



# Mental Health in 2021 into the Holiday Season: Rotary Club

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# Holiday season is not a festive time for all because...

- ▶ Mentally, Financially & Emotionally depleting for some
- ▶ Loss and grief is a reality for many (i.e. divorce, death, trauma)
- ▶ Some experience difficult family dynamics or feel pressure to participate
- ▶ Many feel pressure to give gifts or spend a lot of money on gifts
- ▶ Not everyone has family and friends nearby - suffering from isolation and loneliness

In all of these instances, self-care is a good source of strength. Some ideas include:

- ▶ Journaling
- ▶ Meditation/Mindfulness (deep breathing is useful too)
- ▶ Connecting with those who understand you
- ▶ Reading or participation in a favourite hobby like music or art



# COVID-19 affects and considerations

- ▶ Unprecedented has become a common word in the last 2 years - it only exacerbates the effects of mental health considerations year round, but especially over the holidays
- ▶ COVID-19 has affected mental health due to the following:
  - ▶ Grief and Loss
  - ▶ Life changes
  - ▶ Isolation (Social vs Physical distance)
  - ▶ Loss of income/business
  - ▶ Fear
- ▶ This has led to a sharp increase in alcohol and drug use, anxiety and insomnia, just to name a few

# Affects and Resources

- ▶ Everyone has been affected, but the elderly and children and youth have seen a stark increase in mental health concerns including increase in thoughts of suicide.

## **Distress Centre of Ottawa (Adults):**

- Distress Line: 613-238-3311 or <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/24-7-distress-line/>
- Crisis Line: 613-722-6914 or <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/24-7-crisis-line/>

**Wellness Together Canada - Mental Health and Substance Use Support (for youth and adults):** <https://ca.portal.gs/>

**Kids Help Phone -** [kidshelpphone.ca](http://kidshelpphone.ca) or 1-800-668-6868

# My Work

- ▶ COVID-Impact
- ▶ Holiday and transition times for students

How we are trying to help with extraordinary situations at the OCDSB: Bridges Over Barriers

- ▶ Fund born out of the pandemic crisis
- ▶ Aims to be a bridge over the gaps (or barriers) our students face
- ▶ Gives our social workers a tool to address urgent need

Online auction fundraiser - please contact me if you or your business has something they would like to contribute to our auction (Week before Valentines Day)

Thank you/Questions?

Contact me:

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## ***Bridges Over Barriers Ottawa Fund - OCDSB Social Workers***

**What:** This fund enables Ottawa Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) social workers, through their clinical lens, to identify needs and barriers in students' lives that prevent them from accessing critical basic necessities, activities, and mental/physical wellness supports. The goal is to collaborate with students and/or families in order to immediately access these fundamental supports.

**Why:** The idea for *Bridges Over Barriers Ottawa* (BOB Ottawa) came from Drs. Kwadwo Kyeremanteng and Michael Hartwick, who were inspired by the desire to commemorate their colleague and friend, Dr. Rick Hodder. Dr. Hodder was a Critical Care Physician at The Ottawa Hospital with a deep commitment to the common good. Bridges Over Barriers recognizes that schools are a hub for young people's well-being, and that school social workers are in a unique position in their direct work with many of the most vulnerable children and families in our community.

This fund is established based on the values of equity and the need for early intervention, with a commitment to maintaining the dignity of every individual who is a benefactor of this fund. All Canadians deserve equitable opportunities and life outcomes, and the sooner barriers can be overcome and supports can be put into place, the greater the impact will be for the individual, the family, and the overall community.

**Who:** Students and families within the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board are supported through this fund.

The main OCDSB BOB contacts are school social workers Ariel Burns ([ariel.burns@ocdsb.ca](mailto:ariel.burns@ocdsb.ca)) and Matthew Manion ([matthew.manion@ocdsb.ca](mailto:matthew.manion@ocdsb.ca)).

**When:** The timeline for access to support through BOB is determined by the nature of the request/ urgency of the need (which can be the same day depending on circumstance).

**How:** When OCDSB social workers become aware of a need, they work with the family to first access existing community resources. If a need remains, they consult with the BOB team (including the founders, Dr. Michael Hartwick, Dr. Kwadwo Kyeremanteng, and Pam Cameron, depending on cost). Together, the social worker (through consultation with the student/ family) and the BOB team determine the best way to support the student/ family.

*\*For additional information, and to donate, please visit:*

<https://www.educationfoundationottawa.ca/students-in-crisis/bridges-over-barriers/>\*

***Follow Bridges Over Barriers on social media:***

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