

INTRODUCTION

B.C. families are committed to making sure their children live a healthy lifestyle. For children and youth with mental health challenges, getting a good night's sleep, being physically active, eating healthy and managing stress can have a positive impact on both their physical and mental health.

This toolkit has been created to help your family live a healthy lifestyle by:

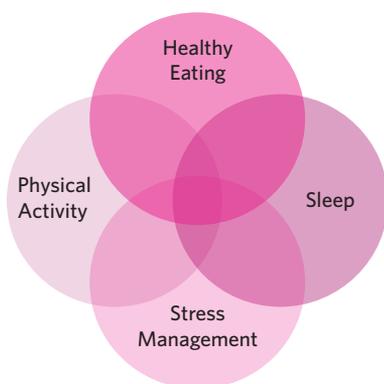
- › Looking at what you are already doing that is contributing to good health
- › Identifying your goals: Figuring out what you would like to work on and taking small steps that will lead to the changes you want
- › Hearing from other families about strategies they have used to promote healthy living in their family

A Suggested Approach to Using this Toolkit

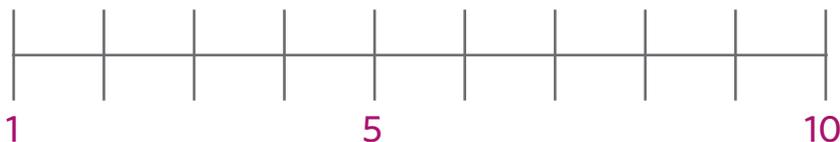
1. Assess your family's current lifestyle
2. Choose a goal and decide on a small change towards it
3. Make sure your goal is a S.M.A.R.T. one
4. Celebrate your family's success!

1. Assess your family's current lifestyle

Families already have what it takes to live healthy. In order to explore your strengths, take a look at your current healthy living practices. Invite your whole family to participate.



On a scale of 1 to 10, where would you rate your family in each of these healthy living areas? Which area would get the highest rating? Which area could use the most improvement?



(Note: 1 = could use the most improvement, 10 = your family does this very well already)

Think about your family's strengths, skills and talents. Do this for each member of your family, as well as for your family as a whole.

Examples of strengths:

- › What you currently know about your child's mental health challenges
- › Each family member's interests, hobbies and activities
- › Support people around your family (e.g. friends, relatives, school)
- › Items that you already have (e.g. bicycles, weights, Wii Fit)
- › Activities your family enjoys together

2. Choose a goal and decide on a small change towards it

Choose one of the healthy living areas. Decide on a goal that you and your family would like to work towards.

Based on where your family rated themselves on the scale (from 1 to 10), think together about a small change that could be made that would move you up on the scale, even if it's just one notch – for example, from a 5 to a 6.

Making changes is more likely to be successful when it is done in small steps and when your child is involved in the process.

3. Make sure your goal is a S.M.A.R.T. one

Think about the goal that you have identified – is it a S.M.A.R.T. goal? “S.M.A.R.T.” is an acronym that stands for **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ction Plan, **R**ealistic, and **T**ime to Review. Setting S.M.A.R.T. goals can help you achieve the changes you want to make.

S

Specific

Describe what your family would like to achieve.

Example: To increase physical activity by walking or biking more often

M

Measurable

Decide on a quantity you want to reach, such as the duration (how long you will do the activity for) or frequency (how often you will do the activity).

Example: We will walk or ride bikes 2 days a week

A

Action Plan

How will your family achieve this goal?

Example: We will walk or ride bikes to school on Mondays and Wednesdays

R

Realistic

Is this goal “do-able”? On a scale of 1 – 10 (10 being very likely), how likely is it that your family will be willing and able to do this?

Example: 9/10 – Very likely, because we have bikes and enjoy bike riding

T

Time to Review

When will your family start? When will you reassess?

Example: We'll start next Monday and re-assess in one month

It might be useful to think of your family's or child's long term goals as a series of small S.M.A.R.T. goals. In the example below, each step on the ladder represents a smaller goal that will help you reach your ultimate goal.

To help with setting goals, we have included an activity sheet (*My Healthy Living Pinwheel*) in the 'Tools & Resources' section of this toolkit.



ULTIMATE GOAL:

Be active 3 or more days/week

SMART GOAL #3:

Go to the park or for a hike with my family 1 day/week

SMART GOAL #2:

Walk or ride my bike to school
2 days/week

SMART GOAL #1:

Walk or ride my bike to school
1 day/week

4. Celebrate your family's success!



Tips for Working Towards a Healthy Lifestyle

1. Think small and simple steps

Focusing on healthy living doesn't mean you have to change all of your family's daily habits at once. Making one new change at a time will help you reach your long term goals. Even one small healthy change should be viewed as a success.

Moving towards a healthier lifestyle may be easier if you gradually change rather than start with the ultimate goal right away.

2. Think about times when you've been successful

Think about what works now and what has worked in the past. When have you been able to help your child try a new food? Or help them get to sleep by their bedtime? What was different about that time? What were they doing? Who was involved? How did it happen?

3. Pick your battles

Promoting healthy living should be a positive experience for everyone. It makes sense to decide what behaviours are worth being firm about, what behaviours are worth encouraging or discouraging, and what behaviours are worth leaving alone.

In his book *The Explosive Child*, psychologist Ross Greene recommends prioritizing behaviours into three symbolic baskets:

Basket A:
Non-negotiable issues



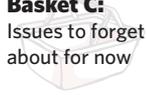
Basket A holds the non-negotiable issues that you always enforce. An example may be going to bed at a specific time.

Basket B:
Negotiable issues



Basket B holds the behaviours or issues that you are willing to compromise on. An example might be an agreement to let your child choose the meal one or two nights a week.

Basket C:
Issues to forget about for now



Basket C holds all the behaviours that you will forget about for now. For example, it's not worth arguing about sleeping on the floor instead of the bed if it means your child will go to sleep.

4. Build on strengths

When you notice your child doing something right, encourage them to do it more often. Find opportunities to highlight good behaviour or accomplishments. Watch and come to know when and where your child has the most energy or enthusiasm. The 'Tools & Resources' section has links to websites that can help you identify your child's strengths (look for 'Able-Differently' under 'Other').

5. Make it a family affair

Hold a family meeting and introduce the ideas presented in this toolkit. What is your family doing right now to promote healthy living? What else would you like to add to your healthy lifestyle? Talk with your child about what area of healthy living they would like to focus on. Let them decide on their own goals, and make it fun!

Family activity: Create a photo album of your healthy living journey. Include photos of your family being active, pictures from recipes, or any positive changes your family makes. Photos can also be used as screen savers or put in areas where everyone can see them.



