

## Instructions Sheet and Talking Points

### Dots for Kids Day - Ring A Bell Campaign for Youth Mental Health

Here at Partners For Youth, Ring a Bell week is one of our favourite weeks of the year! We are so excited to participate with you and other schools around the province to promote positive mental health initiatives for youth mental health.

Each student in grades K-8 in New Brunswick will be colouring a paper strip and connecting them to create paper chains. You can either display the chain in your classroom or connect your chain with those of other classes and display it in the school.

### Talking Points

- 1/5 – “or 20% of Canadians will develop a mental illness in their lifetime. That’s a lot of people! Even though not everyone will have a mental illness themselves all of us will meet and know people with mental illnesses so it’s important to be kind and supportive to everyone”
- 5/5 – “this means that everyone has mental health, it’s a part of our wellness just like our physical health! We have to take care of it the same way we go to the gym to exercise or make sure we have a healthy balance of foods that are good for us and treats”

### Paper Strips

For each of the 4 strips, ask the students to name the things that they see and (depending on the age) ask them to guess what the theme of the strip is and how each item is related to that theme. The following talking points are just guidelines and may not be appropriate for every grade, feel free to adapt as necessary to talk about each paper strip theme!

We’re creating paper chains because it shows the importance of connecting to others and is a visual reminder to students that they aren’t alone. As humans we want to be connected and loneliness is an increasing problem in our society. The activity shows everyone’s unique contribution (coloured paper strip) to the overall community (paper chain).

- **Physical Health** Strip (food, sneakers, brain) – “Even though today is all about talking about mental health, we need to talk about our physical health too! Our mind works best when we take care of our body too. That means doing things like getting enough exercise and choosing healthy food options. A big part of our physical health is getting enough sleep and this is so

important! How many of you have ever felt cranky the day after you didn't get enough sleep? Me too! How much we sleep can affect our emotions/how we feel so it's important for a lot of different reasons!"

- **Animal Strip** (cats, dog, bird) – Why are pets important for our mental health? “Being with animals helps our mental health in so many different ways. It can make us feel more relaxed and less stressed. We feel less lonely and they can even help us feel more mindful – that means we’re paying attention to what’s going on right now in the present moment instead worrying about what happened in the past or the future. The best part is pets love us no matter what and even if we have a bad day they’re excited and waiting for us when we get home”
  - Take a moment to talk about pets that students may have or would like to have.
  - What do they like about their pets?
- **Nature Strip** (tree, leaf, flowers) – “Being outside and enjoying nature is so important for our mental health! Getting enough sunlight is very important for our mental health. It can help us feel less stressed and more mindful because we are paying attention to what’s going on around us instead of worrying about the past or future. Being in nature has even helped people feel less lonely and have better overall wellness. What are different ways you can think of enjoying nature? What are your favourite things to do outside?”
- **Emotion Strip** (emojis) – “Being able to notice how we’re feeling, communicate how we’re feeling, and change how we’re feeling is one of the most important things we can learn. It’s something that we’ll continue to use everyday for the rest of our lives! That means that if we’re angry we can realize what made us get angry and then find a healthy way to work through those emotions – like talking a walk or breathing deeply. There are so many different emotions!
  - Elementary – how many different feelings can you name?
  - Middle – What are healthy ways to cope with emotions like feeling angry or stressed?

## Bell Ringing Event

“We make noise together to raise awareness for mental health, just like a town crier would have done a long time ago. Since everyone has mental health we all come together to ring bells to show that we want to support youth mental health and reduce the stigma towards people who struggle with their mental health – because it’s okay not to be okay!”