

# Community Connections

## – August 25



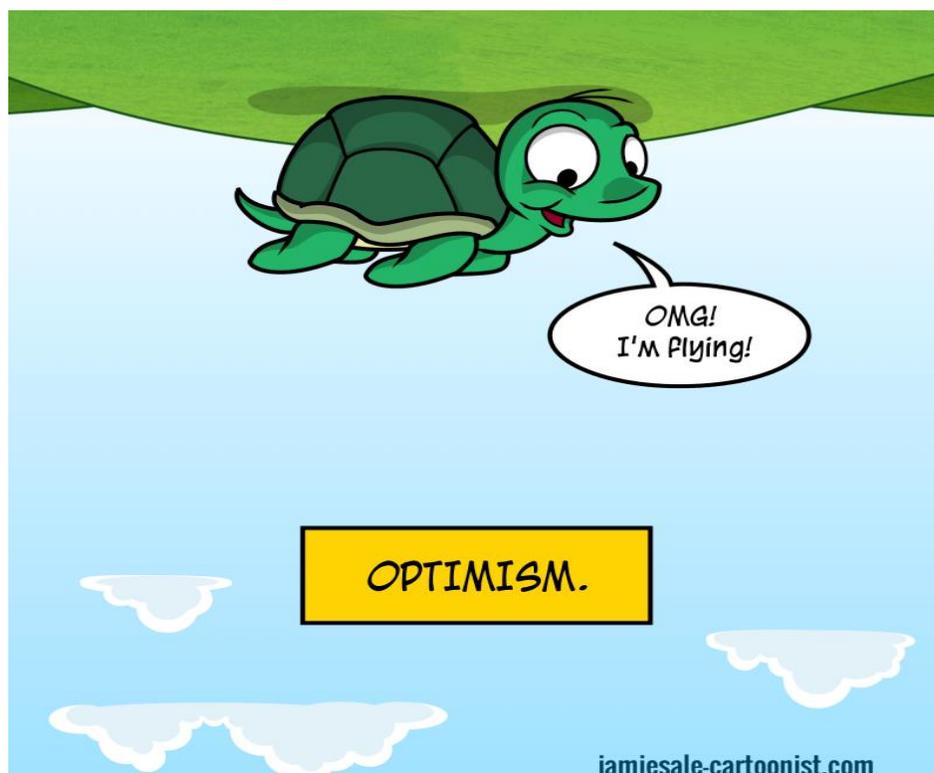
### ***Good morning!***

*When we started this back in March as a way to stay connected during unsettled times, we never figured we would have gone through so many changes to our system, our Region, our Country and the world! As things begin to reopen, we want to remain connected to you and our community. Supporting each other and sharing resources will help all of us and the families that we work with.*

*We will continue to share information and resources that are inspiring us. As always, please feel free to pass this information on to anyone who might be interested.*

*You can find all of the past editions on Niagara Knowledge Exchange by [Clicking Here](#)*

*Also, please let us know if there is anything you have found that has inspired you and we will share in future newsletters*



## Spotlight Activity: Back to School?

With all of the anxiety and unknowns, re-opening schools and early years programs in the age of COVID-19 is going to take all of the optimism educators and parents can muster. Check out these links to support you and your families:

**Reopening Schools During COVID-19:** [Click Here](#) for Niagara Region's site to find specific reopening information and answers to frequently asked questions

**Order des éducatrices et des éducateurs de la petite enfance:** [Cliquez ici](#) Dre Jean Clinton partage son savoir-faire relatif à la gestion des é des enfants en cette période extraordinaire. Elle offre aussi des idées et des conseils pour vous aider à faire en sorte que la transition difficile du retour en milieu de travail se fasse en douceur et en toute confiance

**College of Early Childhood Educators:** [Click Here](#) as Dr Jean Clinton shares her expertise in dealing with children's emotions in this extraordinary time. Dr. Jean also has ideas and tips to help you make the challenging transition back to on-site work smooth and with confidence.

**Pathstone:** [Click Here](#) for 6 Parenting Strategies to Prepare Kids for School.

**District School Board of Niagara Back to School Update:** [check here](#) regularly for updates for the 2020 – 2021 school year

**Niagara Catholic Back to School Update:** [check here](#) regularly for updates for the 2020 – 2021 school year

**Anxiety Canada:** [Click Here](#) for 7 tips for educators returning to school during Covid-19

**University of Calgary:** [Click Here](#) for 9 tips preparing your children to return to school

**Sick Kids Hospital** [Click Here](#) for the Updated COVID-19:Guidance for School Reopening

**Random Act of Kindness:** [Click Here](#) for free ideas to make kindness the norm in your classrooms and for distance learning.

## **Pathstone: Back to School Prep Kit**

Getting into the back to the school routine isn't always an easy feat for kids and families, and after a half year of unpredictable upheaval, in September we will face more than a handful of changes to what back to school will look like. All students will have to make adjustments this year, and those who already struggle with mental health issues may need some extra support behind them.

### **Expand their social circle:**

If your kids haven't been interacting with others face-to-face you may want to consider some outings. This will help your child become more confident about the in-person socialization and will give them a chance to catch up on some of the social development they may have missed. Some examples of socializing outings may be, eating out at a restaurant, having a playdate with friends, or going to the park of course practicing physical distancing

### **Reduce screen time**

There has likely been a lot more screen time in your house through the COVID-19 outbreak. Though devices have helped us all stay connected through the pandemic, it's important to remember the negative effects that too much screen time has. Try reducing screen time by 15 minutes each day until it reaches normal levels. When reducing screen time, swap in real life activities like outdoor play and board games.

### **Let's work on improving focus and staying organized**

Play games that will help your child rebuild their executive functioning skills before they head back to school. Games that promote concentration, planning, the use of memory and even team building - exercising these skills will make going back to school a little less challenging.

### **Reassurance.. Tell them it's safe**

Kids may wonder why all of a sudden it's ok to go back to school. Even if they don't ask, walk your kids through the reasons why the situation is much better now. Physical distancing and mask wearing will be in place and good hygiene is being encouraged. Statistically, younger children rarely experience serious COVID-19 symptoms.

### **Do the normal back to school routine, just as you did last September.**

Get to bed earlier as a family.

Practise your morning routine (making the bed, having breakfast, packing lunch)

Track your route. For students attending school for the first time, or a new school, getting familiar with new steps and settings can be helpful.

For this year, practise masking, hand sanitizing/ washing, drive by or walk to the school, even count the number of stop signs or traffic lights on the way.

### **Talk to your child about the friends they have that are in the same class.**

Getting kids to visualize their school day can offer some ease.

### **Go shopping!**

If your kid could care less about back to school shopping for clothes and supplies, then it can be a quick and painless exercise. For those kids who love the idea of a picking out a new backpack, shoes and supplies this is yet another way to get them engaged in going back to school and can bring excitement and positive energy versus stress and anxiety. Designing a "study hut" in your house can also be a fun family activity. (This is a fun "fort" like area for just your kids to do their homework and keep their school bag)

You know your kids better than anyone. If they are more curious, **make sure you are prepared with answers** to their questions. Have a plan, and follow it. Let your kids pick up on your positive energy about the upcoming school year versus nervous energy.

### ***Take steps to reduce your own anxiety.***

#### **This is the most important step.**

Anxiety is contagious. While it's natural to worry about your child, most experts agree that the risks of continued school closure are greater than the risks posed by COVID-19. Long periods of school closure are strongly associated with learning loss, which could adversely affect your child's educational and professional performance many years into the future. ***The isolation children have experienced during the pandemic has been linked to an increased risk of depression and anxiety, and if it's continued, it could cause many kids to miss essential developmental milestones.*** Keeping schools closed would put these kids at an increased risk of experiencing severe social and emotional problems.

By keeping the risks of COVID-19 in perspective, you'll reduce your own anxiety levels and help your child feel more relaxed. When your child sees that you aren't worried about him/ her going back to school, they'll realize they don't have anything to worry about, either.

#### **Pathstone is here, lean on them.**

Close to 30% of students report not knowing where to turn when they wanted to talk to someone about mental health.

If you still feel uneasy, connect with Pathstone at any time. Our walk-in clinics have re-opened across the Region for in-person sessions or for a video counselling session by appointment. To make an appointment, contact our Crisis & Support line at 1-800-263-4944. As well, Crisis & Support operates 24/7.

Need some help to talk with your kids about all of this? [Click Here](#) for Pathstone's Mental Health Tool.

Pathstone's Drop In Clinics are open [Click Here](#) to find the one closest to you.

## **Stay up-to-date:**

*"With fewer government mandated restrictions on business to slow the spread of infection, the balance has shifted to each of us as citizens to take responsibility for slowing the spread of COVID-19. More than ever, we all need to keep two metres distance from each other, to wash or sanitize our hands frequently, to wear face coverings when we can't keep a 2 metre distance, whether indoors or outdoors, and monitor our health for any symptoms of illness so we can be tested if we do get sick."*

*~ Dr. Hirji, Niagara Region Acting Medical Officer of Health*

**Going out safely during COVID-19:** Your actions matter. Make informed choices to keep yourself and others safe. [Click Here](#) or [Download in PDF format](#)

**Sortez en toute sécurité durant COVID-19:** Vos actions comptent – faites des choix éclairés pour assurer votre sécurité et celle des autres. [Cliquez ici](#) ou [Télécharger en format PDF](#)

**Niagara Region Public Health Daily Covid-19 Updates:** [Click Here](#)

**Niagara Region Community Resources:** is working with the community to ensure residents are connected to resources, services, programs and support during the COVID-19 pandemic. [Click Here](#)

**Ontario Government Covid-19 Update Page:** [Click Here](#) *(this site has the information available in many other languages)*

**Mise à jour Covid-19 du gouvernement de l'Ontario:** [Cliquez ici](#)

**Health Canada Covid-19 Update Page:** [Click here](#)

**Gouvernement du Canada - Maladie à coronavirus (COVID-19):** [Cliquez ici](#)

## Supports for you, your clients and families:

**CMHA: Caring for children in the COVID-19 crisis:** [Click Here](#) for some guidelines for parents to help your child(ren) cope in this public health crisis.

**Association canadienne pour la sante mentale:** Prendre soin des enfants en temps de crise de la COVID-19: [Cliquez ici](#)

**Connect with a Children's Services staff member:** through live chat, [Click Here](#) over the phone (905-980-6000 ext. 3987) or by email. ([ChildCareCosts@niagararegion.ca](mailto:ChildCareCosts@niagararegion.ca))

Talk to a Children's Services staff member about:

- Licensed child care and home child care
- Financial assistance for child care
- Seasonal camp
- ProKids (sports and cultural programs)
- Resource consultant and behaviour consultant support

This new live chat service is available Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 4:15 p.m. (excluding statutory holidays).

[Click Here](#) for more information on how to connect with Children's Services.

## Check out these Locally Sourced resources and activities:

**Amazing Race Niagara – Sunday, September 13.** [Click Here](#) to register for a fun, team based event for friends, colleagues or families, where teams of four travel by car throughout the Niagara Region competing against each other & the clock, completing various activities & challenges in order to receive clues for the next location

**Virtual Field Trip from DSBN Summer Learning:** [Click Here](#) to visit the Decew Water Treatment Plant

**Marineland:** Everybody loves Marineland! [Click Here](#) to see what is open at the park.

## Things to do to keep you and your children busy:

**Play Music on the Porch Day – August 29<sup>th</sup>:** Grab your music makers and plan to join in on Play Music on the Porch Day! Lots of social distancing space while making some joyful sounds – [click here](#) to learn more

**Crayola Canada:** Full of fun to do at home activities, [click here](#) to see all that the Crayola Canada website has to offer. Be sure to [click here](#) for their Facebook page for daily activities -

**Doors Open Ontario:** Although Doors Open Ontario won't be holding in-person tours, they have Digital Doors Open available on their website plus lots of great, related activities and games for all ages. [Click here](#) to explore all that they have to offer!

**NRT OnDemand:** Niagara Regional Transit has a new pilot rideshare program launching for residents of Niagara West. Rideshare is a transportation option which uses smartphone technology and a fleet of dedicated vehicles to provide trips within the service boundaries with no fixed schedules or routes. NRT OnDemand doesn't operate on a fixed route like conventional transit services. It lets riders request trips in real-time through the app or over the phone by selecting a pickup point and destination. Learn more about this new service by [clicking here](#).

**Canada Nice:** Love the tagline on this site – “Canada Nice – we didn't invent nice – we're perfecting it” This site is full of all things Canadian including where you can travel right now and things to see. [Click here](#) to start exploring.

Life is short.  
So do the things  
which make you happy.  
And be with people  
who make you happy.



Look for the good  
in every day-  
even if some days you  
have to look harder.

*Karen Salmansohn*

*We would like to apologize if you received multiple copies of this email. We are trying to reach out to as many early years educators and staff as possible. Please share with all of your staff, clients, families or anyone who is not on this email list.*

**Take Care and Stay Healthy**

***Karen & Sharon***

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**WE NOT ME. MY MASK PROTECTS YOU  
AND YOUR MASK PROTECTS ME.**

