Visit the Teladoc Medical Experts website for more information

As we move through the second half of the year, August is a great time to reflect on how we care for ourselves and those around us. Continue reading to learn how staying socially connected can support your emotional and physical health. Explore strategies for maintaining balance as part of the "sandwich generation" — adults balancing caregiving duties for both their children and their aging parents. With back-to-school season around the corner, navigate supporting teens' mental health insights and practical ways to support the young people in your life, along with Canadian resources for those in need.

How to stay socially connected in a healthy way

Humans are social creatures. We need social relationships and communities to grow, to thrive and to stay physically and emotionally healthy. Even the most introverted people need interaction with others from time to time.

Social isolation and loneliness can result in psychological and physical disintegration. Adults who are lonely or socially isolated are at higher risks for:

- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Obesity
- Anxiety and depression
- Cognitive decline and more[1]

Gather friends to do activities you enjoy.

Older adults are at a higher risk for isolation. Reasons why include limited mobility, hearing, vision and memory loss.

Connect with yourself

Knowing yourself is the first step in finding and establishing new social connections. Ask yourself:

- How much time do you prefer to spend with others?
- Do you prefer to connect with people in person? Via video chats or on the phone? Are text messages enough for you? Do you like a combo of them all?
- What kind of interaction feels best to you? Do you prefer casual chitchat? Deeper conversations? Do you just want to be near another person even if you're not talking?
- Are there people in your life who help you grow? Are there people in your life you think might be holding you back?

Connect with others

Armed with the knowledge of how you like to socialize, create a plan for yourself. Don't be afraid to speak up. If you find yourself in a social situation that makes you uncomfortable, say so.
Communication is key. Here are some ideas to connect with others:

At work

- Start a lunch group.
- Schedule virtual coffee chats with coworkers online.
- Create a walking group.
- Give praise freely and often! Tell your colleagues what they do that inspires you or makes you grateful.

At home

- Eat dinner with your family. Share about your day.
- Plan a family trip.
- Schedule a recurring date night with your partner.
- Have a screen-free night and do something creative together.
- Tell your kids and/or partner why you're proud of them.

With other loved ones

- Schedule a weekly or monthly phone date with a friend.
- Find a workout buddy to enjoy time together while getting some physical activity.
- Tell a good friend why you value their friendship—it can mean a lot!

There's no right or wrong way to find social balance.

Be respectful of your comfort levels and those of others. In turn, you may connect with them and find the community and companionship you need.

[1]https://www.statcan.gc.ca/o1/en/plus/4881-look-loneliness-among-seniors

Steps to take care of yourself while caring for others

We are a population of caregivers.

We take care of children, spouses, our homes and our pets. Increasingly, people in the middle of their lives (those aged 35-55) are being called to provide care for their aging parents and relatives while still caring for their younger family members. As people are living longer and having kids later in life, this group is growing.[1]

Today, caregivers often get stuck in the middle, helping parents and children. Hence the term "sandwich generation."

What it takes

Any of these jobs could take all your spare time. Combining the needs of younger and older family members can be overwhelming. **Add in trying to balance your professional demands, and it's extra stressful.**

You're tasked with organizing on multiple levels. You're often requested to be in more than one place at the same time. No party in this equation wants their needs relegated to second (or third) place. And there is the emotional toll to consider.

Who takes care of you?

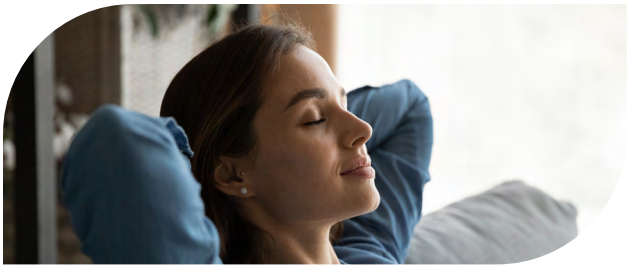
When you fly on a plane, they tell you to put on your own oxygen mask before helping someone else. This means you need to take care of yourself first. That's what self-care is all about.

Take the time to consider all that you're going through physically and emotionally. Coming to terms with that requires an emotional investment. Sadly, both jobs only last for a limited time. The reversal of roles with a parent is one part grief, one part gratitude, maybe even one part anger.

Recognizing that you also have needs in this equation starts you on the right path. Like your younger and older family members, you may also need mental and physical support to get through this time.

Steps to take

Self-care is not selfish. There are ways you can take care of yourself and others by being conscious of your needs.



- **Be self-aware**. Understand your own needs—physical and emotional. Prioritize them.
- **Organize.** Leverage technology to manage calendars, create appointment reminders and store information.
- **Set boundaries.** Don't be available round the clock. Communicate the times you are available and times you need for yourself.
- **Learn coping skills** to manage stress.
- **Stay healthy.** Remember you need sleep, nutrition and exercise. A healthier you is a healthier caregiver.
- **Communicate.** Be open about your own limitations. Practice honest conversations with kids and parents.
- **Practice gratitude.** Be thankful for the chance to serve as a caregiver. Appreciate the small moments.

The goal is to be the caring, thoughtful family member you know you can be without losing yourself.

[1]https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-652-x/89-652-x2024002-eng.htm

Ways to support teens' mental health

A new school year brings a fresh start for students and families alike. There are new classes and new routines to get used to. **And in many cases, there is a need for mental health support.**

Academic demands and social pressures can increase the levels of stress and anxiety in teens and young adults. Unfortunately, these are difficult times for young people in Canada.

According to Statistics Canada's 2023 Canadian Health Survey on Children and Youth[1]:

26% **of teen girls rated their mental health as "fair" or "poor"**
compared to 12% in 2019

Teen girls were the most likely to report a decline in mental health

Academic pressure, life changes, and the lasting effects of the pandemic were key factors

Start talking

If you have a teen in your life, it's important to remain connected. Encourage teens and young adults to reach out when they need support.

You can provide support by:

- Encouraging healthy sleep, nutrition and exercise habits. A healthy body leads to a healthy mind.
- Celebrating their hobbies and other positive social networks.
- Helping with time management and organization.
- Asking them to practice relaxation and mindfulness exercises with you.
- Setting realistic expectations about academic or sports-related performance.
- Educating them about excessive technology/social media use and its impact on mental health.

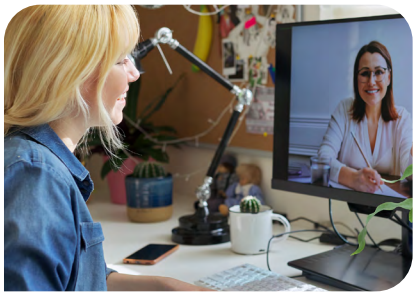
Conversation starters

I've been worried about you. Can we talk about what you are experiencing?

It seems like you are going through a difficult time. How can I help?

I'm concerned about your safety. Have you thought about harming yourself or others?

As adults, the more we talk about our feelings and mental health in general, the less of a stigma will be attached to it. We all experience emotions. There's no shame in telling your teens you feel sad or anxious and why. Being a good role model could open the door to their sharing.



Help our teens

There is good news. As a society, we are taking steps to help our children and remove the stigma around asking for mental healthcare.

The presence of therapists and social workers in schools has shown a positive impact on teen mental health. Parents and educators are learning how to spot the signs of children who need help.

It's never easy for anyone to talk about feelings of depression, anxiety or any mental health issues. Recognizing symptoms is a step in the right direction toward getting help. Offering to help them can make a difference in both of your lives.

If you or someone you know needs help, here are Canadian resources:

- **9-8-8 Suicide Crisis Helpline – Call or text 9-8-8, available 24/7**
- **Kids Help Phone – 1-800-668-6868 or text CONNECT to 686868**
- **Wellness Together Canada – wellnesstogether.ca**
- **Centre for Suicide Prevention – suicideinfo.ca**

[1]https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/240910/dq240910a-eng.htm

Contact Us Today

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or call 1-877-419-2378

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