

Sunrise Update

JUNE 29, 2017



Building Resiliency in our Youth

“**FRIENDS**” is an acronym that represents the strategies and skills that individuals can use to effectively manage anxiety:

- F** - Feelings
- R** - Remember to Relax
- I** - I can do it! I can try my best!
- E** - Explore solutions and Coping Step Plans
- N** - Now reward yourself! You have done your best!
- D** - Don't forget to practice!
- S** - Smile! Stay calm and talk to your support networks

If you have questions, would like more information, or want access to direct mental health services in the region you can reach the Mental Health Intake Team by calling:

1-306-786-0558 or
1-888-989-8444

or visit the Sunrise Health Region website at

www.sunrisehealthregion.sk.ca

According to the Canadian Mental Health Association, 10-20% of Canadian youth are affected by mental illness with anxiety disorders identified as the most common mental health problem. We all feel nervous or worried at times, which can be a helpful motivator or warn us of danger. However, for some, anxiety can be overwhelming and seriously impact how they think, feel or act. Anxiety disorders can lead to delayed personal development, social isolation, academic underachievement and depression.

“Children are incredibly vulnerable and they face a lot of pressure these days. It is important for parents and educators to pay attention to children’s mental health to ensure that they are coping well and that they are able to focus on things like academics and peer and family relationships,” said Britton Houdek, Clinical Lead for Child and Youth Mental Health at Sunrise Health Region.

We can help children deal with challenging situations by teaching them the social and emotional skills necessary to manage and prevent anxiety. Sunrise Health Region’s Mental Health and Addiction Services team have been busy providing training to teachers and school counselors in the Good Spirit and Christ the Teacher School Divisions that does just that.

FRIENDS is an evidence-based, classroom delivered program that is supported by the World Health Organization. It is designed to build resilience in children and families by teaching them important life skills, how to cope with difficult situations, how to be a good friend and how to relax when feeling stressed. FRIENDS aims to enhance the natural lessons we teach children about relationships, connecting with their peers, feeling confident in their actions and staying well.

“Right now we are piloting in 16 different schools across the region. There have been about 750 students participating since the middle of April,” said Houdek. “We are working to implement the program into all grade 1, 4, 6, and 9 classrooms this fall.”

The FRIENDS curriculum is delivered to children and youth at key developmental stages and integrates well with the health curriculum that is already in place. The parent component allows them the opportunity to be active participants in their child’s education. Activities are sent home with children to encourage parents/guardians to take a proactive approach to getting to know their child, what they are feeling, how they are coping and helping them learn where their child may need more support.

The response from teachers and students has been incredible. Teachers have commented that the conversation generated from their students after implementing the program is remarkable. Students are learning how to better communicate and problem solve when faced with challenges.

The goal of the FRIENDS initiative is to increase children’s ability to cope with difficulties they encounter. When we teach children to identify stressors and provide them with coping skills, we help normalize the importance of mental wellness and make it easier to ask for help. This has a direct effect on the way they interact with their peers, family and community. It is our sincere hope that by teaching and working with our children we can decrease the stigma around mental health in our communities.



Britton Houdek, presenting about FRIENDS to the Community Health Advisory Committees (CHACs).