself as a parent. Seek support from other parents, parenting programs or support groups. If you are struggling, consider counselling services and talk about your feelings. When you help yourself, you help your children. I attended a postpartum support group, and it transformed my healing.



Help others! We have two hands: one to help ourselves and one to help someone else.

See what you can do in the community or at the school to help out. Volunteering is an amazing gift and you will feel amazing. Help out a friend, a family member or a neighbour who may need support; it can be a phone call or a chore or a random act of kindness. Again, you will feel amazing.

Exercise every day, and deep belly breathe. Get active!!! This is so therapeutic, and you feel amazing.

Get outside and get active as a family: walk to the park and breathe the fresh air, play and have fun. This helps everyone feel better. Consider a sport: this helps increase selfesteem for children and it's fun for you to watch them develop. Take time every day for exercise and you will feel amazing.

Self-awareness, acceptance, forgiveness and love—use these simple tools from *Behind the Mask* to unlock the door to wellness!

Make these tools something to learn as a family. Encourage your children to love and accept themselves, and that forgiveness is a gift you give to yourself. Make sure to praise your children for each and every unique personality trait they have. Take time also for yourself to do some inner work and take a look at awareness and acceptance. Above all else, encourage self-love. If you need further information you can order my book, *Behind the Mask – Trust, Adjust and Transform your Life*, which is a wellness workbook that uses these tools. Check out my website at www.thesmilingmask.ca.

Write you story, re-write your story, try something completely different and be the star of your life!

This is where you start your day—by truly being amazed at all that you are and all you can accomplish. You are amazing; you are a star! Make sure you share this mantra with your kids. Tell them every day they are amazing. Give yourself a pat on the back

for all you do as parents; the many dishes, meals, chores, caregiving etc., won't be unnoticed. Remember you are creating the children of the future.



Inspiration is everywhere; find a passion and obsess about it. You will help make the world a more amazing place!

Take time to sit down with your family and decide as a team how you would like to volunteer—it could be helping out with a food drive on Halloween or helping an elderly couple with snow removal, or perhaps reaching out to a neighbor who needs help or a family member. Remember, peace begins with a smile so smile at everyone you meet. Also remember to spread kindness on social media.

Take time to laugh each and every day, laugh out loud, and even better laugh with a friend! Laugh at yourself. Don't take yourself too seriously.

Humour is the best medicine and I make a practice to use it daily. Make a habit every day to tell a funny joke at breakfast. Watch a funny movie; have some laughs with the other parents. Remember, parenting isn't easy and

you have to find the humor in the everyday things that happen.



connections

Coming up

The next issue of Connections will focus on celebrating 20 years of home visitation. If you would like to submit an article or resource for this topic, please contact the AHVNA office January 15, 2022.

Hearing from you

Connections is published two times per year by the Alberta Home Visitation Network Association. We welcome comments, questions and feedback on this newsletter. Please direct any comments to Lavonne Roloff, AHVNA provincial director, by phone at 780.429.4787 or by email to info@ahvna.org.

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Confidence comes from within. Compliments are fabulous; supercharge your self-talk and see what you can accomplish!

Teach your children about positive affirmations (check out the author, Louis Hay). Positive affirmations make you feel good. Write out on a piece of paper a positive affirmation, for example, "I am beautiful, smart and kind" and draw a rainbow over top and some hearts. Then put it on the fridge. Make sure the kids read this every day and make one for yourself as a parent. You will be amazing. Make sure you say affirmations throughout the day.

Heroes, mentors, coaches and balcony people: find them, listen and learn from their wisdom. Balcony people cheer your every victory and will carry you when you need assistance. Support is all around you!

Surround yourself with balcony people. These are the people who will cheer your every victory and hold your hand when you need support. Encourage each other every day as a family and find some heroes you can look up to for parenting support and also for ways to live your life in a positive way. Remember, you are a coach and a leader to your children: encourage them, teach them, and remember, they are watching you, so be proud!

Visit Carla O'Reilly's website for more information on her books and educational work for families at www.thesmilingmask.ca.





Alberta Home Visitation Network Association

If you would like additional copies of the publication, visit the AHVNA website at www.ahvna.org/Resources/Publications/. See Vol 17 Issue 2.