

# MENTAL HEALTH ACTIVITIES FOR FAMILIES

Connecting as a family is a proactive strategy that supports everyone's mental wellness. Connection releases oxytocin, a hormone that counters the body's stress response and increases emotional literacy.



## Screen-free family dinner

Eating together as a family has been shown to improve lifelong physical and mental health. Family meals can also be a great opportunity to do some icebreaker activities: talking about highs and lows, telling jokes, or naming what you are each thankful for.

## Hug

Warm, safe and affectionate touch is extremely important at every age, and should happen multiple times every day. However, this may look different depending on everyone's sensory needs: ensure that the frequency, duration and type of touch is appropriate for everyone.

## Vision and values

Talk about your family values and/or your family's vision and goals for the next year. Allow everyone an opportunity to contribute ideas, and represent these goals in a creative way that's visible in your home. This can promote a sense of belonging and purpose.

## Serve together

Identify a need in your community and work together to meet it. This could look like raking leaves, mowing grass, shovelling snow, picking up garbage, delivering a meal, making a donation, or sharing kind words.



follow along  
for more tips!



1

### **Kindness elf**

One family member starts with the elf and completes a random act of kindness for another family member, secretly passing the elf to them without their knowledge. Then it's the next person's turn! The elf will continually be circulated secretly at least once per week.

### **Get creative**

Cook, bake, build lego, make a treehouse or a fort, sew/knit, or do arts and crafts together – activating the “creative” parts of the brain can help in working your way out of (or staying away from) the stress response systems.

### **Read together**

This could include reading out loud from a book with or without pictures. Audiobooks and podcasts can be downloaded from a local library for a zero-contact, zero-cost option!

### **Family game night**

Shared activities are a great way to facilitate connection. Take turns choosing what board game you might play, or what activity you might do together.



*follow along  
for more tips!*



2