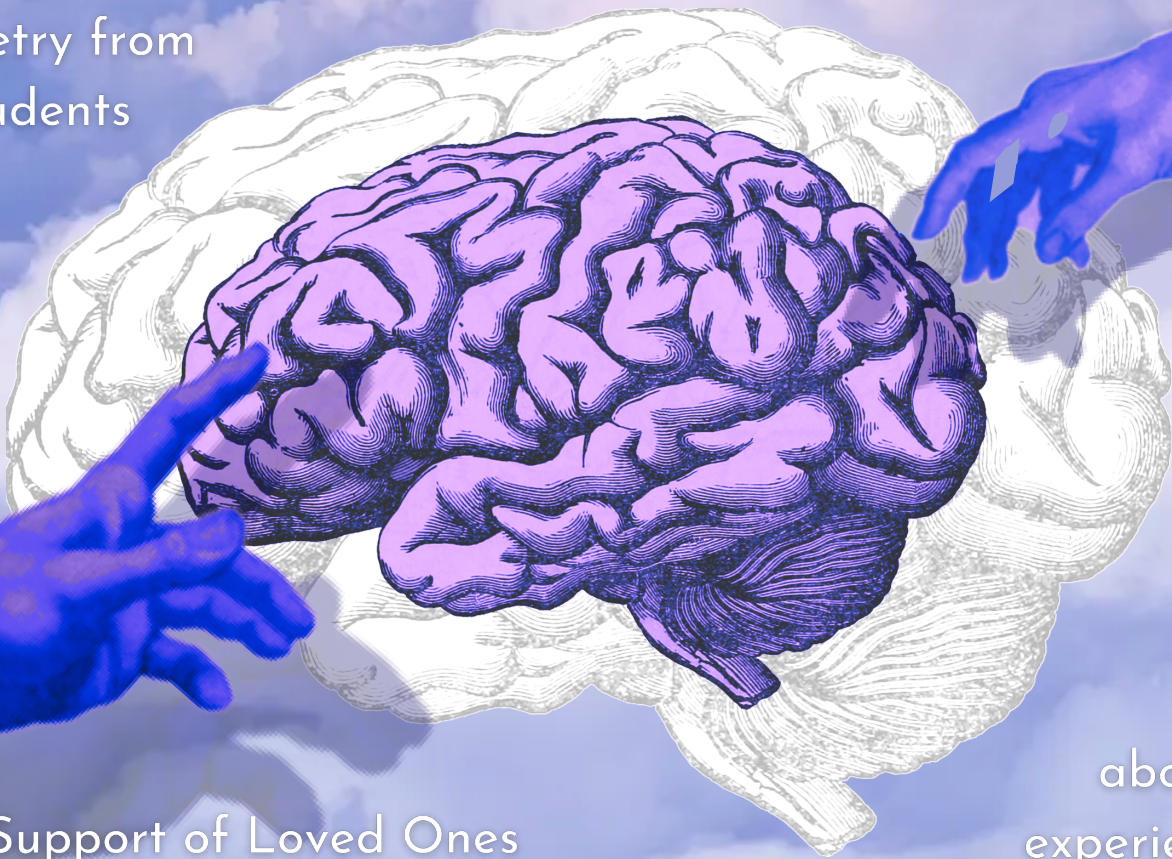




KIND MIND -MAGAZINE-

An Intro to
MENTAL HEALTH
WELLNESS AND AWARENESS

Featuring artwork
and poetry from
UoG students



"Support of Loved Ones
Dealing with Mental Illness"

Read
about other's
experiences with
mental health

ABOUT CAM'S KIDS

Cam was a well-adjusted, social, active kid with a normal life, until everything began to change as he entered grade 9. After experiencing physical symptoms of illness, like stomach aches and nausea, Cam's family began to worry that he was very ill. After this was ruled out, it became clearer that the cause of Cam's symptoms was anxiety. His family decided a change in environment might be the best solution.

Cam changed schools, but this only helped for a short period of time, and it was decided that home-schooling may be the best solution for now. With the help of school staff, Cam finished grade 10 online, and fully integrated back into school in grade 11. Luckily, Cam was able to receive individualized support from his school, as well as health care practitioners and doctors, that allowed him to better manage his



mental health and enjoy his high school years.

In September of 2014, Cam began post-secondary studies at the University of Ottawa, and two months later was fatally struck by a motor vehicle.

In Cam's honour, his family founded the Cam Hick's Kids Foundation. Dedicated to "Supporting Young People Struggling with Anxiety," Cam's Kids helps students cope effectively in order to reach their full potential and realize their dreams.

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Disclaimer:

The authors featured in this
magazine are not experts. The
advice and opinions shared in
this magazine are from
personal experiences and are
not to be taken as fact.

Hello! From the UofG Cam's Kids Team

Hello! And welcome to the first-ever Cam's Kids @ Guelph Mental Health Magazine! We are so thankful to have you here.

We created this magazine in hopes of developing a space for those passionate about spreading mental health awareness, and for those faced with mental illness to share their stories and insights. We also included art pieces that may have played a role in one's mental health journey, or just simply brought joy to the artist.

Each of the pieces in this magazine touch on various subjects related to mental health, through various forms of media. We hope the content found in this magazine provides a sense of comfort, feelings of understanding that you are not alone, and perhaps some valuable insights and resources to aid in your own journey.

Enjoy!

The Editors



Mckenna Williams



Raquel Rodrigues



Masyn Manchester



Dilpreet Banwait

Photography by : Hannah Di Renzo



Support of Loved Ones Dealing with Mental Illness

*Written by:
Madeline Kerrigan*

Given the sheer magnitude of adults who suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder, there is almost an infallible chance that you or someone you love have been afflicted with a mental disorder. There currently exists a large proportion of attention regarding mental disorders which remains focused on the individual and personal coping strategies. However, mental illness is not confined to the affected individual; those whom they love also join them in the trenches of pain and suffering.

From my personal experience, watching a loved one battle mental illness causes a tidal wave of feelings of utter powerlessness, panic, and depression to persist, and like a wave, these seek to drown us and all those in close vicinity. This article will attempt to arm you with strategies and tips to help you support your loved ones as they battle a mental disorder. Keep in mind, these are simply strategies that I have come across in my own personal experience, research, and therapy.

"...through the tool of empathy, you can mentally place yourself in the shoes of that individual..."

There is a common misconception that people feel that they cannot possibly connect with a loved one suffering if they themselves have never been in that position or felt what the person suffering is going through. However, you do not need to suffer the loss or experience the mental trauma they have in order to relate to them. The key to connection is through empathy, which is the ability to mentally and emotionally place yourself in the shoes of another given the same situation. For example, you may have a friend suffering from depression as a result of losing a loved one. You may feel unable to communicate as you have never experienced the loss of a loved one, but through the tool of empathy, you can mentally place yourself in the shoes of that individual and gauge how you would feel if you were placed in the situation of your friend.

People often do not know what to say when speaking to someone dealing with mental illness and may stay silent out of fear of saying the wrong thing. However, what people fail to realize is that your silence speaks volumes far louder than anything you could possibly say. Your loved ones do not expect you to have all of the answers, or to always be able to say the right thing. These expectations are simply internalized pressures we place on ourselves, rather than a reflection of those placed upon us by the afflicted individual. Most important in the process is letting your loved one feel as though they are heard through active listening. Sometimes your loved ones will want to speak about their illness and other times they may want to speak about anything but this.

"Your energy is contagious, and you can attempt to elevate those you love by radiating unconditional love."

Whatever it is they are feeling, go along with it. If they do not wish to verbalize their emotional state, distract them and speak to them lightheartedly. Your energy is contagious, and you can attempt to elevate those you love by radiating unconditional love.

"At the end of the day, you must understand that you will never be able to control an individual or force them to make decisions that you see fit for them."

One of the most important things is to always encourage loved ones to seek professional help, because at the end of the day, you are not licensed and cannot be their sole source of therapy. Through constant encouragement, you will be breaking down the stigma associated with reaching out for help. I am a firm believer that no matter who you are, you can always benefit from speaking to a professional. Remember, you cannot hold the weight of the entire Earth on your shoulders, so do not attempt to do this. You will end up emotionally drained and unavailable for those when they need you the most.

Ultimately, you must understand that you will never be able to control an individual or force them to make decisions that you see fit for them. You can only encourage them to seek help and remain empathetic. It may be hard to not lose your patience with them, but we can only control ourselves and provide support for others.





Photography by: Lauren Larmon

Gradual unfurling of the Wings
Whilst the Chrysalis splits
Leads into discovery of oneself, As the perfect sanity
permits.
This harks back to **the overlooked woes**, Full of deep
malaise and no wit.
Of Course, 'tis a mindset win when one "Risked it to a
menace, yet still retrieved it".
Certitude tussling the delusions, Conscience under
someone's sway. Paranoia taking over personality until The
Process bears the stability away.
Earned breakthroughs are thus a way to peace, Every dolor
worthwhile as you recover.
Things never exposed will forever be sensitive Since it's all
'**control**' as you uncover.

As You Uncover

Poetry by:
Ridhi Dhodra

A Closer Look into the Poem...

In the opening of the stanza, the term 'chrysalis' relates to the life-cycle of a butterfly, from when she emerges out of her shell to her first flight. The subtle movement of those wings (gradual unfurling of the wings) increases her awareness of her capabilities. Similarly, after undergoing the whole process of development, we discover the purpose of our life. Initially, it might seem complicated, like a hustle, but by going through these entanglements, we obtain a vital experience and a positive lifelong lesson. The ability of our body and mind to adapt can permit our mental health and stability to persevere during harsh moments. Once our mentality upgrades, it becomes clear that hardships facilitate our growth. At times, the emotional upheaval of these miseries might manifest in the mind and cause discomfort. People around us may fail to notice this chaos and despair that exists within. Nonetheless, the current day makes you proud for the present victory of your 'mindset'.

Victories are made when one has risked every part of themselves, including pride and self-esteem, but to have it back in grasp is gratifying. All the intuitions and energies from inside firmly hold certainty. Letting others decide the 'principles of one's life' can often lead to misconceptions about oneself. Nothing should affect our personality in ways such that we become cynical or doubtful about everything. This might deter us from making crucial decisions about life. 'Paranoia' means the state of having a

paranoid personality or difficulty to trust, which is often seen in people if they go through some trauma. One should always believe that there are other good people just like them in this world.

Throughout this entire experience, what you might fail to realize is that you are learning, adapting and overcoming. Just the way hard work always pays off, your credit is the 'peace' that you earned through these breakthroughs you never really saw coming.

'Every dolor worthwhile as you recover' states that you will soon be grateful for the current afflictions. If you never face it, you will always fear it. 'Since it's all control as you uncover' – the best part about discovering yourself is that now you have control over your sanity, intellect and emotions. All in all, everything is in control as you grow through limitations.

A Message from the Author

I wrote this poem out of my experience, learning that everything happens in life for a reason. You are being shaped by the adversity surrounding you. I assure that life becomes beautiful once you start to focus on understanding yourself and your needs. Moreover, in today's world, we do also have the option to seek professional help in hard times. There is always someone who can assist us in ways we can never think of. Never fear to share your thoughts with your loved ones. As you uncover and reveal yourself to the world, you will radiate!

It gets better when you start observing positive changes in you. Focus on your improvements each day and the past will feel no more than a bad dream and a worthy experience.

Good luck!

Ridhi Dhodra

How Anxiety Changed my Life

Written by:
Gabrielle Holt

I was diagnosed with anxiety in grade nine and this was one of the toughest years I have experienced. I went to a high school with only one of my friends from elementary school. She was thriving, making new friends, while I was fading into the background. I struggled to meet new people and most times sat alone in my classes. It wasn't until November that I found a friend group and finally felt like I fit in somewhere. I thought that this would solve my problems, but I was wrong. Finding a friend group gave me people to hang out with at lunch and after school; however, it didn't fix my biggest problem. Since the start of the school year, I had felt on-edge, always nervous, and always stressed.

Sometimes my heart felt like it was beating so hard it was going to fall out of my chest.

I found myself stressing days before social events. "No one there will like me. People will think I'm weird. I can't go." I would come home from school and overthink everything until it turned into some big bad thing in my head. I was having trouble sleeping. I blamed it on the stress of school and adjusting to high school. I suppressed these feelings because it was easier than talking about it. I didn't want to stress my dad or my friends over something that probably wasn't a big deal... until it got bad.

First semester of grade 9 I had geography—one of my favourite classes. For our final project we had to make a comic strip. I went to the library to print mine, and it wasn't working and wouldn't print. I started to get this tight pain in my chest and it felt like I couldn't breathe. Like any normal 14 year-old I thought, "I'm having a heart attack." I called my dad, bawling my eyes out and telling him to pick me up. Spoiler alert: it wasn't a heart attack, and this would not be the first panic attack. My dad took me to the doctor that night and he told me it was just stress. This made a lot of sense.

But then the tightness in my chest started occurring more often. It was just stress. That's what I kept telling myself and the doctor kept telling me. I remember coming home from school and again dealing with this chest pain. I was home alone and I didn't know what to do—when people say it feels like you're dying, they aren't joking. I called my dad while he was at work, bawling my eyes out, telling him what was going on. He sent his friend to come check up on me. I knew this wasn't stress and, whatever this was, it was bad.

Once I'd calmed down, my dad booked a doctor's appointment for the next day.

"It took me the entire summer to realize that there was nothing wrong with me."

It was that appointment where I finally got an answer: I had generalized anxiety disorder. I was referred to a therapist and finally had a diagnosis for the issues I had been dealing with for the past year. Not stress, not me making things up in my head, not just me being a teenager; a disorder that was making things harder for me. A mental illness I couldn't control. Something that confirmed what was happening wasn't my fault. Yet I was so heartbroken when I was diagnosed. How could I have anxiety? How could I have a mental illness? Was I crazy? I cried after my doctor told me. It took me the entire summer to realize that there was nothing wrong with me.

I have anxiety, but it doesn't make me some horrible person or someone that people should fear. I learned about stigma, and I decided to advocate for mental health. Raising awareness is important to me because I want other people struggling, like I was, to know what they have sooner. With this information, they can get the adequate care that they need to recover.

If you take one thing away from this, just know: you do not need to struggle alone. Reach out to family, friends, and your doctor for help until you get the answers you deserve and need.

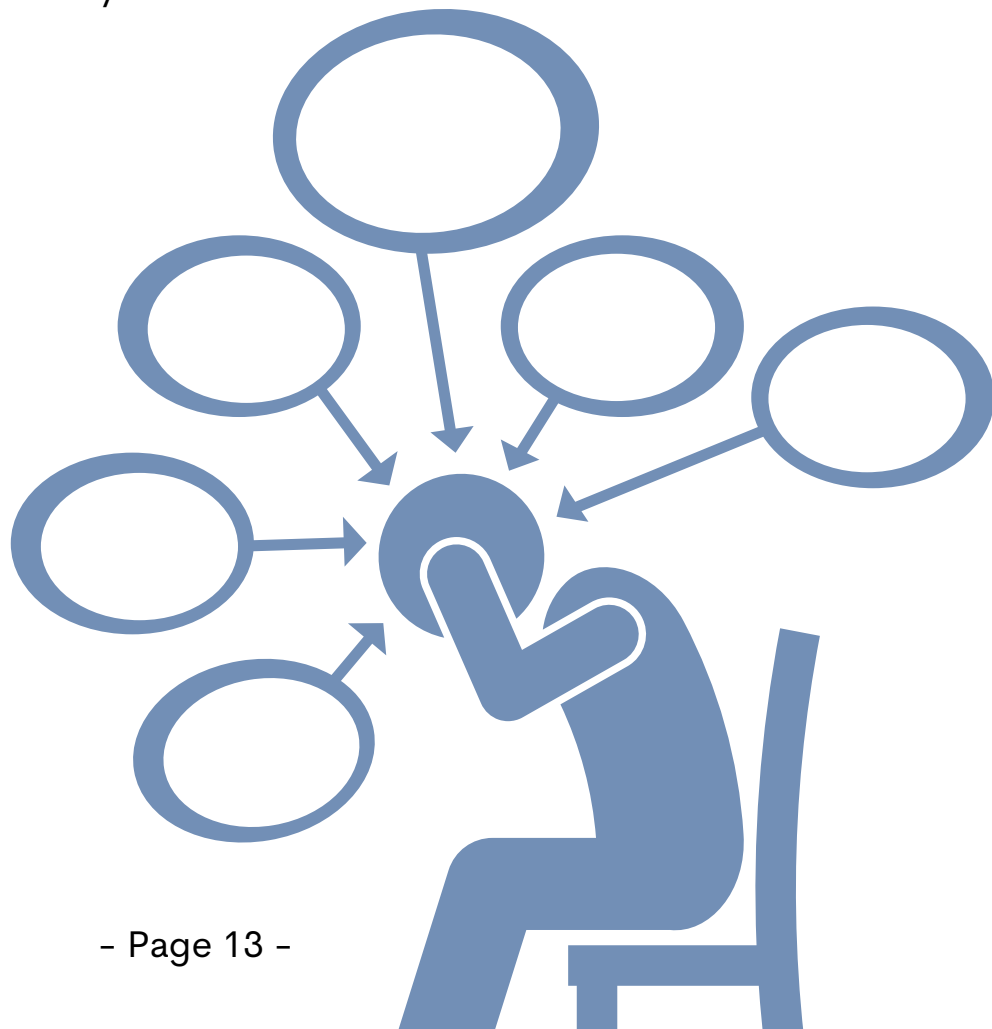
UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

**Stress Management & High
Performance Clinic**
www.selfregulationskills.ca

Student Wellness Navigators
519-824-4120 x52131

Counselling Services
519-824-4120 x53244

Student Wellness Website
wellness.uoguelph.ca



Practicing Mindfulness through the Pandemic

*Written by:
Eden Rechteris-McNab*

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected everyone in various ways. This includes, but is not limited to: social interactions, communal activities, and general tasks through school and work. This prolonged pandemic has brought anxiety, stress, despair, and various other negative states of mind.

We live a large portion of our lives dwelling on the past, anticipating

**"...to be mindful is to
prioritize bringing
your attention to the
present moment
without any sort of
evaluation..."**

the future, and forgetting to live in the present. One thing that has discouraged our mindfulness is social media. Social media has the possibility of being detrimental to one's mental health as it facilitates the recall of past negative events (Karim, 2020). To be mindful is to prioritize bringing your attention to the present moment without any sort of evaluation (Karim, 2020); this is a skill beneficial for all to apply after the pandemic.

To be mindful is to trust your surroundings, not to judge the current moment but to accept and let go of the past and/or negative



thoughts, to be patient with oneself and to find a balance between commitments. There are three key characteristics to mindfulness: (1) intention to cultivate awareness; (2) attention to what is occurring in the present; and (3) obtaining a non-judgemental, curious attitude (Karim, 2020). To set the intention to cultivate awareness and the ability to return to it is a skill that requires practice, but is very rewarding. The ability to observe

thoughts, feelings and sensations as they arise, giving attention to what is occurring in the present moment allows for oneself to identify thoughts, whether positive or negative, in order to reason through and release burdens. Curiosity and attitude are important when practicing mindfulness—this is the only way we can accurately observe the present and feel comfortable being in this frame of mind.



Photography by: Lauren Larrmon

One way to incorporate mindfulness is focusing on relaxing and/or completing actions that allow one to meditate; closing the eyes and connecting with the senses of the body. To focus on breathing allows for the individual to tune into their bodily awareness.

Setting intentions encourages productivity and ambition, even throughout stressful life events. In

the morning, it's beneficial to avoid checking your social media but instead focus on setting intentions for the day. When you consider the many aspects of your day ask yourself: How might I present myself to have the greatest impact? What thought patterns do I want to strengthen today? How can I take better care of myself and prioritize my needs today? How might I be able to be compassionate to others and myself when faced with a difficult situation? How may I feel more connected and fulfilled in the present moment today? Although these questions may feel either silly or initially extraneous, practicing intention and gratitude encourages us to be held accountable for our goals.

Short and long-term goals and intentions have the ability to contribute to a greater level of prosperity, which is one of the most vital aspects of our youth. The COVID-19 pandemic has made this increasingly more difficult, although we, as the youth, have the potential not to build a negative perception of the world but to resiliently unite and intentionally improve ourselves for the greater good of society.

burned out

Poetry by:
Nida Ansari
2018



there is such a thing of being too happy,
being too available, being too forgiving;
because after the highs you start feeling crappy,
and you realize what kind of world you start living.
I've given off my happiness, have let others feed off it,
I give too much and expect none back;
and although I do nothing in hopes of some profit,
I always end up being the one that lacks.
sometimes I feel like my flames shine too bright,
my radiance overspreads, and I've learned;
if I don't take care of my everlasting light,
I'm always going to get myself burned.

fallen off

Poetry by:
Nida Ansari
2018

I barely see myself
I barely know my worth
Lately I've been feeling like I've fallen off the earth
I'm somewhere no one sees
I'm somewhere no one knows
It's like I'm peering through a glass wall watching as everyone comes and
goes
I've lost touch
I've lost friends
There's only so much I can do to meet broken ends
I'm left out
I'm left wondering if
There's a hand to pull me back after I've fallen off this cliff
If you can see me
If you can hear
I'm standing right beside you, trembling in fear
In fear of being rejected
In fear of having no rebirth
Because I'm afraid I've gone too far away from the place I once called earth

QUIZ TIME Burnout

Anyone can be a victim of burnout. Use this assessment tool to gauge if you may be experiencing this. Try to think about elements in your environment that are depleting your energy. Interpret your results at the end and think of ways you can incorporate rest and self-care.

Statements could apply to personal burnout, work-related burnout, and caretaker burnout.

Rating: Not at all (1); Rarely (2) Sometimes (3); Often (4) Very Often (5)

1. I feel physically and emotionally drained.
2. I feel easily irritated by the people I am surrounded with.
3. I feel like I could be doing more.
4. I do not have time to engage in self-care, or healthy leisure activities that I enjoy.
5. I have a hard time getting motivated in the mornings.
6. I have negative thoughts about my role.
7. I feel like I have no one to talk to.
8. I feel uninspired.
9. I can't keep up with the tasks I have to complete throughout the day.
10. I can't wait for the day to be over.
11. I am having second thoughts about the role I am in.
12. I am doing a poor job.
13. I feel misunderstood by others in my role.
14. I feel an overwhelming amount of pressure.



Obtained from: <https://www.kellymagazine.ca/mentalwellnessarticles/quiz-burnout>

QUIZ TIME Answers



Results:

If you scored...

14-28: No/slight risk of burnout.

29-55: You may be at risk of burnout.

56-70: You may be experiencing burnout.

"What can I do to minimize burnout?"

- Identify and **regulate** your stressors
- **Consider** all of your options
- **Improve** your outlook
- Seek health and wellness **support**
- Establish a healthy **balanced** routine



For more details,
check out:
<https://www.kellymagazine.ca/mentalwellnessarticles/quiz-burnout>

Artwork by:
Cassidy Boyle
2021



colours, a multitude of mediums (acrylic, markers, and resin), and varying textures throughout the piece. I find that this complex culmination of ideas exhibits how exhilarating and diverse the world feels to me. A viewer could interact with the artwork through both touch and sight, reflecting what I feel to be an experience more akin to my own. The flowers, one overshadowing and dull, the other deeper and more vibrant, express my vision of how imposing the outer world is over my inner world.

I feel intimidated by my lack of conformity and the social consequences as a result, though the smaller, brighter flower is still something beautiful, to be fixated on. The transition of cool to warmer colours at the centre portray my urge to stifle my inner thoughts. A mess of words falls behind the objects on the forefront, overlapping and being easily misread to depict the confusion and difficulty associated with this disorder. The subject floats above this backdrop, having no control over her movement, surrounded by these conflicting and chaotic thoughts. She is wrapped in so many ideas that it's impossible to comprehend the true emotions behind it all; happiness, sadness, excitement, or fear.

Overall, if I could remove my ADHD at the press of a button, I wouldn't. I'd instead wish to change the structure of how our communities allow people like me to function, for the betterment of all.



The Difficulties Faced by Individuals with Anxiety Disorder and their Family Members and How Society Can Aid in Fostering Resilience

Written by: Selina de Paiva

Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), one of the most common mental disorders, leads to overwhelming feelings of worry and fear (Munir & Takov, 2021). It involves persistent, unmanageable, and excessive worry about everyday things and is accompanied by physical symptoms such as restlessness and irritability (Barlow et al., 2021). The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders specifies that intense anxiety, worry, and nervous anticipation must be ongoing for at least six months to be considered GAD (Barlow et al., 2021). The individual must struggle to control these feelings and must also have

at least three physical GAD symptoms (Barlow et al., 2021). Its physical symptoms differentiate it from similar disorders such as panic disorders, which are associated with autonomic arousal (Barlow et al., 2021). GAD involves fatigue susceptibility, mental agitation, and difficulty sleeping, which in turn



disrupt daily activities and reduce the quality of life (Barlow et al., 2021). The goal of this article is to spread awareness of the difficulties that GAD patients and their families encounter, as well as how society may aid in the development of perseverance in these people and their families.

Individual and societal barriers to treatment access, such as misdiagnosis owing to fear of stigma, familial consequences, and skepticism, are problems that patients with GAD face (Barlow et al., 2021; Goetter et al., 2020). Stigmatization surrounding psychiatric conditions may discourage patients from discussing their mental health with a physician (Goetter et al., 2020). This concealment of emotional issues adds to misdiagnosis by leading doctors to focus solely on the physical symptoms of their patients (Kartal, 2011). Diagnostic accuracy can potentially be affected by inter-patient variability (Barlow et al., 2021). According to Goetter, et al. (2020), at the systems level, intergenerational effects have led to more underutilization of mental health

services in minority populations. This may be influenced by cultural beliefs. For instance, some Asian communities may believe that mental illness can be treated through willpower, rather than seeking psychological help (Leong et al., 2011). Many patients do not believe their psychiatric symptoms are unusual, and some GAD sufferers even believe that their anxiety helps them avoid unfavourable outcomes (Barlow et al., 2021). Ultimately, GAD patients experience barriers that prevent treatment access.

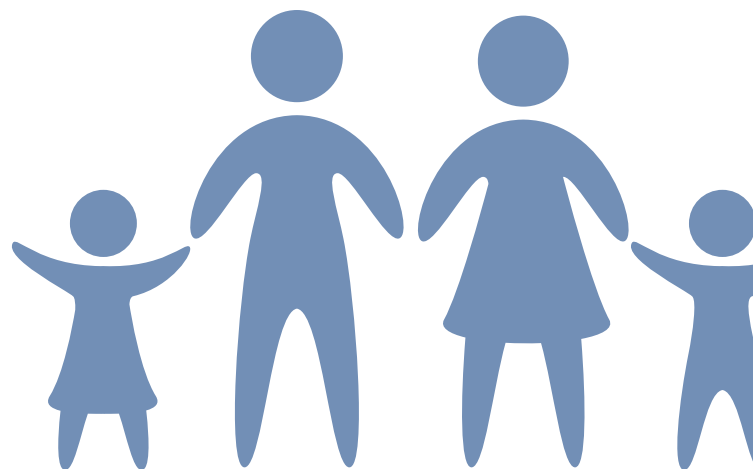
Families of GAD patients may experience self-blame, inheritance concerns, and a financial burden (Moses, 2010; Barlow et al., 2021; Kartal, 2011). Family members may endure immense pressure and uncertainty on how they can alleviate their family member's struggles (Moses, 2010). Self-blame likely entails notions of a negative family environment and ineffective oversight of the child's mental health (Moses, 2010). GAD is thought to have a genetic basis, therefore family members may be concerned about their risk (Barlow et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the high coexistence of GAD with other psychiatric conditions makes GAD patients more prone to seek healthcare services frequently, resulting in increased tardiness and financial strain on their families (Kartal, 2011). Family members of GAD patients, therefore, have numerous challenges.

Through public education, lowering logistical barriers to treatment availability, and outreach initiatives, society can aid in the development of resilience in GAD patients and their families (Goetter et al., 2020). Firstly, public awareness about GAD symptoms and the accessibility to GAD treatments must increase (Goetter et al., 2020). This will enhance public health literacy and potentially reduce stigma (Goetter et al., 2020). Secondly, providing convenient treatments like telemedicine can reduce logistical barriers, especially for individuals who avoid conventional therapy (Goetter et al., 2020). Lastly, more efforts need to address populations that are at the highest risk of not accessing treatment.

To improve treatment utilization among these populations, research must strive to understand these barriers and develop culturally-sensitive outreach initiatives, such as those involving diverse outreach representatives (Goetter et al., 2020).

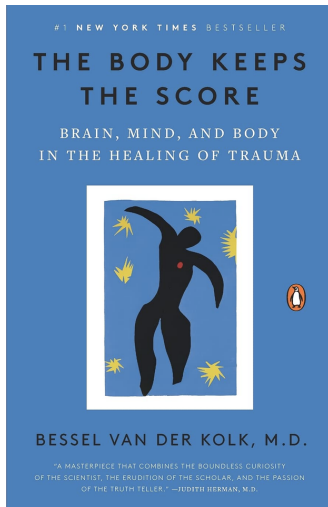
By understanding the barriers endured by individuals with GAD, society can develop effective approaches to help them and their families.



Book

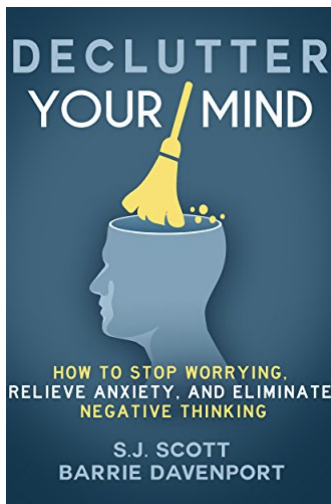
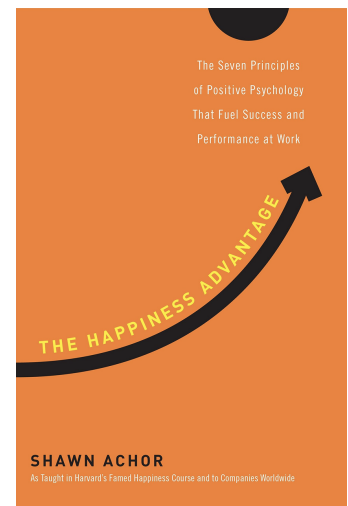


Recommendations



The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma by Bessel van der Kolk M.D.

The Happiness Advantage: The Seven Principles of Positive Psychology That Fuel Success and Performance at Work by Shawn Achor



Declutter Your Mind by S.J. Scott

Cultivating a Healthy Mindset and Lifestyle:



How I got from the worst place in my life to the best place in my life within one year

Written by: Talia Cohen

My name is Talia and I'm a fourth year psychology student at the University of Guelph. Outside of the classroom, I am on my own personal mental health journey. I suffer from generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), social anxiety disorder (SAD), sensory processing disorder (SPD), and borderline personality disorder (BPD). Most of you are probably familiar with anxiety; debilitating worries which can be about anything. For me it specifically includes social situations. SPD affects how we

process any sensory information; I am particularly sensitive to specific textures and feelings. I discovered my SPD when I was in elementary school and started to dislike the feeling of underwear to the point that I had a meltdown every morning when I got dressed. BPD impacts the way you think about yourself and others, usually stemming from trauma, and is said to be one of the hardest disorders to live with.

Mental health is far more than just

mental illness, though. It's also about our psychological and emotional wellbeing. In August 2020 I faced one of the hardest events of my life: a messy breakup from a toxic relationship. It was bittersweet; I was happy to feel free, but unsure how to move on and heal. I wish I had the strength to leave sooner but I was gaslit to believe that I couldn't live without them. Being newly single, I started to put myself first; live MY life for ME. That's where my recovery began. I am proud to say that now in August 2021 I am the happiest and healthiest I've ever been.

Yet it wasn't always easy getting here; I tried countless therapists and remedies until I eventually found the treatment plan that works best for me. Please don't give up if you haven't found your perfect treatment yet. Change doesn't happen over night; commit to bettering yourself each day. With small changes, you're making small progress, which is nevertheless progress. Good things take time and I'm proud of you for embarking on this journey.

In order to live a healthier lifestyle, there are a few things I try to

implement into each day: drink a lot of water, get some fresh air, be active, do something I enjoy, eat healthier, and ultimately some alone time to unwind (I'm a huge introvert!). I also started journalling every night and got back into reading (I highly recommend *The Life-Changing Magic of Not Giving a F**** by Sarah Knight). These small changes have made huge improvements in my overall mood. Sometimes I have a bad day, but that's okay! Don't beat yourself up for swerving off track. Healing isn't about overcoming the pain, it's about living despite it. When I'm feeling down, I focus on my breath, sip on cold water, tell myself I'm okay, recognize that my thoughts are fears not facts, and name what I'm feeling. By labelling my emotion I can understand myself better, identify my triggers, and find an appropriate solution. Labelling also shifts the brain from an emotional state to a thinking state, helping you calm down by reducing cortisol (the stress hormone) levels and amygdala (fear region of the brain) activity. So you're actually being your own therapist and changing the chemistry of your brain at the same time!

The biggest lesson I learned is that a healthy life is a journey, not a destination. I was striving for happiness. But happiness is an unattainable destination. It's not something you can achieve once then live happily ever after. Life is a journey because there are ups AND downs. It's impossible to have only 'ups,' and that's a good thing! We need a whole range of emotions to get through life; happiness is just one of them. Take advantage of the

'downs' and feel your feelings! Live a life of authenticity instead of toxic positivity. Strive for peace; be at peace with the good times, the bad times, and everything in between. So next time you have a bad day, use that moment as an opportunity to learn and grow. Life has handed you a bucket of dirt and a shovel, you decide what to plant.

Thank you for reading. Keep being the best version of yourself that you can be.

A Discussion on Sports Anxiety and How to Cope

Written by: Erika Vahidi

Performance anxiety in sports runs deep within the minds of many athletes. Whether you are an Olympic athlete or participating in sports to simply stay active, our minds often have trouble separating the physical from the psychological. Often increased before competitions, tryouts or games, our stress levels reach higher than peak levels, preventing us from tuning into our desired peak performance.

Have you ever experienced the feeling of being completely prepared for an event, but on the day when your skills are at stake, it feels as though you forget how to move? Have you ever experienced being so overwhelmed before a competition that breathing gets continuously harder? Have you ever been through a terrible practice and been so discouraged that your mind is a blank slate for practices



to come? This list can continue forever. Sports anxiety affects everyone to different degrees, and in hundreds of different mannerisms. There is no perfect solution to this problem, although with the right combinations of recommended methods, there is no doubt that you can tackle this barricade and bring your stress levels down to optimal levels.

This emotional obstacle is felt by every single person. When you look around at all the other athletes that you are comparing yourself to, the first thing to always remind yourself is that they are equally going through their own share of anxiety and worries, even if their façade tells you otherwise. We are all human and this is just a condition of our existence.

I started competing in figure skating in early elementary school, and up until this day at every single competition, I still go through good and terrible phases of mental health as a result of my sport. Throughout my competitive career, I have tried many different methods to help me deal with this obstacle and in no way have I completely eradicated my worries, but I do find myself

more and more in control of my mind and body.

Visualization is one of the biggest methods I can recommend. Use your mind's eye to imagine perfect execution of skills that you have not mastered, as well as the ones you have. Not only should you think about the actual practice of your sport, but also visualize the preparation and your desired end goal. Imagine yourself putting on your skates or jersey, and stepping onto and off of the field of your sport. By doing this, you are activating a sort of "deja vu" that will allow you to become familiar with your environment and predicament. Another coping mechanism is the classic breathing exercise. By focusing on deep breathing, you are sending a message to your brain to relax (Healthwise Staff). It is crucial to allow yourself to relax to the best of your ability and fake confidence until it becomes real! By changing your body language to a state that demonstrates confidence, your mind will adapt and follow through with physical confidence and make it mental confidence as well! Finally, by having little superstitions—whether it is having an essential

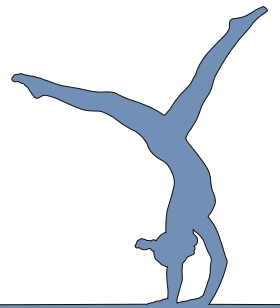
oil to calm you down, or doing a specific warm up—these comfort factors will prove to be helpful by giving you a sense of familiarity and reducing stress and anxiety.

These are simply a few methods that have helped me in the past and

hopefully will help you to help with achieving your peak performance during your sport! Remember to visualize, look confident, breathe and achieve familiarity in any way possible. You are not alone in fighting this obstacle, and you can overcome it.

Simone Biles' Big Feat: Seeking to Normalize Mental Health Illness

Written by: Daniel Perlmutter



Simone Biles is an accomplished American gymnast who many consider to be one of the sport's greatest athletes (Peszek, 2016). During the Tokyo 2020 Olympics this past summer, Biles made international headlines after withdrawing from scheduled team and individual competitions due to mental health concerns (Chappell, 2021). In addition to feeling anxious and restless as her competitions approached, she experienced "the twisties," which

is a slang term used to describe a mental block in which gymnasts lose their spatial orientation during aerial moves (Peszek, 2016). As a result, Biles decided to pull out of competition at the last minute to avoid worsening her health status and costing her teammates a medal (Chappell, 2021).

Biles is one of a host of professional athletes including NBA star, DeMar DeRozan, and swimmer, Michael Phelps, who have publicly shared

their mental health struggles in recent years (Longman, 2021). These athletes' courage to share their stories has helped to reduce the strong stigma surrounding mental illness that exists in professional sports and beyond (CAMH, 2021). There is a common myth that people can just 'snap out' of their mental distress, which is perpetuated in the professional sports community since these athletes are often perceived as extremely physically and emotionally resilient (CAMH, 2021). Consequently, teams' hired trainers and healthcare professionals are often very attentive to players' physical health issues while ignoring their possible mental health concerns (CAMH, 2021). The reality is that mental health issues can affect anyone and are just as (if not more) complex as physical injuries. Accordingly, they require the same degree of awareness and treatment as physical health issues (CAMH, 2021). Simone Biles' debilitating mental distress this past Olympics demonstrates that mental health challenges can interfere with athletic performance just as much as a broken bone or a torn ACL. Therefore, mental health issues in

sports should not continue to be stigmatized (Chappell, 2021).

I applaud Simone Biles for prioritizing her mental health despite immense pressure from the international community and even from her own teammates to power through her Olympic competitions (Chappell, 2021). She embodied true strength by acknowledging that her mental distress was valid and taking the time she needed to seek treatment. Hopefully one day there will be enough tolerance and understanding of mental health issues for people to feel just as comfortable taking off work for a mental health day as calling in sick with a cold. People like Simone Biles are helping to turn that fantasy into a reality.



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Mental Health Resources

Good2Talk (Ontario)

1-866-925-5454

Crisis Text Line (Canada)

For UofG students: Text UofG to 686868

keep.meSAFE (International)

1-844-451-9700

Guelph Sexual Assault Domestic Violence Care

510-837-6440 Ext. 2728

24 Hour Line: Ext. 2210

Here 24/7 (Guelph)

1-844-437-3247

Kids Help Phone

Text CONNECT to 686868

Crisis Services Canada

Toll Free Line (24/7): 1-833-456-4566

Text Support (4pm-12am EST): 45645

Canadian Crisis Hotline

1-888-353-2273

The Trevor Project (LGBTQ+)

Text Line (24/7): Text START to 678678

Toll Free Line (24/7): 1-866-488-7386

Interested in contributing?

We will be looking for individuals who are passionate about mental health awareness to contribute artwork, photography, and written pieces for our next issue during January/February 2022. For more information, contact Mckenna Williams at mwilli46@uoguelph.ca.

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SUPPORTING
YOUNG PEOPLE STRUGGLING
WITH ANXIETY
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