eMentalHealth.ca

# Looking for a Mental Health App or Website?

Image credit: Adobe Stock

**Summary:** Problems with stress and mental health are unfortunately common in modern society. While many people could benefit from seeing a mental health professional, such as help is not always readily accessible. Fortunately, there is increasing evidence that e-MentalHealth interventions may be helpful for mental health, which includes apps and websites.

## D’s Story

D. is a young adult having problems with stress and anxiety. Unfortunately, she lives in a rural area, and there is no easy access to a mental health professional. She does an internet search on online help, but is overwhelmed by the number of websites that pop up. She decides to see her family physician to asks what apps she might recommend...

## Apps

There is a growing number of apps for mental health but it can be challenging to know which ones are reputable, safe and effective. Only a tiny percentage are associated with credible healthcare organizations. On one hand, there are good apps that may be helpful. On the other hand, there are some apps which may be a waste of time and money, and worse, perhaps even harmful.

## Apps for Mental Health by Publicly Funded Organizations

| Description | Issues Addressed | Age | Languages | Cost |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Always There<br>By Kids Help Phone<br>Allows you to chat with or call Kids Help Phone.<br>Android Store<br>https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.speakfeel.khp_en&hl=en_CA<br>iOS https://apps.apple.com/ca/app/always-there/id579718991 | Mental Health | Children/youth | English<br>French | Free |
| Be Safe<br>By MindYourMind, a publicly funded service in Ontario.<br>Allows you to create a digital safety plan; learn about mental health and addiction resources in Ontario; create a personal ‘get help script’ that helps you find the words to reach out and empower yourself.<br>www.BeSafeApp.ca | Mental health | Youth and young adults | English<br>French | Free |

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| BoosterBuddy Mobile App<br>By Island Health Authority, British Columbia<br>BoosterBuddy is a free app designed to help teens and young adults improve their mental health. Manage your personal wellness journey and earn achievements as your sidekick guides you through a series of daily quests designed to establish and sustain positive habits.<br>http://www.viha.ca/cyf_mental_health/boosterbuddy.html | Mental health and wellness in general | Youth/young adults | English | Free |
| Calm Harm<br>App developed to help with teenage mental health using principles of dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT).<br>Endorsed by the National Health Service (NHS) in their digital app library.<br>https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/ | Mental health and wellness in general | Youth | English | Free |
| HealthyMinds App<br>By the Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre<br>Problem-solving tool to help youth and young adults deal with emotions and cope with the stresses you encounter both on and off campus.<br>iOS, Android<br>http://healthymindsapp.ca | Coping with stress for students | Youth/young adults | English<br>French | Free |
| iSMART<br>By the Centre for Studies on Human Stress (CSHS) at the University of Montreal.<br>Digital tool for helping better understand how you respond to stress and learn how to prevent and cope with stress.<br>iOS, Android<br>https://centreaxel.com/en/projects/ismart-en/ | Stress | Young adults and adults | English<br>French | Free |
| MindShift<br>By Anxiety Canada.<br>For coping with anxiety -- breathing exercises, a symptom checker to help rate your current anxiety, and steps to get you through difficult episodes or situations.<br>https://www.anxietycanada.com/resources/mindshift-cbt/ | Anxiety, sleep problems | Youth/ young adults | English<br>French | Free |
| mood. (spelled "mood.")<br>By MindYourMind<br>Helps track daily mood and sleep patterns.<br>https://mindyourmind.ca/tools/mood-mindyourmind | Mood, sleep | Child/Youth | English | Free |
| Moodie<br>In partnership with the Mood Disorders Society of Canada (MDSC).<br>Tracks food intake, sleep, physical activity, and self-care; while motivating users to care about their mental and physical health. Designed to complement other mental health services -- users can give permission for professional to view their mental health tracking data.<br>https://feelingmoodie.com | Mood tracking, mental health care, portal for professionals | Youth/Adults | English | Free |
| Daylio App<br>Makes it easy to track moods and encourage healthy activities<br>Chaudry, 2016<br>https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5344152/ | Mood tracking | Youth / Adults | English | Free |
| SAM (Self-Help Anxiety Management)<br>By researchers at the University of West England.<br>Helps users with multimedia activities and mini-games. It also includes peer social support.<br>https://sam-app.org.uk/ | Monitor and manage panic attacks and anxiety | Youth / Adults | English | Free |

# Apps for Addiction

| Description | Issues Addressed | Age | Language | Cost |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Saying When App<br>By the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) to cutting down or quitting alcohol.<br>https://www.camh.ca/en/camh-ne... | Alcohol Use | Adults | English | Free |

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| Breaking Free from Substance Use<br>Online program along with companion app to help with substance use and recovery.<br>https://www.breakingfreeonline... | Substance Use | Adults | English<br>French | Free |

## Mental Health Apps by Commercial Companies

| Description | Issues Addressed | Age | Language | Cost |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Headspace<br>Highly rated app that introduces the basics of mindfulness and meditation with the "Take 10 Free Trial".<br>www.headspace.com | Mindfulness, anxiety, sleep | Youth / adults | English<br>French | Free trial |
| Calm<br>Awarded Apple's "App of the Year" in 2017. Designed to reduce anxiety, improve sleep, and help you to feel happier.<br>Calm focuses on the four key areas of meditation, breathing, sleep, and relaxation, with the aim of bringing joy, clarity, and peace to your daily life.<br>www.calm.com | Anxiety, sleep | Youth / adults | English<br>French | Free |
| Sanvello<br>Formerly known as Pacifica, Sanvello helps with anxiety and stress through various techniques, along with a supportive community.<br>https://www.sanvello.com/ | Anxiety, stress | Youth / adults | English<br>French | Free and premium versions |
| Happify<br>Happify is a space to overcome negative thoughts and stress and build resilience. Whether you are feeling stressed, anxious, or sad, Happify helps you to regain control of your thoughts and feelings.<br>https://happify.com/ | Stressed, anxious or sad | Youth / adults | English<br>French | |

## eTherapy Websites

These are websites that provide (self-guided) eTherapy.

# Mood Problems (e.g. Depression), Anxiety, Stress, PTSD

| Description | Issues | Age | Language | Cost |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| MoodGym<br>Online CBT for persons 16 years and older Developer: Australian National University<br>https://moodgym.com.au/ | Mild to moderate anxiety disorders or depression. | Age 16+ | English | $39 AUD / year (as of Jan 2019) (Previously free) |
| eCouch<br>e-couch is a self-help interactive program. Evidence-based information and teaches strategies drawn from cognitive, behavioural and interpersonal therapies as well as relaxation and physical activity.<br>Developer: Australian National University<br>https://ecouch.anu.edu.au/welcome | Depression, generalised anxiety and worry, social anxiety, relationship breakdown, loss, grief. | Age 16+ | English | Free |
| Cope 2 Thrive<br>Online CBT for youth<br>http://www.cope2thrive.com/ | | Youth | English | Yes |

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| Depression Center<br>Online therapy for depression; you can complete a depression quiz and you will be able to print the results to show your doctor.<br>http://www.depressioncenter.net/ | Depression | Adults | English | Free |
| OnTrack Depression<br>Online therapy for depression, which aims to help you recover from depression. You will be able to write down your moods and thoughts in a diary and graphs will show you how you are doing over time.<br>http://www.ontrack.org.au | Depression | Adults | English | Free |
| The Journal<br>Online programme that can teach you skills to manage depression. Online modules based on cognitive behavioural therapy will teach you how to make behavioural and lifestyle changes to help manage your depression.<br>www.Depression.org.nz | Depression | Adults | English | Free |
| Moodkit<br>Over 200 mood improving activities and thought modulation strategies<br>Healthline Best Apps for Depression 2017<br>www.thriveport.com/products/moodkit | Mood problems | Adults | English | International |
| PTSD Coach Canada<br>Veterans Affairs Canada with education plus CBT techniques<br>www.veterans.gc.ca/ | PTSD | Adults | English<br>French | International |
| MindMaster from CHEO<br>English/French -- For adults (parents or professionals) to use with their children aged 4-9 year olds to master emotional regulation through relaxation, positive thinking and mindfulness. Consists of a guidebook for adults, videos and audio tracks to do with the child.<br>https://www.ottawapublichealth.ca/en/professionals-and-partners/iecmh.aspx#Mindmasters-2 | Stress, mild problems with anxiety and sadness | Children,youth,caregivers | English<br>French | International<br>Free to download |
| Pain Squad<br>By Hospital for Sick Children to help children with cancer pain<br>www.sickkids.ca | Cancer pain | Children | English | International |

# Apps for Sleep Problems (Publicly-funded)

| Description | Age | Cost |
|---|---|---|
| CBT-i Coach<br>By the US Department of Veterans Affairs.<br>For people who are engaged in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia with a health provider, or who have experienced symptoms of insomnia and would like to improve their sleep habits. The app will guide users through the process of learning about sleep, developing positive sleep routines, and improving their sleep environments. It provides a structured program that teaches strategies proven to improve sleep and help alleviate symptoms of insomnia.<br>https://mobile.va.gov/app/cbt-i-coach | Adults | Free |
| Doze<br>By the Sleep and Depression Laboratory at the Toronto Metropolitan University (previously Ryerson University), with funding from the CIHR. Doze aims to give young people effective tools to sleep better and feel better during the day.<br>https://www.dozeapp.ca/ | Young People | Free |
| Better Nights Better Days<br>By a team at Dalhousie University, funded by a CIHR grant.<br>Online program from Dalhousie University to help children who are having sleep problems, offered as part of a clinical trial. Families can sign up and see if they qualify for treatment under the program.<br>http://betternightsbetterdays.ca/about-program | Children up to aged 10 | Free |

# Website for Eating Disorders

| Description | Age | Cost |
|---|---|---|
| CanPed<br>By the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO)<br>For parents of children/youth (aged 9-18) who may be suffering from an eating disorder<br>http://www.canped.ca | Age 9-18 | Free |

## Looking for More Apps? App Review Websites

To learn about apps for mental health, consider the following websites which have reputable reviews of apps:

- Practical Apps, a website of the Ontario Telemedicine Network (OTN). Apps are reviewed by a team of experts.
  https://practicalapps.ca/
- iMedicalApps.com, an online publication with a team including physician editors that provides reviews of mobile and health care apps.
  https://www.imedicalapps.com
- Psyberguide, a non-profit website dedicated to consumers seeking to make responsible and informed decisions about computer and device-assisted therapies for mental illnesses. A project of One Mind Institute.
  http://psyberguide.org/
- The National Health Service in the UK has a library of recommended apps for mental health
  https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/filter/?categories=Mental%20health

## References

David Gratzer and Faiza Khalid-Khan, Internet-delivered cognitive behavioural therapy in the treatment of psychiatric illness. CMAJ March 01, 2016 188 (4) 263-272; DOI: https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.150007
http://www.cmaj.ca/content/188/4/263

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## Disclaimer

Information in this article are offered ‘as is' and is meant only to provide general information that supplements, but does not replace the information from your health provider. Always contact a qualified health professional for further information in your specific situation or circumstance.

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