Border Town was co-created with a passionate group of youth at a Design Lab, in partnership with Hôtel-Dieu Grace Healthcare. The content and layout of the book was conceptualized by our awesome Windsor Youth Team: Ahmed, Aleyna, Ally, Cole, Daisy, Daina, Erica, Matthew, Pavneet, Shaawnonoo, Sophia and Tyler.

The purpose of the book is to support the mental health of young people in the Windsor, Ontario region. The title of our guide, Border Town - Bridging the Gap, was chosen because Windsor connects Canada and the United States by way of the Ambassador Bridge. Metaphorically, this title is to inspire bridging the gap between mental illness and mental wellness. The group felt as though anxiety, depression, self-esteem and substance use are struggles young people often face. The purpose of this workbook is to educate and support young people with engaging information and activities.

You can use this book however you want! There are lots of activities to shift your thinking positively. That being said, change takes time and practice. Enjoy!
Anxiety is the most common mental health issue experienced by young people today. Anxiety, when it’s moderate and not a constant state, is perfectly healthy and quite normal. Even worrying can be productive!

**Common symptoms:**

Being preoccupied with worry and fear that trigger an overactive mind, also known as “fight or flight mode”.

Clammy hands, faster heart beats, feeling lightheaded or dizzy, and a racing mind.

Anxiety Disorders have a wide range of classifications; remember that everyone experiences anxiety differently even when there are common symptoms. For more information about different anxiety disorders go to mindyourmind.ca/illnesses.

**Anxiety Disorders ARE NOT:**

Being moderately stressed or worried about a test, performance, or something else that is typically stress inducing.

The result of any actions or personal failures of the individual.

A sign or result of low intelligence or weakness.

All the same or even similar. Symptoms differ between disorders and people.
Physical Effects of Stress

Brain and Nerves
- Headaches
- Feeling hopeless
- Low energy
- Sadness
- Feeling nervous
- Feeling irritable
- Difficulty concentrating
- Trouble remembering things
- Trouble sleeping

Skin
- Acne

Heart
- Increased heart beat
- High blood pressure

Stomach
- Nausea
- Sore stomach
- Not feeling hungry or eating a lot
- Losing weight or gaining weight

Pancreas
- Higher risk of diabetes

Intestines
- Diarrhea or constipation
- General digestive trouble

Other
- Sore muscles
- Tightness
- Weakened immune system
Stress & You

How does stress and anxiety affect your body?
Bridging the Gap

Is there something that’s constantly on your mind right now? What is making you feel worried?

What are your fears around this concern/situation?

If my fear came true, how would I handle this concern/situation?

The probability that my worries will come true:

0% 100%

If I’m not feeling better, who can I talk to about my worries?
CONVERSATION STARTER

It can be hard to open up and ask for help with your anxiety. Here are some things to think about before you reach out:

How do you feel about talking about your anxiety with people you trust?

Who can you talk to about your anxiety?

How might you describe your anxiety to others? Star the things you might say.

I’m feeling stressed.
I’m scared about doing this.
I’m a little worried about this.
I feel overwhelmed.
I can feel my heart beating fast which means I’m stressed.
Add your own:

Remind yourself that there are ways to manage uncomfortable feelings! It’s important to understand that anxiety is just a feeling and feelings are temporary. Turn the page for helpful tips to manage when you are feeling uneasy.
MANAGING ANXIETY

Find a safe space to ground yourself like a wall or the floor. Lean or lie down and feel the solid surface supporting you.

Focus on your breathing. Take long deep breaths. Breathing fully will allow your body to re-oxygenate which will make your body feel back to normal eventually.

Focus on the regular things going on around you until the anxiety attack symptoms dissipate, such as: other people going about their day, the sky, or simply observe what’s happening around you.

To relieve your anxiety attack do things that calm you, like: petting your pet, drinking water or herbal tea, listening to music, etc.
Depression is a type of mood disorder. It is a serious illness characterized by intense and prolonged feelings of sadness, apathy and/or low energy. This means you can have little to no will and motivation.

Think about mood as if it were a sliding scale: If someone feels “stuck” in a very low mood for a prolonged amount of time, or finds it hard to feel content or happy for any length of time, they might have depression. Depression can make you think, feel and behave in a way that interferes with your ability to live your best life. Depression can affect relationships, lead to lost time from work or school, or even lead to suicidal thoughts.

**Depression is NOT:**

Depression isn’t the same as feeling sad or experiencing grief. Sadness and grief are normal responses to the inevitable losses and disappointments in daily life, but depression is more than being sad or feeling grief after a loss. It is not something someone can “snap out” of. Often there is no obvious reason why it happens to someone. Like all mental health issues, depression is complicated and can be caused or triggered by any combination of factors:

- Biological - family history, brain development, etc.
- Psychological - trauma, ongoing stress, etc.
- Environmental factors - life events, unhealthy relationships, big changes (becoming a new parent, moving, death of a loved one, etc.).
Symptoms of Depression

Here are some warning signs/symptoms of depression. Everyone experiences depression differently and this is not an exhaustive list. For more information go to mindyourmind.ca. The warning signs can be changes in thinking, changes in feelings, changes in behaviour or physical changes:

- Reduced energy, becoming easily tired.
- Physical symptoms with no physical cause (e.g. headaches, muscle aches and pains, etc.).
- Difficulty making decisions, avoiding making decisions.
- Thoughts of being a failure, or being critical or judgmental toward oneself.
- Persistent thoughts of death, suicide or attempts to hurt oneself.
- Depressed/low mood, intense sadness or frequent crying.
- Feeling numb, empty or an absence of feelings.
- Social isolation, withdrawal from work, school, friends, or hobbies.
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs (prescription and/or non-prescription).
MANAGING DEPRESSION

- Depression is treatable. A good first step is to see your family doctor to get a proper assessment.
- Depression is not your fault - it has many causes. Be kind and gentle with yourself.
- Track your mood to understand your ups and downs and to notice patterns in your depression symptoms.
- Avoid alcohol and other drugs. They may worsen depression or interact badly with antidepressants.
- If taking antidepressants ask your doctor before mixing with other meds, vitamins or herbal remedies to ensure safety.
- If taking medication treatment for depression be sure NOT to stop or alter your treatment without talking to your doctor first.
- Wash the car. Ride a bike. Do some gardening. Walk the dog. Daily exercise helps depression symptoms.
- Suicide is a major risk for people with depression. Don’t accuse someone of seeking attention. Help your friend to get help by downloading the Be Safe app so you can find resources in your community.
Feeling Good

For each day of the week write down up to three things that made you feel good. These can be small or big! When you have a few days worth of information take some time to reflect on what makes you feel good and try to incorporate it into your day everyday!

Monday:

Tuesday:

Wednesday:

Thursday:

Friday:

Saturday:

Sunday:
The most important relationship a person can have, is with themselves. Having a healthy sense of self means feeling good about who you are and how you live your life. It doesn’t mean things are perfect, but that you accept yourself and feel generally positive about yourself! This can include: having a healthy support system, taking appropriate care of yourself, identifying and working on your goals, and establishing genuine healthy friendships. Taking care of your mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health is key to cultivating a healthy sense of self. Self care looks different for everyone - we hope this section provides you with some helpful tips you can integrate into your life!
Boost Your Self Confidence

• Set realistic goals and reassess them as needed. Don’t beat yourself up for expectations that were unreachable.

• It’s okay to be disappointed in yourself sometimes but realize your self worth isn’t determined by your grades or your job.

• Keep a book of positive notes for when you’re feeling down. Look back on past accomplishments.

• Credit yourself for your efforts. Even if you don’t achieve a goal, congratulate yourself for trying valiantly.

• Everyone struggles with esteem sometimes, even people who pretend they don’t care. You are not alone.

• Silence your inner critic. If your first thought is a negative one, try re-framing and hoping for the best.

• You have weaknesses, and that’s okay! You are still worthy in spite of your faults. Never forget it.

• Help someone who needs it. You might find that making a difference makes you feel better about yourself.
In what areas of your life are you already confident? Where would you like to increase your confidence?

Think about a time something didn’t go your way but you persevered anyway:

What happened...

What kept you going? What were you thinking at the time?

Write down the thoughts that kept you going...

Did you learn anything from your thoughts at the time?
Social Media Detox

Social media is an amazing tool to stay connected with friends, stay up to date and get inspiration but sometimes it can be too much. If you are spending too much time on social media it might start to negatively impact your moods and the way you think about yourself.

If you want to better your relationship with social media here are some tips:

- If you ever find yourself in an argument with an internet “troll”, find safe and healthy ways to respond or don’t respond at all.

- Try tracking how much time you spend on social media. You might learn something new about yourself.

- Photoshop is everywhere! Search #effyourbeautystandards for diverse images and inspirational quotes.

- Let everyone express themselves without comparing yourself to their “highlight reel”. Be you!

- Schedule social media time, set a start and end time and stick to it.
Crush Your Critic

Everyone gets down on themselves occasionally. We probably all have negative names or labels we use to describe ourselves all too often without reflecting on the truth of our self-talk.

What are the labels you give yourself?

Are those labels 100% true all the time in every situation?
Yes or No (circle one)

Regardless if you believe your labels are true all the time write down five examples of when your labels don’t fit.

Remember, no matter what you tell yourself no one’s labels are 100% right all the time! Don’t believe the negative things you tell yourself.
Body Image
Adapted from: The Bulimia Anorexia Nervosa Association (BANA) Windsor-Essex

Body image is the perception that a person has of their physical self, and the thoughts and feelings that result from that perception.

Why does it matter if you have a negative view of your body?

Negative body image can lead to:

- Low self-esteem
- Not participating in physical activities
- Limiting what you eat
- Developing an eating disorder
- Depression and anxiety

Body image starts with self acceptance and other positive thoughts.

- Love your body for everything it can do.
- Keep a list of things you like about yourself, if you have trouble thinking of things ask your friends and family.
- Spend time with positive people.
- Do something to help others - it will distract you from negative self talk.
Circle the words that describe you right now:

Kind  Funny  Intelligent  Confident  Helpful  Mature  Responsible  Ambitious  Adventurous  Calm  Positive  Creative  Curious  Determined  Easygoing  Energetic  Friendly  Honest  Open-minded  Organized  Patient  Persuasive  Talkative  Tech Savvy  Fun
Circle the words that you would like to be in the future:

Kind  Funny  Intelligent  Confident  Helpful  Mature  Responsible  Ambitious  Adventurous  Calm  Positive  Creative  Curious  Determined  Easygoing  Energetic  Friendly  Honest  Open-minded  Organized  Patient  Persuasive  Talkative  Tech Savvy  Fun
FALL IN LOVE WITH YOURSELF

It can be difficult to think of positive qualities. If you are stuck consider trying the following:

• Interview your friends and family, ask them what they like about you.

• Think about the compliments you have received in the past, write new ones down.

• Reflect on problems you have successfully faced or dealt with recently.

• Re-read old cards or notes people have written for you. People often list positive attributes in their writing.

• Think about all of the responsibilities you take care of on a regular basis.

• Think about times when you’ve done things that were hard and scary.
Substance abuse is something that is impacting our community in Windsor-Essex County. Most people know someone who struggles with substance use. Addiction is a disease that does not discriminate. Substance use becomes a problem when it interferes with your ability to conduct your life in a meaningful and healthy way. Substance use varies, and depending on many factors, can lead to an addiction. When substance use becomes an addiction, it turns your life upside down and requires a lot of support to evolve out of addiction and into recovery.

Substance use can be complicated; using a substance may not be the same thing as “misuse” or “abuse”. Substance use runs on a spectrum and understanding substance use can take time. People and their behaviours don’t usually fit neatly into a “category”. The world is not divided into people who don’t use vs. people living with addiction. If substance use is impacting your life in a negative way, reach out for help. If you’re unsure where to start check out mindyourmind.ca/help.
I'm not using substances at all.

I've tried substances a couple times because I was curious. I may not do it again.

I need to keep using substances, even though my use is causing problems for me.

I use substances every so often with friends, usually after school or on weekends.

My substance use is getting in the way of doing the things I need and want to do.

I use substances daily. But it's not getting in the way of school, work, family or friends.
**SUBSTANCE SAFETY**

- If you use substances, do a self-inventory: “Why do I use? How is it working for me? Is it a problem for me?”.
- People respond to drugs in different ways, so don’t base your substance use choices on the experiences of others.
- Prescription drugs may seem safer but they cause more deaths than heroin + cocaine combined. Don’t adjust the dose without a doc!
- If you’re taking prescription meds, research how they interact with other substances. Alcohol may reduce their effectiveness.
- Consider family history of addiction. You might be at higher risk if addiction runs in your family. Plan, act and reflect accordingly.
- Many substances can lead to overheating and dehydration. If you use, try to monitor your body temp and drink lots of water.
- Take turns with your friends being sober at parties to act as driver and decision-maker in case of emergency.
- Have a friend trying to cut out drugs and/or drinking? Be supportive. Hang out with them in a drug-free environment.
THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND: RECOVERY

• Change your story of addiction into one of recovery. Let yourself believe that change is possible.

• If you care about someone struggling with addiction, you can (and should) get support as well. Check out groups in your area.

• Remove negative and harmful people from your life. Surround yourself with people who care about you and want to see you get better.

• Connect with your breath through meditation techniques. Use meditation to ground you when struggling with a craving.

• Take your recovery one day at a time. Don’t worry about three months from now. Just focus on today.

• Don’t test yourself. If something has triggered you in the past, keep away. Old patterns are easy to fall into.

• Make a list of all the reasons you want freedom from your addiction. Keep it on hand for when you need a reminder.

• If you’re in over your head, seek help. If you’re not sure where to start check out mindyourmind.ca/help
Recovery is a long and difficult process. It takes a lot of introspection and outside support. One way to enhance your recovery is to add helpful and healthy habits into your life. Hopefully the healthy habits will replace the bad. Build yourself up in a healthy way. Try new things and see what works for you. This could be coping strategies, better nutrition, etc.

**Add a list of healthy distractions**

- What distractions have worked in the past?
- What distractions would you like to try but haven’t tried yet?
- What distractions can you do right away?
- What distractions take some time and planning?
One Last Thing...

If you feel like you are needing more support, please access one of the following resources:

Hôtel-Dieu Grace Healthcare Regional Children’s Centre
3901 Connaught Street, Windsor, ON  519-257-5215

Hôtel-Dieu Grace Healthcare Crisis and Mental Wellness, Transitional Stability Centre
744 Ouellette Avenue, Windsor, ON  519-257-5224

The Bulimia Anorexia Nervosa Association (BANA)
1500 Ouellette Avenue #100, Windsor, ON  1-855-969-5530

Can-Am Indian Friendship Centre of Windsor
1 – 1699 Northway Avenue, Windsor, ON  519-253-3243

Maryvale Adolescent and Family Services
3640 Wells Street, Windsor, ON  519-258-0484

Teen Health Centre
1361 Ouellette Avenue #101, Windsor, ON  519-253-8481

Suicide Prevention and Support  1-833-456-4566  Text 45645

Kids Help Phone  1-800-668-6868  kidshelpphone.ca  Text 686868

Bullying Canada  1-877-352-4497  bullyingcanada.ca

mindyourmind.ca  Information about mental health and wellness

Be Safe  Free crisis safety planning app  BeSafeApp.ca