

**CMHA Mental Health Week**  
May 2-8, 2022

**#GetReal**  
mentalhealthweek.ca

**La Semaine de la santé mentale de l'ACSM**  
du 2 au 8 mai 2022

**#ParlerPourVrai**  
semainesantementale.ca



## CMHA Mental Health Week – What's it's all about

The insight

- 1. When someone is struggling, people tend to offer solutions—or judgment—when what is needed most is empathy. We need to tune in before we weigh in.**
  - When someone is struggling with their mental health, our gut reaction might be to want to fix it.
  - When we jump in to solve things, we might be missing what they really need, which is to know they're not alone.
  - Empathy includes recognizing others' perspective as truth, being non-judgmental, understanding another's feelings and being able to communicate that back to them.<sup>1</sup>

What is empathy and what are the benefits?

- 2. Empathy, or the ability to understand another's perspective and share their feelings, can increase compassion, and help reduce and resolve conflict.<sup>2</sup>**
  - The importance of empathy is the theme for CMHA's 71<sup>st</sup> Annual Mental Health Week.
  - Empathy is the ability to understand how someone feels because you can imagine what it is like to be them.<sup>3</sup>
  - Empathy is overwhelmingly correlated to compassionate, prosocial, less aggressive and helping behaviour;<sup>4</sup>
  - In adolescent friendships, higher levels of empathy are associated with better conflict management and conflict resolution.<sup>5</sup>
  - Empathy is a central part of international conflict resolution. For example: Empathetic negotiation played a critical role in the success of conflict mediation between the Colombian government and FARC rebels in the 2010s.<sup>6</sup>
  - Empathy promotes a feeling of emotional connection between individuals, groups families and communities.<sup>7</sup>
  - Empathy involves putting yourself in the other person's shoes and understanding **why** they may be feeling what they're feeling.

<sup>1</sup> Unknown (2020). Empathy builds connection. University of Kentucky. <https://powell.ca.uky.edu/files/empathybuildsconnection.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Klimecki OM. The Role of Empathy and Compassion in Conflict Resolution. *Emotion Review*. 2019;11(4):310-325. doi:10.1177/1754073919838609;

<sup>3</sup> Somson, S. (2014). *Developing Empathy in the Classroom*. Corwin-connect. <https://corwin-connect.com/2014/06/developing-empathy-classroom/>

<sup>4</sup> Klimecki.

<sup>5</sup> De Wied.M et al (2007). Empathy and Conflict Resolution in Friendship Relations Among Adolescents. *Aggressive Behavior*. Volume 33. Pp 48–55. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/ab.20166>

<sup>6</sup> Centre for Empathy in International Affairs. (2016). *Empathy in Conflict Resolution: If, How and When*.

<sup>7</sup> Somson.

- In becoming aware of the root cause of why a person feels the way they do we can better understand and provide relevant support and suggestions.<sup>8</sup>
- A person's distress increases when they feel isolated. By showing empathy, you can help someone in distress to calm down.

The opportunity

### **3. Empathy is a skill that can be learned, and it's fundamental to successful relationships at home, work and school.**

- When speaking with someone experiencing a challenge, to show empathy you can:<sup>9</sup>
  - Consider what you know about them and be willing to learn more
  - Not rush to judgement
  - Listen attentively without offering solutions
  - Resist the urge to interrupt and share your personal experience
  - Focus on understanding *how* the person feels and *why* they feel that way
  - Take time to reflect
- Employees with highly empathic leaders experience less burnout.<sup>10</sup>
- When a manager is empathetic, their team displays improved work performance.<sup>11</sup>
- Employees who experience empathy from their managers in the workplace report higher engagement, increased feelings of inclusivity, better work-life balance and are less likely to leave their workplaces if their perspectives are heard and respected.<sup>12</sup>
- Classrooms with higher levels of empathy have students who are more engaged, have higher academic achievement, better communication skills, better relationships and lower likelihood of bullying, aggressive behaviours and emotional disorders.<sup>13</sup>
- When educators demonstrate that they care and expect students to do the same, it can help students stand up for someone who is teased, notice and reject stereotypes, respect and value differences, widen their circle of concern, listen closely to peers and adults, manage difficult feelings like anger or frustration and navigate social situations.<sup>14</sup>

Get involved

### **4. The Canadian Mental Health Association's annual Mental Health Week is a social change campaign to shift attitudes and perceptions about mental health. The 2022 theme is the importance of empathy.**

- Each May, people in Canadian communities, schools, workplaces and legislatures rally around CMHA Mental Health Week.
- First marked by CMHA in 1951, May 2-8, 2022, marks the 71<sup>st</sup> annual Mental Health Week in Canada.

<sup>8</sup> Kisling, J. (2018). The Difference Between Empathy and Sympathy. *Psychiatric Medical Care*.  
<https://www.psychmc.com/articles/empathy-vs-sympathy>

<sup>9</sup> Bariso, J. *There Are Actually 3 Types of Empathy. Here's How They Differ--and How You Can Develop Them All*. Inc.  
<https://www.inc.com/justin-bariso/there-are-actually-3-types-of-empathy-heres-how-they-differ-and-how-you-can-develop-them-all.html>

<sup>10</sup> The power of empathy in times of crisis and beyond <https://www.catalyst.org/reports/empathy-work-strategy-crisis>

<sup>11</sup> Gentry, W. A., Weber, T. J. and Golnaz Sadri. (2007). Empathy in the Workplace: A Tool for Effective Leadership. *Center for Creative Leadership*. <https://cclinnovation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/empathyintheworkplace.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> The power of empathy in times of crisis and beyond <https://www.catalyst.org/reports/empathy-work-strategy-crisis>

<sup>13</sup> Jones, S. et. al. (2018). How to Build Empathy and Strengthen Your School Community. Making Care Common Project.  
<https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-for-educators/how-build-empathy-strengthen-school-community>

<sup>14</sup> Jones, S. et. al. (2018). How to Build Empathy and Strengthen Your School Community. Making Care Common Project.  
<https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-for-educators/how-build-empathy-strengthen-school-community>

- Mental Health Week is a social change campaign to educate the public and shift beliefs and perceptions about mental health. It helps promote behaviours and attitudes that foster well-being, support good mental health and create a culture of understanding and acceptance.
- Visit [www.mentalhealthweek.ca](http://www.mentalhealthweek.ca) for info and tools about CMHA Mental Health Week.
- Connect with us on social media using the hashtags #GetReal and #MentalHealthWeek.
- Stay tuned for hundreds of local events like open houses, speakers' series and virtual celebrations, plus two nationwide events, including a [Virtual Mental Health Week English event on May 2](#) and a [Virtual Mental Health Week French event on May 4](#).
- Mental Health Week is generously supported by major sponsor Beneva, sponsors The Medicine Shoppe, Not Myself Today and Workplace Strategies for Mental Health (Canada Life) and by media partners Twitter Canada, Rogers tv, Outfront, DailyHive and TikTok.

Get help

**5. If you or someone you know needs mental health support, there are free programs and services available to help.**

- To access free mental health and addictions programs, services and supports tailored to the needs of your local community, please [contact your local CMHA](#).
- For free resources and 24/7 counselling over the phone, please visit the Government of Canada's [Wellness Together](#) portal.
- If you are thinking about suicide, please call the Canada Suicide Prevention Service toll-free at 1-833-456-4566 (1-866-277-3553 in Quebec).