

Resources from Family Webinar “Home for the Holidays: Tips and Resources for Parents and Caregivers of kids with Special Needs” (Dec 15, 2020)

Please note: The information provided in this tipsheet is for reference only. It is not intended as a recommendation or endorsement of organizations, news sources, agencies or private businesses, or as a comprehensive resource list.

A list of resources and information based on a December 15 webinar by the Bloorview School Authority, the Toronto District School Board and Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital. It lists ideas and tools to **support routines**, **stay socially connected** and to **support mental health** during this period of isolation and physical distance.

Please contact community providers directly with program-specific questions.

Programs & Supports Available during the Holidays

Autism Ontario

Has activities going on during the holiday break including [Kwanzaa Craft Kit](#), [Teen Christmas Trivia](#), [Parent & Caregiver Paint Night](#), [Sing-Along with young ones](#). See all events [here](#).

My Community Hub

An online space where individuals with a developmental disability and their families can find programs from a variety of organizations.

- Check out [MyCommunityHub.ca's Virtual Events Page](#) for events through December 2020.

Holland Bloorview

Virtual connection platforms available for clients and families:

- [ASD Engage](#) – A weekly podcast for parents and families of children and youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
- [Isosfriendships](#) - A podcast that explores what social connection means for youth living with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- [HB Alumni Network](#) - An alumni network for clients (13+), families and caregivers to connect, share experiences and help us improve care and services.
- [Parent Voices @ Holland Bloorview Facebook](#)

Toronto District School Board (TDSB)

Has a [Resources for Parents](#) section of their website which includes many opportunities to stay connected to your school community:

- Ways to [Get Involved](#) in your school community
- Learn about [Student Supports](#) and [Special Education Resources](#)
- Understanding how to address [Questions and Concerns](#)



Resources for Building Routines

ConnectABILITY

A website and virtual community dedicated to lifelong learning and support for people with disabilities, their families and support networks. Find links on their website including templates for [Creating your Own Visuals](#)

Erin Oak Kids

Resources for families to help build routine and structure at home through their [Virtual Learning Hub](#) including [Daily Living Skills](#), [Daily Schedules](#), [Visual Supports](#)

Geneva Centre for Autism

Provides resources on their [Daily Schedule](#) page including examples of choice boards, a visual gallery and free downloads to help structure your family's daily schedule.

Holland Bloorview

Tipsheets for families geared to the living in the context of COVID-19 including this [Sample Daily Learning Schedule](#). Find more tipsheets and resources for families [here](#).

Toronto District School Board (TDSB)

Has helpful resources for families to support children with Autism and other who may benefit from visual supports and social stories:

- [Community Resources for Families - Special Education Autism Services](#)
- [Effective Educational Practices for students with ASD](#) – includes visuals

STAR Institute

Sample routines and activities. More details available [here](#).

Raisingchildren.net

Building routines as a family. More details available [here](#).

Household Chores for Children

Check out these articles for ideas on building chores into your routines for children at home:

- [Household Chores - Good for Children, Good for your Family](#)
- [Focus on the Family - How to help kids be responsible](#)
- [Create a Chore Chart - Free Printables](#)

Household chores help children learn important skills, explore interests and feel good about contributing to family life. Choose household chores that suit children's ages and abilities.

Many strategies and communication tools already being used at home work well for helping children to learn new skills and responsibilities.

Examples include: showing, visual checklists, first-then boards, visual schedules etc.



Resources for Staying Socially Connected through Physical Distancing

For Parents & Caregivers

ConnectABILITY

Has a section of their website focused on [COVID-19 Resources](#). Find links on their website including

- A chatroom called [Let's Connect](#) for individuals and families to ask questions, share experiences and connect with others.
- A list of [Virtual Connections and Online Programming](#) across communities
- A fun way to stay connected through deliveries like a letter or a postcard. Sign up up through [Friendly Connections](#)

Holland Bloorview's Parent Support Network

- Monthly, family-led, support-based events. For more information contact Stephanie at smoynagh@hollandbloorview.ca.
- Please visit our [Virtual Workshops and Events Calendar](#) for more information opportunities to connect with families through Holland Bloorview.

Partners for Planning (P4P)

Can help you find many ways to connect with other families during this time of physical distancing. These include:

- [Find a Family Support Network in your Community](#)
- [COVID-19 Managing the Next Wave: Connecting Virtually with other Families](#)
- Learn more information about accessing different technology platforms to stay connected [here](#).

For Children and Youth (All Ages)

Abilities Centre

Offers virtual activities that are fully inclusive with fun variations. More details are available [here](#). To register: Please contact Adam Fitzpatrick at 905-665-8500 ext. 222. Please note that programs may cost a fee.

Erin Oak Kids

- Provides links to hands-on tools for families to use with their children while at home, through their [Virtual Learning Hub](#) including [Interactive Activities & Physical Play](#), [Augmentative and Alternative Communication Tools](#)

Play at Home (Jumpstart)

Fun activity ideas to help keep kids active at home and guided videos featuring Olympic and Paralympic athletes. More details available [here](#).



Unstoppable Kids Daily Challenge (Jay's Care Foundation)

Work through as many of the challenges as you can. Submit photo proof to potentially win prizes. More details available [here](#).

Toronto Public Library

- Offers Story Time and Virtual Circle Times for children, information about [38 Ways to Use the Library from Home](#) and many other virtual programs. More details available [here](#).

Workout of the Day (YMCA Niagara)

Follow along to workout videos. More details and a variety of options, including gentle stretching and chair yoga available [here](#).

For Children 0-6 years

EarlyON Centres

- EarlyON centres offer free programs for families and children from birth to 6 years old across Toronto and Ontario. They are now running a great number of virtual programs.
- You can learn and play with your child, meet people and get advice from early childhood professionals. Find a virtual EarlyON programming [here](#). Check out examples of virtual program schedules from [Macaulay Child Development Centre](#) and [Mothercraft](#).

You can find virtual EarlyON programs in languages other than English, including French, Hindi, Mandarin, Punjabi, Spanish, Urdu and more.

Holland Bloorview's Family Circle Time

Check out 5 videos of song circles to help your children have fun, connect and work on early transitional life skills. You can find all 5 on Holland Bloorview's YouTube channel available [here](#) or choose a Family Circle Time below:

- [Family Circle Time with Wayne and Isabel](#)
- [Family Circle Time with Wayne and Sue](#)
- [Family Circle Time with Wayne and Michelle](#)
- [Family Circle Time with Wayne and Mary](#)
- [Family Circle Time with Wayne and Sylvia](#)

For Youth and Young Adults

ConnectABILITY

Has a section of their website focused on [COVID-19 Resources](#)

- Chatroom called [Let's Connect](#) for individuals and families to ask questions, share experiences and connect with others.
- List of [Virtual Connections and Online Programming](#) across communities
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Corbrook (through ConnectABILITY.ca)

Free workshops that offer the opportunity to gain new skills, explore topics of interest and meet new people. Topics may include: Mindfulness, Arts and Crafts, Money Management, Pre-Employment Training, Yoga and Fitness, Cooking and more. More details available [here](#). To register contact: louise.scott@corbrook.com irene.cvetkovski@corbrook.com

Dreamweavers

Offers group and individual programming for teens and young adults. Virtual programs include “Let’s Talk About Sex + Relationships” and “Connections Social Group. More details available [here](#). To register contact: dreamweaverscollective@gmail.com

Holland Bloorview’s Isofriendships Podcast

Holland Bloorview Youth Leaders share their experiences and insights with friendship in times of social isolation. Learn more about the podcast [here](#).

Resources to Support Mental Health

For Parents & Caregivers

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)

- [A resource/toolkit for adults in coping with stress and anxiety during physical distancing](#)
- [Free Mindfulness Courses](#) for adults with autism and caregivers starting January 2021. For more information contact mindfulness.research@camh.ca

Partners for Planning (P4P)

Places you can connect with groups or call to speak with someone to get some support

- [Your Staying Healthy Winter Checklist](#)
- [Connecting Virtually with Other Families](#)
- [Need Someone To Speak With](#)

What’s Up Walk-in Counselling (Yorktown Children’s Mental Health Services)

Free, short-term counselling for families and caregivers that is accessible without appointment during designated times across the City of Toronto. For more information see [here](#).

Action for Happiness

[Coping calendar: daily acts that can help us look after ourselves and support each other](#)

Headspace

[Resources such as meditation, movement exercises, music and more help you look after your mind, build resilience, and improve sleep](#)



Culturally-specific supports

“It takes a Village” Black Parent Support Group

For Black caregivers of children and adults with disabilities December 8, 7: – 8:30 pm.
January 12, 2020, 7 – 8:30 p.m. To register or submit questions ahead of the meeting – please e-mail BPSGroup2020@gmail.com

Native Women’s Resource Centre - Pimaatisiwin (a good way of life)

A parenting program that provides learning opportunities, parenting support, resources and cultural activities for families with young children, as well as programs for youth and young adults. Contact: support.request@nwrct.ca, www.facebook.com/nwrct/, @NWRCT

South Asian Autism Awareness Centre CARES program for caregivers

A family support program aimed at increasing caregiver capacity to support the development of children with autism. Find more details and registration information [here](#) or contact info@saaac.org / 416-289-0100

Spirit of Life/Heep Chi

Founded by a group of Chinese families with members who have a developmental disability. Families support one another by sharing information, knowledge, experience and resources. Contact 905-474-9500 or info@solhc.ca

For Children 0-6 years

Mindheart

- Has published [COVIBOOK](#), a short story authored by Manuela Molina aimed at young children to support them in processing emotions through repetitive play and stories read multiple times. Available in 20 different languages.

EarlyON

Many of the virtual EarlyON programs are specific to supporting the mental health of young children 0-6 years of age, such as [Peaceful Moments and Yoga](#) group and [Growing Bodies, Healthy Minds](#).

For Children and Youth (All Ages)

Children’s Mental Health Ontario (CMHO)

Has many tools and resources on their website including their [Family Care Centre](#) where you can find:

- Tips and ideas to help your family support your child’s mental health and manage the holidays in a pandemic.
- Back to school mental health kit
- Parenting Survival Guide for caring for kids living with mental health challenges
- COVID-19 resources for supporting children with anxiety through the pandemic
- General resources for parents concerned with their child’s mental health



Erin Oak Kids

Has links related to supporting your child's mental health in their [Virtual Learning Hub](#) including:

- [Anxiety/Calm Music](#)
- [Coronavirus Social Stories and Resources](#)

Holland Bloorview

Tipsheets for families on Mental Health-related topics

- [Mental Health and Wellness Supports during the COVID-19 Outbreak](#)
- [Supporting Siblings during the COVID-19 Outbreak](#)

Toronto District School Board (TDSB)

Has a [Mental Health and Wellbeing](#) section of their [Resources for Parents](#) page which includes information about:

- [Everyday Mental Health Classroom Resource](#)
- [Mental Health Resources During COVID](#) like [Mental Health TO](#) and [Kids Help Phone](#)
- [Professional Support Services available to students](#)
- [School Mental Health ASSIST](#) a provincial support team for school boards that offers a variety of resources

Stay at Home Kits (Young Caregivers Association)

Sibling-specific resources about stress management, feelings, and resilience. More details available [here](#).

ConnectABILITY

A resource page for [Mindfulness and Children](#)

For Youth and Young Adults

Black Youth Helpline

Serves all youth and specifically responds to the need for a Black youth specific service, positioned and resourced to promote access to professional, culturally appropriate support for you, families and schools. More info [here](#) or call 416-285-9944, Toll-free 1-833-294-8650.

Griffin Centre

- Offers specific supports to individuals with a dual diagnosis from diverse ethno-racial backgrounds that have experienced barriers in accessing services due to culture, religion and/or language. Call 416-222-3563 or find more information [here](#).
- Also provides free counselling to 2SLGBTQ youth 12-18 years in their [ReachOUT](#) program. For more information contact reachOUT@griffincentre.org or Tai Vo, Supervisor, reachOUT at 416-559-8565

Holland Bloorview's Isofriendships Podcast

Holland Bloorview Youth Leaders share their experiences and insights with friendship in times of social isolation. Learn more about the podcast [here](#).



What's Up Walk-in Counselling Youthline

Free, short-term counselling for youth and young adults that is accessible without appointment during designated times across the City of Toronto. Learn more [here](#)

Walk-in for Youth with Developmental Disabilities or Autism

- Strides Toronto and Surrey Place Centre have partnered to launch a virtual 'What's up' Walk In clinic for children and youth (ages 0 to 29 years of age) living with ASD or developmental disabilities.
- Call Mental Health Toronto (MHTO) 1-866-585-6486, open Monday-Friday 9am-7pm to ask about this specific service.

We encourage you to visit our [website](#) to access all of our COVID-19 or Coronavirus specific family tip sheets. If you are looking for other family resources that have to do with childhood disability, please visit www.hollandbloorview.ca/resourcecentre.

Created by Stephanie Moynagh, Family Support Specialist; the Bloorview School Authority and the Toronto District School Board on December 22, 2020. If you have a question or a resource to share, please feel free to reach out to us at resourcecentre@hollandbloorview.ca

