



It starts with Scouts.

# MENTAL HEALTH + BEHAVIOUR

## Management Support

### SUPPORT FOR YOUNGER SECTIONS .....

**When you first join a younger Section (Beavers, Cubs), it can be hard to control 24 little kids that are excited to be running around and having fun together. Here are some tips to help you have a happy, controllable, stress-free meeting!**

#### Top Tips

1. Younger youth need to move around. Set up your activities so that they are free to move.
2. Not all youth will be able to sit for long periods of time on the floor. It is ok if they lie down or need to fidget. Most times, allowing this will help them focus on your instructions better!
3. Not all youth can read and write. Let them know it is ok to tell you this and get support, or they can draw a picture.
4. Younger youth have about a 10-minute attention span when you are asking them to sit and listen. Be short and sweet whenever you can.
5. Break youth up into small groups whenever possible (even smaller than Lodges or Lairs—if you need!) One large group is often unmanageable.



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9. Keep instructions to two instructions at a time to help with understanding. The shorter it is, the easier it is to repeat, too!
10. Use simple language.
11. When asking them to do something, avoid questions like, “do you want to come and do the game?” and instead use, “come and do this activity, when would you like to do it? Now or in 5 minutes?”
12. Have backup activities for the backup activities! Not all youth will want to do the activity you’ve chosen but try to keep them occupied other ways. E.g., have them tape out roads on the floor or building with blocks or Lego.
13. Try your best to listen to them—you may be the only person that does that day!
14. Get to know them as little people. Find out what they like and what they don’t.
15. Include the parents as much as possible. Consistency is key—so what’s working at home or school should help in Scouting!
16. Always close your meeting with what they have accomplished that night and get them excited for the next week’s meeting.
17. If you have some children with behavioural issues, it is nice to get an email from Ringtail, etc. about something that they did very well that night.
18. Celebrate with them! Make a big deal about birthdays, accomplishments, or something that they did well. E.g., got a new belt at karate.





## Look After Yourself

1. Beavers can be tiring—it is ok to ask for help or take a break.
2. Share the workload with the other Scouters. Shared leadership is important!
3. Work with your strengths, but also don't be afraid try new things. Scouts is a development journey for everyone!
4. If you are having issues with a child, include the parents from the start. Don't sugar-coat the youth's behaviour, be truthful and ask them for help.
5. Have parents help where they can. If you need help cutting out activities, shopping for camp, help cleaning up at the end of the night, help carrying things out to your car etc., ask the parents if they can support you in small ways.
6. Develop relationships with parents in your Colony where you can and utilize their strengths to support you.

## Resources

- **Promoting Positive Behaviour and Managing Challenging Situations** Guide
- Check out the webinar on **Managing Behaviour Positively** on the David Huestis Learning Centre (DHLC).
- **Erasing the Stigma, Desktop Zen Garden, Rose and Thorns, Positivity Tree, Forest Bathing, A Feeling of Belonging, It's My Feelings, Let's Chill, Gratitude Changes Everything!, That Musical Feeling** Activities
- Child Development Map

# ANXIETY & WORRIES

**Anxiety is a catch-all term for anxiety-related disorders, which may include Panic Disorder, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Generalized Anxiety Disorder, specific phobias, and many other disorders. In this instance, we are looking at anxiety, as well as general worries that can affect anyone.**

## Understand

- Youth may experience anxiety or worries about things that are completely inconsequential, or do not seem like they should matter—misplacing an item, doing an activity incorrectly, being away from home, a change of plans, etc. While these feelings may seem silly or unnecessary to an adult, remember that these are real feelings—the youth is feeling them as strongly as any other feeling.
- Youth with anxiety disorders may feel heightened emotions—these disorders can lead to such distress that they may interfere with their ability to cope. For youth with anxiety disorders, worry and fear are constant, overwhelming and may be debilitating.

- Some youth may have techniques (or may be on medication) to help them cope. Others may still be figuring out what works best for them—try to be understanding and kind.
- It can be easy to feel frustrated when a youth is experiencing heightened anxiety or worry—especially when it seems like they're worrying about 'nothing.' Talk to them, understand their feelings and reassure them without dismissing their feelings—use phrases like 'I understand you're upset about how your Beaver Buggy turned out. What can we do to fix it?' rather than 'It's not a big deal—don't worry about it.'
- You may not be able to help youth to solve the problem they are anxious about—support and encourage them but recognize that there may be more to this than a simple band-aid solution (and that's not your fault!). Sometimes, things will be completely out of your control. Offer reassurance, check in when needed and be an active listener. Sometimes, listening and reassuring is all you can do, but it can have a great impact on youth.

## Top Tips

1. Reassure youth and be an active listener.
2. Help them through a grounding exercise if they need it. Sometimes, if a youth is experiencing a panic attack, or is very worked up about a certain worry, it can be easy for them to feel detached from reality or from their current situation. Ask them to tell you five things that they can hear, then four things they can see, three things they can feel, two things they can smell and one thing they can taste.
3. Deep breaths, simple meditation or light stretches may also help.
4. Work through problem-solving with the youth and encourage them to actively help solve the problem with you. What can you do to help them? What can they do to help themselves?
5. Even youth without a diagnosed anxiety disorder may experience symptoms of anxiety or heightened worry, especially in new or unexpected situations. Things like homesickness may also occur. In all situations, offer reassurance to the youth and try to help them solve the problem. Do not dismiss their worries but talk through them. Figure out what is worrying them (youth may not know) and try to give names to their feelings—these can be big feelings for little kids, so naming them might help them to cope better.
6. Be patient. Be comforting, but not dismissive.
7. Sometimes, youth might just need a break to collect themselves. Especially as youth get older, it can be embarrassing to cry in front of others. Have a small collection of 'break time' activities available—a deck of cards, some books, colouring pages, fidget toys, etc. that a youth can quietly use on their own when they need a break. You can even always make these items accessible so that youth can just grab the items and go sit quietly when needed, without having to draw too much attention to themselves.
8. Use the resources available to you—and parents are resources! Work with the youth's family to figure out some techniques that they may use at home and keep them up to date on what is happening. This is also a great way to set boundaries (e.g., at what point should you call home during a meeting or camp).



## Look After Yourself

- This can be exhausting, and as you get tired, it can be easy to lose your cool. Don't be afraid to tap another Scouter for help if you need it.
- It can be easy for youth to 'cling' to a certain Scouter for comfort—they may always end up going to you when they are upset. That is ok if you can handle it, but there is no shame if you cannot. Respectfully bring another Scouter into the conversation and encourage the youth to speak with that Scouter as well.
- Take a break—it can be stressful to deal with an anxious youth at camp or at a meeting. After the youth has calmed down enough to be able to return to the activity, take a few minutes to yourself. Take a walk, grab a drink of water, or even just sit for a few minutes.

## External Resources

- For further information, check out [Anxiety Canada](#) resources.
- [Better Mental Health for All—Scouts UK Activities](#)



# ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD) .....

**Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) effects the nervous system and is most often genetic. The three main symptoms or presentations of ADHD are inattentiveness, hyperactivity, and impulsivity, and may be mild, moderate, or severe. Children and youth with ADHD may need extra support in regulating their emotions, making decisions, and changing learning styles to support full understanding.**



## Understand

1. Encourage, celebrate, and reinforce positive behaviours whenever you can. Kids do well if they can—how can we support them to have a fun time at Scouts?
2. Behaviour management is not a 'one-size-fits-all' situation. What works for some children with ADHD may not work with others—and that is okay.
3. Help children understand their feelings and avoid denying them. Although they may seem silly to you, they are a big deal to them. Help them put a name on that feeling!
4. Praise graciously, but wisely. Be overly specific about what you're praising them for, so children know you really mean it.
5. Include the child in the problem solving. Provide autonomy by giving fair choices and working as a team. For youth with ADHD, it can be a little more difficult to regulate emotions and understand.
6. Try your best to see the world through the child's eyes. This might even help you spot the situations that might cause challenges before they even happen.
7. Sometimes, all we need is a break! Whether it's you, or the child, take a few minutes to re-group before jumping to solutions or consequences.

## Top Tips

- 1. Involve parents for further strategies!**
  - a. Parents are your best resource when it comes to managing the behaviour of your participants.
  - b. Be sure to approach the parents in a respectful and concerned manner and be conscious of the language you use.
  - c. Ask what you can do to help their child get the most out of their Scouting experience.

- d. Ask the parent to stay for meetings if the behaviour is not under control.
- e. Be sure to comply with any ongoing suggestions or treatment the youth has already been prescribed.  
*Consistency is key!*

## 2. Support youth in dealing with their feelings:

- a. We all have bad days, and kids do, too! Most of the time, what doesn't seem like a bad day to you might feel like the worst day for them.
- b. Work through the emotions together:
  - Be mindful of your words, i.e., "there's no reason to be this upset?" You wouldn't like to hear this from your spouse, friends, etc.
  - Avoid denying a child's feelings but help them to understand what they are feeling.
  - Listen quietly.
  - Acknowledge with a single word.
  - Give the feeling a name, i.e. "I can definitely understand you're feeling upset!"
  - Give the child his wishes in fantasy, i.e., we can't go to park cause of rain.... "I wish I could magically stop the rain and be able to take you to the park, too!"

## 3. Simplify your directions:

- a. When giving direction, simplify to the 3 aspects of positive direction:
  - Say the child's name (to gain their attention)
  - Be sure to insert "please" and remain calm (modeling the behavior you wish to witness), and
  - Tell them what you would like them to do versus what not to do.



#### 4. Use helpful strategies to mitigate stressful and agitating feelings:

- a. Introduce visuals to help with predictability of schedule and keep a routine.
  - Visual Timer
  - Visual Meeting Schedule
  - First/Then Cards
  - Give countdowns.
  - Praise good transitions.
- b. Body breaks!
  - Body breaks can be effective if used in a positive and constructive way.
  - Allow plenty of “body breaks” and a quiet area where youth can go to calm down, regroup or simply reset.
  - Redirect negative behaviour with a positive option.
  - Do not reward bad behaviour, but perhaps offer a child who is having trouble some more responsibility to help redirect his/her energy.
  - Children know what they need best! Ask what they need (quiet time, a break, etc.) and listen.

#### 5. Encourage Autonomy

##### Step #1: Change Your Lens

- Try to see the world through the child’s eyes—this can help you spot the situations that might be a problem before you even get there.

##### Step #2: Put a name on their feeling!

- Help youth determine their triggers or what is causing them to feel a certain way.
- Focus on identifying the skills a child is lacking and the expectations they are having difficulty meeting that’s frustrating them.
- Then, the goal is to help them solve those problems. Allow for agency!

##### Step #3: Problem solve together and create a “user-friendly” environment!

- Promote realism.
- Don’t take it personally.
- Avoid power struggles—work together.
- Give choices.
- Offer appropriate awards and praise.
- Get to know them on a personal level—there is more to their world than Scouting!

### Look After Yourself

Take Ten:

- Take 10 Second Pause
- Take 10 Deep Breathes
- Take 10 Steps Back
- Take 10 Minute Break

It is totally ok to take a break and re-group or turn things over to someone else if you’re feeling frustrated and need some time to relax.

1. Set boundaries! If you’re not in the right headspace, or having a bad day yourself, recognize this and set your boundaries early. Scouting is meant to be fun and not add to your stresses!
2. Shared leadership is important in more ways than one. Share the role with someone else to avoid burnout or frustration.
3. Talk to others/problem-solve with other adults—how can we continue to support each other to ensure our Section remains positive and place for all youth to thrive and have fun? It’s like that saying, “it takes a village!”
4. Find outside support if you need it. Whether that’s within the Scouting world—Group Commissioner, Relationship Manager, Program Team, Safe Scouting—or someone else who can support you in the community. Don’t be afraid to do what you need to take care of yourself—both mentally and physically.

### External Resources

- For further information, check out Centre for **ADHD Awareness**, Canada resources.
- **How Should I Respond to Challenging Behaviours—Scouts UK**

# AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD) . . . . .

**Autism Spectrum Disorder, most often present from early childhood, is characterized by difficulty communicating and forming relationships with other people, and in using language and abstract concepts. ASD ranges anywhere between high functioning (what was previously known as Asperger’s) to low functioning (perhaps non-verbal). Individuals with this exceptionality can find it hard to understand social cues, may have uncommon behaviours (hand flapping, stimming), and may take longer to understand what is being said or asked.**

## Understand

1. Youth with ASD may have difficulty transitioning into a new activity, often preferring well established routines. Building in a visual schedule may help with unexpected transitions throughout your meeting!
2. Some youth with ASD might have a difficult time expressing their needs with their words. Helping youth to work through and find their emotion might help with their frustration!
3. Youth with ASD might demonstrate repeated body movements (i.e., hand flapping, finger twitching or rocking), which may serve to lessen anxiety in stressful situations. Although it might seem easier to sit quietly and listen, allowing this movement can really help with understanding and lessen stressors.
4. Some youth might also experience hypersensitivity to certain sensory stimulations—like noises, tastes, smells, feelings, etc. Being cognisant of this when planning a meeting (activities, locations, etc.) can help avoid extra stressors.
5. Try your best to see the world through the child’s eyes. This might even help you spot the situations that might cause challenges before they even happen.
6. Often, youth can tell or show you what it is that they need to help them stay calm and feel better. Provide autonomy for youth by listening and supporting.

## Top Tips

1. Include the parents in finding strategies that work for their child.
2. Get to know your youth. Consider adding a form at registration that touches on things like, what helps, difficulties, likes, dislikes, etc. for each youth in your Section. This can help you be better prepared to support youth when they need it!
3. Simplify the language you use as much as possible.
4. Use “first, then” when talking about changing to different activities (e.g., first we are going to do a craft, then we are going to play a game).
5. Break down your instructions into small bite size chunks (it is better to give one instruction at a time).
6. Tell the youth what you want them to do, e.g., “let’s walk up the hill,” and steer away from the word “don’t.” For

young children, when hearing something like, “don’t run,” the youth hear run and then become confused when they’re told they aren’t following instructions properly.

7. Have the youth repeat your instructions back before doing the task to ensure they’ve fully understood and heard you. This can help any confusion right from the start!
8. A visual/picture schedule of the night’s activities may be helpful for youth with ASD. Change and transitions can be very difficult for youth with ASD—and this helps to anticipate with what’s coming next.
9. Give time for a break. You might even have a special spot in your meeting hall or area when a break is needed—with calm down kits (bin of books, sensory toys, colouring, etc.) to help relax and re-group.
10. All Scouters need to be consistent! Being on the same page is important—much like multiple parent or guardians being on the same page.

## Look After Yourself



1. It is ok to take a break. Ask another Scouter to take over if you are becoming overwhelmed.
2. It is ok to feel that tonight was hard. Each day is a new day to try again, and you are doing your best!
3. It is ok to ask the parents to give you new strategies or extra help for the youth to be successful.
4. If you or your Section are struggling, reach out to your Relationship Manager or Group Support Scouter and ask for more resources.
5. It is ok to feel overwhelmed—take 10 second pause, 10 deep breathes, and 10-minute break if you need it!
6. Try not to take things personally. You’re doing your best and youth are not doing things to annoy you on purpose.
7. Some of the best experiences are through working with youth with exceptionalities. It can turn your world around in a magical way and make you see things in a whole new light!

## External Resources

- For further information, check out **Autism Canada** resources.

