

**MCEC Zoom Meeting with Youth Ministers, Workers, Sponsors
May 5, 2020**

**Caring for the mental health of youth and families during physical isolation:
How have you been caring for the mental health of youth and their families as we continue in
physical isolation?**

- Encouraging open conversations on grief and loss
- Creating space for normalizing and being consistent with specific times to connect online and for Zoom Sunday school.
- Spending energy on increasing the amount of connections with youth and junior youth in more personal ways.
- Sharing positive coping skills through games and activities like “beat the boredom blues bingo” that invites them to consider simple and easily completed tasks or goals.
- Hosting a read-a-long group with the youth or junior youth choosing from a specific book list. Encouraging questions and discussion after the chapter is completed, opens the way for reflection and connection. Engaging a story promotes refocusing and gaining perspective away from what can be overwhelming about reality.
- We were trying to be super creative early on with lots of participation but as we settle in for the new normal, engagement has dropped off with some youth working fulltime hours in grocery stores, drive through business, agriculture, etc. Continuing to check in with youth individually is important.
- Exhaustion has set in and youth and their parents are getting weary of so much screen time. Yet this is the main way we can connect with each other in the church and as pastors and youth workers.
- Some churches are working at connecting online with youth while being tech free. They are invited to do activities together like paint nights where they all work on the same painting together, cook something together or decorating cupcakes. Some preparation is involved so that everyone has access to the same supplies or items can be dropped off with no physical contact prior to event.
- Connecting with parents through Zoom when children are in bed or engaged in something gives the parents a chance to express themselves and their need for support. Spending time in prayer together is a vital way to express to God what may not be able to be named through sharing.
- Parents need to be encouraged to make space to express their frustrations and their challenges. *“Sometimes you just need to talk about something, not to get sympathy or help, but just to kill its power by allowing the truth of things to hit the air” Karen Salmansohn*

- Laughing together by sharing jokes, going for walks, putting boundaries around beginning and ending work, and connecting with your friends or support groups online also supports our mental health and our ability to be present to the needs of youth and junior youth.

Resources:

- [MCEC Junior Youth Virtual Retreat 2020 - What's in your web: Caring for what really matters!](#) In a culture that pulls junior youth in so many different directions, how are they really caring for themselves, their close relationships, their relationship with God, and their relationship with others? Junior Youth are invited to explore who they are, experience what connects them to God and others, and stretch their personal web. This material can be used for a dedicated time with breaks or over multiple online meetings with your junior youth.
- **Graduation** is coming without the pomp, rituals or processions. Hannah Lee Sandoval in her blog, *Reinventing graduation: 3 ways to honor milestones in the midst of pandemic*, emphasises how important community and connection are. It is still important to mark the transition from childhood to adulthood. Acknowledging grads in worship, reviewing the wonderful things they have participated in or given leadership to, can help them focus on the positive. Involve your church community in giving grads a digital card by recording messages of congratulations and sharing what you appreciate about them. <https://fulleryouthinstitute.org/blog/reinventing-graduation>
- **Self-care as a leader:** How do you deal with your own resistance to surrounding yourself with support? Erica Layne encourages us to embrace that getting help doesn't mean we have failed, rather it acknowledges that we can't always do everything on our own. Reaching out for support is a risk worth taking and can be very empowering. <https://ericalayne.co/faulty-beliefs-mental-health/>
- Are we asking parents of youth, junior youth and children how they are doing? Many are balancing working at home, managing online learning with their children, managing physical distancing from other families and feeling distant from their church community. Claire Gagne gives voice to the immense pressure parents have been dealing with throughout this time. As churches it is important to be listening and supporting the parents as well as the youth and children we care for. <https://www.todayparent.com/blogs/opinion/why-is-no-one-talking-about-how-unsustainable-this-is-for-working-parents/>
- Lucas Randall, in *4 Self-care moves to make our summer great despite the pandemic*, suggests we can create a healthier experience if we make space for mourning, gratitude, rest and spontaneity. <https://blog.youthspecialties.com/4-self-care-moves-to-make->

[our-summer-great-despite-the-pandemic/](#)

- This [Self-Care Wellness Challenge](#) calendar pdf is an additional resource from the Government of Ontario. Used by permission.