**Cultivating your mental health bears fruit in later life**
*National organization promotes mental wellbeing this seniors’ week and throughout the year*

TORONTO, May 31, 2023 – Your mental health is like a garden. Sometimes conditions are nearly perfect for steady growth and flowering. And other times conditions can be challenging, with little water, too much shade, or scorching heat. But there’s always something you can do to tend to your mental health and help your garden grow in all seasons of life.

That’s the message the Canadian Coalition for Seniors’ Mental Health (CCSMH) is sharing this Seniors’ Week.

“This week is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the resilience of older adults, and also shed light on ways we can better support their mental wellbeing,” says CCSMH director of projects and public policy Brenda Martinussen. “We’re sharing practical tools for older adults, their families, and health care providers to dig into.”

CCSMH is a national, interdisciplinary organization dedicated to promoting better mental health outcomes for older adults. They’ve received major grants from several funders, including the Public Health Agency of Canada, to do just that.

“The COVID-19 pandemic was really difficult for older Canadians, especially those living in long-term care,” says CCSMH executive director Claire Checkland. “It shone a spotlight on some underlying challenges that we are eager to address. And there’s great reason for hope.”

Recent findings from Mental Health Research Canada suggest that 80 per cent of older adults across Canada feel hopeful about the future.

“Mental illness is not a natural part of aging; we have the right to mental wellness no matter our age,” says Checkland. “Our organization is committed to ensuring that older adults can get help if they need it so that they can flourish in all seasons of life.”

CCSMH has recently released a new pamphlet helping older adults make sense of depression, drawing on the best available evidence reviewed by a committee of experts.

Since 2002, the organization has brought together health professionals including physicians, nurses, and social workers as well as older adults to create clinical and public-facing resources on topics like depression, delirium, and substance use. CCSMH is currently working on new clinical guidelines for anxiety, social isolation and loneliness, and the behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia.

“CCSMH is truly a pan-Canadian effort,” according to founding co-chair Dr. David Conn. “We have a remarkably dedicated team coming together with renewed energy to lead with evidence and empathy in support of the mental health of older adults right across the country .”

How can you support an older adult you know to flourish?

To learn more, access CCSMH mental health resources, or lend your voice to their efforts, visit their website at ccsmh.ca or follow them on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. If you need emergency help, please call 911, or visit your local emergency department. To reach a local crisis line call 1-833-456-4566, toll free anywhere in Canada.

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