

# *First Assist* Program Workbook



# The First Assist Team

## Glenn Crichton - Project Coordinator

Glenn has an extensive background in sports as a player, coach, manager and Director of Development for the Ontario Hockey Association. He was appointed Director of Operations for Team Canada Selects for the 3 Nations Cup and was awarded the Gold Stick recognising his contributions to hockey in Ontario. Glenn, along with his wife Roslyn, are the co-founders of Coping Bereavement and for the past 28 years has served as Associate Director of the Coping Centre working with people of all ages in the area of loss and bereavement. Coping works with the O.H.F member partners in supporting teams and players when loss has occurred. Glenn also co-authored the book "Blindsided- A Game Plan for Grief", provides educational seminars and speaks across the country on the profound impact of loss and how it can impact mental wellness.

## Rebecca Pister - Program Developer

Rebecca holds a doctorate in Community Psychology from Wilfrid Laurier University. She has been working in youth mental health promotion for more than 15 years and is an often-requested educator and presenter on youth mental health. Over the past several years Rebecca has been increasingly involved with the hockey community through mental health presentations to both the Kitchener Lady Rangers and the Rangers, running safeTALKs for the Guelph Storm and both Rangers teams, and delivering mental health presentations for the OHF U-15 training camps in Kitchener. She is currently the Wellness, Well-being, and Inclusion Lead at Cambridge Memorial Hospital. In her spare time, she loves to swim, cook, try her hand at home renovations and hang out with her family.

## Jessica Schumacher - Seminar Facilitator

Jessica was born and raised in Kitchener, and attended Wilfrid Laurier University for Child Education Development, and Conestoga College for Recreation and Leisure Services. Jessica has worked for the Canadian Mental Health Association running peer-led mental health promotion teams and mental health education sessions. She is motivated and enthusiastic and is passionate about programs that help youth grow and develop their own well-being. Aside from her professional background, sports and fitness have always been a huge part of her life. From playing on in-school teams to competitive leagues (including rep basketball for the OBA's), to adult recreational groups, Jessica loves spending time being active every day. She is excited to be working with elite athletes in a new capacity.

## Doug Ranton - Seminar Facilitator

Doug is a retired guidance counsellor and physical and health education teacher. He spent many hours coaching basketball, football, baseball, rugby, and badminton at both the high school and club level. In 2014, Doug, Sandra, their son Trevor had their lives turned upside down when they lost their son and brother, Jacob, to suicide. A huge part of their grieving process has been their involvement in suicide awareness, education, and prevention including supporting others who have experienced a loss to suicide and working with the Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council. Doug was also the alumni representative on the University of Waterloo's Committee on Student Mental Health ensuring the implementation of recommendations regarding student well-being. Doug and Sandra spend many hours on the golf course, curling rink, Bruce Trail and volunteering in their community.

## Pat Rivett - Seminar Facilitator

Pat is a graduate of Western University, Wilfrid Laurier and Conestoga College. She recently retired as Human Resources Director for the Waterloo Regional Police Service after 28 years service. Pat now provides HR Consulting and Coaching in her own practice. She has extensive experience in Human Rights, Conflict Management, Mediation, Crisis Intervention and other areas of Human Resources Management. She has completed certificates in Positive Psychology, Life Coaching, Grief and Mental Health. After the loss of her husband Paul, 8 years ago, Pat discovered a passion for supporting grieving people and volunteers as a widow's group facilitator at the Coping Centre and joined the Board of Directors at Hospice Wellington. In her spare time she enjoys spending time with family and friends, being in nature, travelling, hiking, kayaking, curling, cottaging, watercolour painting, and rug hooking.

# Message from the Chairman

## Scott McCrory



The OJHL Foundation and in particular our First Assist Program has been a beacon of light in helping many young men through their struggles of dealing with poor mental health and anxiety.

Special thanks to Glenn Crichton and the Coping Centre and Rebecca Pister, PhD for all their help with this amazing program that helps to train young minds, encourages assistance when needed and provides the support and resources to take advantage of.

Additional thanks for the wonderful job that all the professional facilitators working with our member teams and players do throughout the year. I would also like to acknowledge the Legacy Foundation of Canada and Tony and Amy Campbell for their support of mental health and the First Assist Program.

Finally, thank you to the OJHL Foundation Board of Directors and Executive Director Rick Morocco for all the work they have done over the past several years on this program and the OJHL Foundation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott McCrory". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Scott McCrory  
Chairman  
OJHL Foundation

## OJHL Foundation Board of Directors

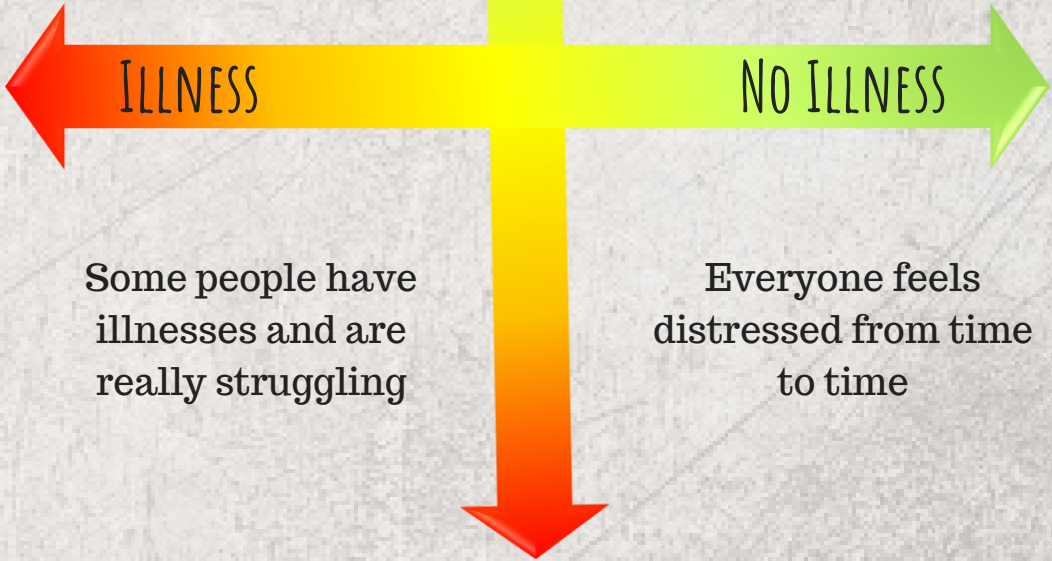
Chair - Scott McCrory  
Director - Bill Feaver  
Director - David Hladin  
Director - Richard Pilosof  
Executive Director - Rick Morocco



FEELING GREAT!

Most people with illnesses are doing great

Most of the time we're feeling great mentally and physically



Some people have illnesses and are really struggling

Everyone feels distressed from time to time

FEELING AWFUL!

HOW ARE YOU DOING?

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# 5 QUICK FACTS ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

You can't have physical health without mental health.

Everyone has mental health.

Mental health and mental illness are not the same thing.

Just like with physical fitness, we need to work at being mentally fit.

Our mental health affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make decisions.

# How Stressed Out Are You?

**Step 1:** Circle how often you have felt this way in the past month  
0 = Never 1 = Almost Never 2 = Sometimes 3 = Fairly Often 4 = Very Often

**Step 2:** Add up your answers to get your score.

		0	1	2	3	4
1	In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?	0	1	2	3	4
2	In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?	0	1	2	3	4
3	In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and “stressed”?	0	1	2	3	4
4	In the last month, how often have you felt unsure about your ability to handle your personal problems?	0	1	2	3	4
5	In the last month, how often have you felt that things weren’t going your way?	0	1	2	3	4
6	In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?	0	1	2	3	4
7	In the last month, how often have you been unable to control irritations in your life?	0	1	2	3	4
8	In the last month, how often have you felt that you couldn’t get on top of things?	0	1	2	3	4
9	In the last month, how often have you been angry because of things that were outside of your control?	0	1	2	3	4
10	In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?	0	1	2	3	4

## About your score:

Total: \_\_\_\_\_

Average for guys in your age group is about 14 or 15.  
20 or over? You're considered high stress.

If you're feeling really stressed or overwhelmed it might be a good idea to talk to someone who can help get you back on track.

Stress is **less about the event itself and more about how we react to what is happening**. We feel stressed when we believe the situation we are in requires more skill or ability than what we have in order to be able to complete the task successfully.

## Stressors in Elite Sports



### Organizational

Tied to the structure and politics

### Competitive

Related to your ability to play the game

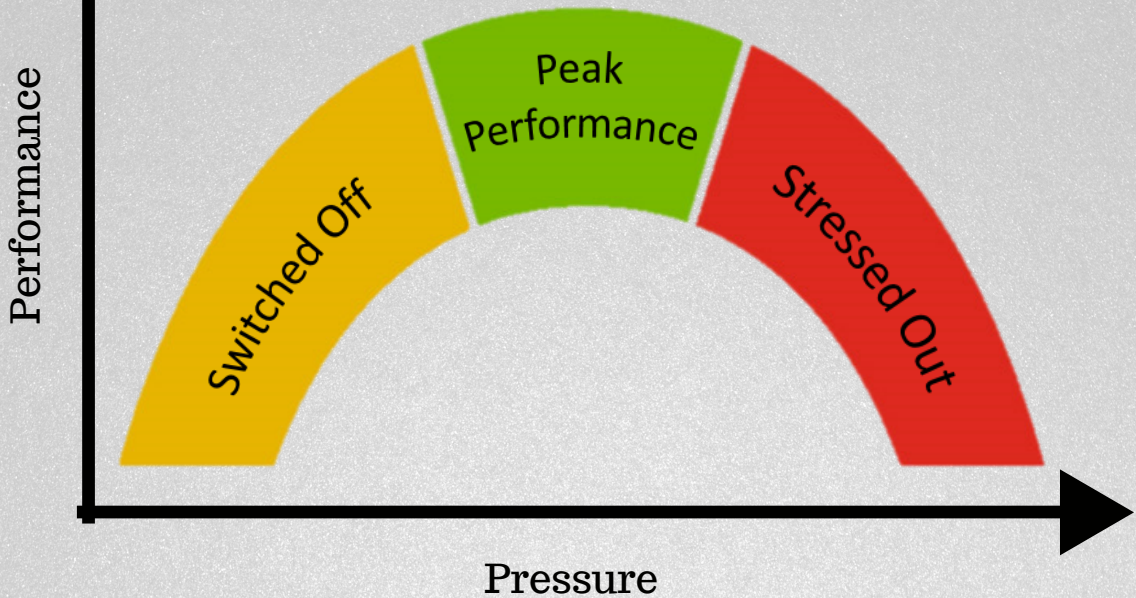
### Personal

Everything outside of hockey

### Other

Anything else?

# How Does Pressure Really Impact Performance?



## The Impact of Too Much Stress

### Mental

- Poor brain function
- Lowered concentration and attention span
- Poor memory
- Difficulty making decisions
- Mental illness

### Physical

- Trouble eating
- Hard to sleep
- Always tired
- Physical illness
- Headaches
- Sore muscles

### Well-being

- Feel anxious
- Get angry easily
- Negative thoughts
- Feel nervous
- Irritable
- Impatience

**Stress is inevitable. Stressed out is optional.**



# What's the Deal with Mental Toughness?

Mental toughness is more than just a word coaches and athletes toss around. It's an important part of what it takes to be successful in elite level sports.

GOOGLE THIS!

## Some tips from Olympic athletes... and the Navy SEALS.

### Talk positively to yourself

Your brain is always going. It's estimated you say 300 to 1000 words to yourself per minute. Olympic athletes and SEALS agree: those words need to be positive.

### Set goals

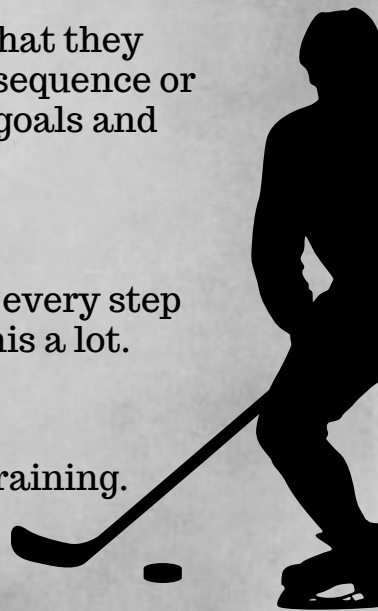
The best athletes had clear daily goals. They knew what they wanted to accomplish each day, each workout, each sequence or interval. They were determined to accomplish these goals and focused fully on doing so.

### Practice visualization

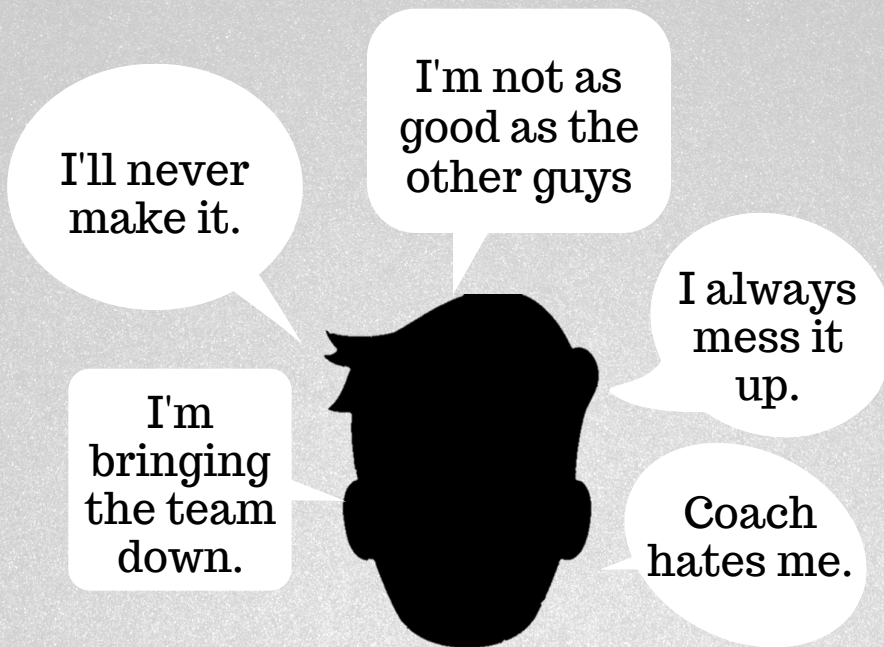
Close your eyes. See the big challenge. Walk through every step of it. Sound silly? Maybe, but the best of the best do this a lot.

### Use simulations

The best athletes made extensive use of simulation training. They approached training runs, routines, plays, or scrimmages in practice as if it were the real deal.



# Switching Off the Negative Talk



## Identify

"I'm a failure."

## Stop

Try to think or say out loud: "shut up", or "stop it", or "this isn't true".

## Replace

"I'm good at this I just didn't do well today. I'll do better next time."

## Your turn

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# Are you thriving? Or just surviving?



True self-care often is about making the choice to build a life you don't need to regularly escape from (Brianna Wiest). This means taking care of ourselves in more ways than one, more days than not.

How are you taking care of yourself?

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# How Can Mindfulness Help?



Improves mental health.



Boosts confidence so you aren't stuck in negative thought patterns.



Gives you better emotional control in the heat of the moment.



Improves endurance and recovery time.



Increases concentration so you stay focused and in the zone when it matters.



Reduces physical discomfort.



Improves connections between body and brain.



Helps you adapt so that you can get back on track faster.



Reduces stress and anxiety on and off the ice.

Mindfulness is about paying attention, to the present moment, without judgement.

## When Can We Use Mindfulness?

When your mind is racing.  
When you feel anxious.  
To stop negative thoughts.

While you listen to music.  
Before practice.  
As part of a pre-game ritual.

Anytime and anywhere.

## Some Examples of Mindfulness

### Pay Attention to Your Breathing.

How are you breathing? Deep? Shallow? Fast? Slow? Try to breathe more slowly and deeply. 5 seconds to inhale. 5 seconds to exhale. Take 5 breaths like that. If your mind wanders that's ok. Just bring it back to focus on your breathing.  
**Remember, we have to take life one breath at a time. That's really all we've got.**

### Pay Attention to Something New.

Pay attention to something you weren't paying attention to a second ago. Maybe it's a sound, an object in the room, or the colour of the walls. Pay attention to it for 10 seconds and build up time from there.

**We are usually caught up in our heads somewhere else. If we pay attention to something new that brings us back to the moment.**


### Pay Attention to the Music.

Instead of focusing on the lyrics pay attention to the music. What instruments do you hear? Is the song loud or soft? Is it fast or slow? How does the music make you feel? Can you feel the beat of the music in your body?

**When you really pay attention to the music it carries you, one second at a time, and keeps you in the present.**


# Dealing Day to Day

## What works for other guys?




Going through tough times there isn't one thing you can say works. **There isn't one magic potion or spell. You're going to have to find what works for you.** For me that was getting in the right mindset, being around people I enjoy, sitting for an hour listening to music, or watching a movie, or just resting. Some people might want to hang out with a bunch of people, some people might want to take that time for their mental well-being on their own. Some people like to talk to people, whether that's a sports psychologist or just a friend. **You've got to find what makes you the most comfortable and helps you out of those areas of anxiousness and stress.**

Scott Walker




**I've started to reach out. I'm a talker and I have to verbalize how I'm feeling and that helps.** Even if it's just a ten minute conversation and tell them how I'm feeling or what I'm feeling. I find that's the best way instead of just letting it pile up in your mind and dealing with it on your own.

Tanner Bull



I learned to take control of my schedule. As a professional, you're called upon to do a lot off the ice as well for your team and sometimes **I had to back off some of those appearances because my schedule was getting so full and it was starting to affect how I played, my performance.** Taking control of that, taking control of my time, was probably one of the biggest issues I had to overcome. That was one of my big issues. Being too busy.

Ron Ellis



If you're not working on your physical fitness how are you going to be in the ice? If you're not working on your mental wellness how are you going to be in life? **I use it as a tool before it gets to anxiety or before it gets to any of that. I just like to keep my mental wellness in check.** It's important to me and it's important to the people around me.

Ben Fanelli

# Separating Myth from Fact

**Myth: People with mental illness can't handle the normal stresses of life.**

Stress is hard for everyone, mental illness or not. By learning solid coping strategies people with mental illnesses can handle stress as well as anyone else.



**Myth: Depression is a character flaw and people should just 'snap out of it'.**

Research shows that depression has nothing to do with being lazy or weak. You can't snap out of depression any more than you can snap out of having cancer.

**Myth: People with mental illnesses are less intelligent**

Intelligence has nothing to do with mental illnesses. However, some mental illnesses can make it harder to remember facts or get along with others, making it seem like they someone is cognitively challenged.



**Myth: Addiction is a choice and shows a lack of willpower**

While the person may have made an initial choice to use the drug, addiction causes changes in the brain that affect the person's self-control and ability to stop from giving into cravings for the drug.

**Myth: People with mental illnesses never get better**

With the right treatment, many people can and do recover from mental illnesses. Even with a mental illness people can still be mentally well.



# Getting the Support You Need

Sometimes we get to a point where we need to reach out and talk about what's going on.

**Here are some tips that might help you out.**

**1**

## **Make a Plan**

You'll be more likely to follow through if you have a specific plan. Figure out a person, time, and place. For example: I'm going to invite Mark over to play video games and I'll talk to him before he leaves. Or after practice on Wednesday, I'm going to ask coach if we can talk for a few minutes .

**2**

## **Have a Backup Plan**

Your first plan might not work out. Have other options of times, people, and places that might work for you.

**3**

## **Know What You Want to Say**

It's ok to practice what you're going to say and think through how they might respond. Going over it in your head will help you feel more prepared and comfortable.

**4**

## **Choose How You Want to Tell Them**

Maybe you aren't ready to talk in person. Consider a text or even a letter instead. If you need help right now, you might just have to reach out without much of a plan. That's ok. There is no right way to talk about this.

**5**

## **Keep Reaching Out**

The first person you talk to might not be the person who can help you. Keep reaching out until you find someone who can.



# Some Tips for Helping a Friend

## Why Not Try:

1. Asking them what's been going on lately.
2. Telling them you're worried and giving specific examples if you can.
3. Asking questions.
4. Spending more time listening and less time talking.
5. Offering practical support like going with them to talk to someone.
6. Reminding them that it isn't their fault and they aren't alone.

## Stay Away From:

1. Diagnosing them.
2. Giving medical treatment or advice.
3. Blaming them for what they are going through.
4. Minimizing how they feel, even if you don't understand it.
5. Telling them to just stop feeling the way they do.
6. Sounding annoyed or judgmental.
7. Making it about you.

## What if they don't want to talk?

1. Remind them that you're there when they're ready to talk.
2. Keep reaching out - follow up with them in a few days. They might be ready to talk then.
3. Encourage them to talk to someone they can trust.
4. If it's serious or you're worried they might be self-harming or thinking of suicide, reach out to an adult for help.

## Remember

While you can be a supportive friend, you can't solve someone else's problems and it's not your responsibility to do so.

# Taking the First Step

## What would you do?

You've been really stressed out and none of your regular strategies are helping much. You know you probably need to reach out and talk to someone.

Let's plan how to do that:

Who are some of people you could talk to? Come up with a few options.

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What could you say to start the conversation? What words would you use?

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How can you deal with the fact that this could be uncomfortable or awkward?

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What would you do if that person wasn't helpful or you didn't get what you needed from them? Be specific.

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# Taking the First Step

## Helping a friend

You've been worried about another guy on the team. He's been really stressed out lately and hasn't been himself. You want to see how he's doing.

Let's plan how to do that:

How would you talk to him? Come up with a few options.

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What could you say to start the conversation? What words would you use?

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How can you deal with the fact that this could be uncomfortable or awkward?

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What would you do if he's not interested in talking right now? Be specific.

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# Where Can You Go From Here?

## Phone and Online Chats

Need to talk now? Help is available when you need it, where you need it.



**Kids Help Phone 800-668-6868 or**

Live chat [www.kidshelpphone.ca](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca)

Kids Help Phone provides professional counselling, information and referrals and volunteer-led, text-based support to young people in both English and French.

**ConnexOntario 866-531-2600 or text CONNEX to 247247**

Live chat [www.connexontario.ca](http://www.connexontario.ca)

ConnexOntario provides access to addiction, mental health, and problem gambling services in Ontario 24/7.

**Crisis Services Canada 833-456-4566 (24/7) or text 45645 4pm-12am**

[www.https://www.crisisservicescanada.ca](https://www.crisisservicescanada.ca)

Canada's national crisis and suicide prevention line. You are not alone. Whether you are worried about yourself or someone else there is always someone there.



## Ongoing Help and Support

Maybe you need to talk to someone more than once to figure this out. Want to get connected to ongoing support? Here are a few places you can find someone to help you through this.



**Coping Centre - 877-554-4498 [www.copingcentre.com](http://www.copingcentre.com)**

Coping Centre offers a place of support, understanding, and compassion when help is needed. Give them a call. They can connect you with the right people at the right time.



**Wes for Youth Online [www.wesforyouthonline.ca](http://www.wesforyouthonline.ca)**

Wes was an energetic hockey player who suffered with mental health issues in silence. When he was 16 he died by suicide. His parents created Wes for youth online so that young people would have somewhere to find support. And it's all done online.



**Canadian Mental Health Association [www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca)**

The CMHA national website includes great information on mental health as well as a way to find your local CMHA which might offer free services and support.

## Helpful Websites

Talking to someone one on one isn't for you? We've got you covered. These websites provide information and programming that might be the kind of support you need.

**Mindyourmind [www.mindyourmind.ca](http://www.mindyourmind.ca)**

Mindyourmind exists in the space where mental health, wellness, engagement, and technology meet. They work with young people to co-create interactive tools and innovative resources to help build resilience, promote wellness, and increase access to supports. Full of information, great games, and tons of apps, this site has everything!



**BounceBack!** [www.bouncebackontario.ca](http://www.bouncebackontario.ca)

Are you struggling to manage anxiety or depression? There are tons of skills that you can develop to take back your life. BounceBack is an online program for adults and youth 15+. Free, confidential, and you can do it from the privacy of your own home.

**Wellness Together Canada** [www.wellnesstogether.ca](http://www.wellnesstogether.ca)

We get it. Struggling with your mental health can be scary and it's hard to know where to start. Wellness Together Canada is place where you can access free tools, apps & programs to support you with mental health and substance use issues.

WELLNESS TOGETHER  
**Canada**

## Apps

Who doesn't have their phone on them 24/7? Why not turn it into a tool for improving your mental health? Discreet, confidential, and sometimes kind of fun. Here are some apps that can help you stay on top of your game. They're all free, too.



### Be Game Ready

Mental Health and Hockey. All in one place. Designed with the Ottawa Senators, this app will help you take care of your brain like you take care of your body.



### Smiling Mind

Remember that connection between mental toughness and mindfulness? This app has some handy mindfulness exercises you can use, broken down by age. You can also do daily mood check ins and track your progress over long periods of time.



### MindShift

Struggling with anxiety? Tired of missing out? There are things you can do to stop anxiety and fear from controlling your life. This app is designed to help teens and young adults cope with all kinds of anxiety.



### Quit That! - Habit Tracker

Quit That! is a completely free app that helps users beat their habits or addictions. Whether you're looking to stop drinking alcohol, quit smoking, or stop taking drugs, it's the perfect recovery tool to track and monitor your progress.



### What's Up

What's up is an amazing free app that uses real therapy techniques to help you cope with Depression, Anxiety, Stress, and more. Use the positive and negative habit tracker to maintain your good habits, and break those that are counterproductive.



### SAM

Self-help Anxiety Management is an app with tons of tools for helping you deal with anxiety including an anxiety tracker and toolkit.



### Happify

Need a happy fix? With its psychologist-approved mood-training program, this is your fast-track to a good mood. Try various games, activity suggestions, gratitude prompts and more to train your brain as if it were a muscle, to overcome negative thoughts.

Didn't find what you're looking for? Visit us at [ojhlfoundation.ca](http://ojhlfoundation.ca) for more resources!

We would like to thank James Richmond, Tanner Bull, Ben Fanelli, Scott Walker, Paul Henderson and Ron Ellis for their support with this project.

## Here are their messages to you.

Love the game. Love your teammates. Love your coaches. And know that all of us are going to have bad days so don't take those bad days and blow them up into something bigger or someone doesn't like you. We all have bad days but we can support each other and talk to each other and get through those days.



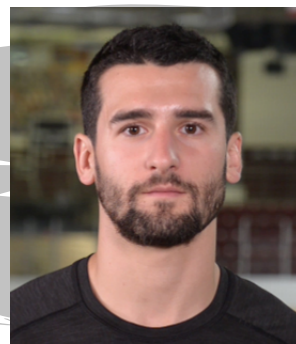
**Tanner Bull**  
Concordia University

Toughness isn't about holding it in or playing through it. That leads to hurting your performance. True toughness is accepting even unfortunate situations and doing what it takes to find help.



**James Richmond**  
General Manager/Head Coach  
Mississauga Steelheads

Going into my senior year I made a choice that I was just going to enjoy playing hockey. I wasn't going to let anything stress me or be too hard on myself. I was just going to enjoy being there and it was a night and day difference. I had fun playing again, I felt better about myself as a person and honestly, it was the most fun I've had playing hockey.



**Ben Fanelli**  
Captain  
Kitchener Rangers - '13-'14

Enjoy it and surround yourself with good people because it's extremely hard and no one knows the pressure we're under except for the people that are under it. So reach out to those people, surround yourself with good people, but ultimately, be a good person, too.



**Scott Walker**  
Vancouver Canucks  
Nashville, Carolina  
Washington

"One of the most important things about being a hockey player is to compete but don't put pressure on yourself. When you go out there don't be fearful of making a mistake. You go out there and have fun. The way you learn to be a better hockey player is by trying things. And you're going to fail. And failure is ok. That's the way you learn. But with anything else in life, there are no shortcuts to success. The more time and effort you put into it, the better you will be. If you have a weakness in your game, tell your coach about it. If you're hurt, get fixed before you go back out there."



**Paul Henderson**  
Detroit Red Wings  
Toronto Maple Leafs  
Atlanta Flames,  
Team Canada '72

Enjoy the highs. I was not able to do that as I was my worst critic and I wouldn't allow myself to enjoy those highs. Enjoy the highs because they're few and far between. I was able to win a Stanley Cup at 21. I retired at 35 and there was no second Stanley Cup. You can have a successful season just by improving your skills and just by strengthening yourself physically, emotionally, and mentally. Good luck.



**Ron Ellis**  
Toronto Maple Leafs  
Team Canada '72



The Legacy Foundation of Canada is pleased to support mental health in the hockey community by assisting with the development and team trainings of the First Assist programs in the OJHL.

The OJHL Foundation thanks the Legacy Foundation of Canada for their generous support.