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# *KELLY*

HAPPY MIND, HAPPY LIFE

**TALKING  
BACK:**

TIME TO GET  
OUT OF YOUR  
OWN WAY

**TAKING  
THINGS  
PERSONALLY**

**HOW  
TO  
DEAL  
WHEN**

**YOUR  
PARTNER'S  
EX IS A  
PSYCHO**



*RELATIONSHIPS, MENTAL HEALTH,  
WELLNESS, LIFESTYLE*

# *LETTER*

## *FROM THE EDITOR*



**LINDA KELLY**

MSW, RSW,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF  
KELLY MENTAL HEALTH

When I started Kelly Mental Health, I wanted to help people in a big way. I wanted to resolve the problems in our city, and the way that made the most sense was to start with individuals, because one person can change the lives of everyone around them.

I was once told that the definition of hell is when the person you are meets the person you could have become. I've always kept that in mind because it would be a tragedy to waste this terribly short life being held back by fear, thoughts of inadequacy, or the opinions of those who also struggle with those issues. You have to answer to yourself in the end, and I choose to make decisions that will leave me with the least amount of regret.

Starting KMH is one of the best things I have ever done. In two years, we have nearly outgrown our space, and are being recognized more often in the city for the work we do with individuals and families. I have learned that opportunities are there if you're ready and willing to bet on yourself and the fire that burns within. I've also learned that some opportunities will veer you off track, and you must viciously guard your time and energy.

If I had to give advice to anyone starting out, I would tell you that Google is your best friend for the how-to's. Emotionally, the hurdles affect people differently. Knowing what to expect certainly gives you the opportunity to have a game plan in mind. But there will be setbacks, weeks when the phone doesn't seem to ring at all, and times you go home feeling like the only people who can make this work are smarter, richer, or better than you. But then you get some rest, savour your coffee or tea, notice the sunlight when it touches your skin, and know deep down that people are built to learn and develop, and this is just another opportunity to grow.

The best you can do is try to manage your own feelings, take care of yourself, sleep when you're tired, eat when you're hungry (the right foods), observe the law of diminishing returns, and enjoy the ride.

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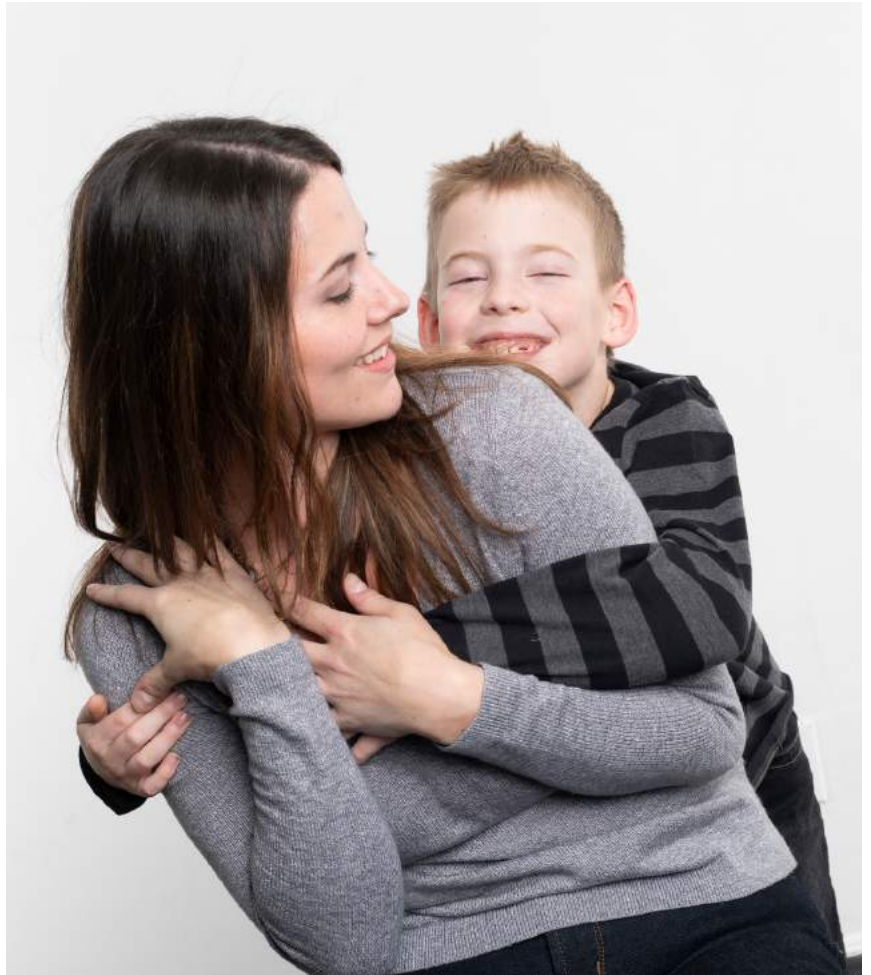
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# How to Survive Life Transitions

by Seija Grant, MEd CP, RP

There are many types of life transitions, and we all experience at least a few of these during our lifetime. I have realized that we often underestimate just how difficult it can be to cope with these changes in our lives, be it a major change or smaller adjustment. Some of these changes can be positive, but still come with many stresses that need to be overcome. While others are a challenge to cope with mentally, and make it difficult for us to find a silver lining.

If you have not yet experienced one of these transitions but are thinking that you will soon, here are some things to be expected:

**It is quite common to feel depressed or anxious when you are going through these changes in your life.** The good news is that these feelings are usually situational, and will correct themselves once you find

your way through the darkness. **You may feel lost or like you no longer have any direction in your life.** Hold on, because you will regain your sense of direction once you have had time to adapt to the change. **It may take longer to feel 'normal' again than you might have expected.**

Remember that we all heal, cope, and rebound at different speeds. Be patient with yourself.

If you are experiencing some of the negative side effects of your transition, don't worry too much, as there is still hope. Here are some tips for managing these overwhelming feelings and embracing opportunities:

**Create a support network for yourself.**

Connect with others, be it old friends (in person, by phone, skype, Facebook, etc.) or new people. Join a club or find others in your area who are interested in some of the same hobbies or pastimes.

**Create realistic expectations.** Nobody is

going to adjust to change overnight. Even the most adaptable person will likely struggle and grapple with change for a while. Try not to be so hard on yourself, and allow yourself to adjust at your own pace. Don't compare yourself to others, because we all have our own timelines.

**Practice self-compassion.** Simply said: Be kind to yourself. However, this may be easier said than done for many people. Start by catching yourself when you are in a negative headspace and trying to find the positive, or give yourself permission to struggle sometimes. We are all human, and not perfect by any means. Engage in activities that are pleasurable for you, and make sure to incorporate self-care into your new routine.

**Ask for help if you need it.** Don't hesitate to ask for help if you need it, as we all need a little help sometimes. Ask a friend, a family member, or even your neighbourhood counsellor. We are here to help you through these tough times and would be honoured to be a part of your story.

# self-care



**Be Selfish.** Do one thing today just because it makes you happy.

**Be Still.** Sit somewhere green, out in the sun, or under the clouds, and be quiet for a few minutes.

**Check In.** Sit quietly and allow yourself to feel all of your emotions without judgment.

**Be Mindful.** Use the body scan technique to check in with each part of your body. Relax your muscles.

**Breathe.** Breathe into your abdomen, and let the air puff out your stomach and chest. Repeat 3 times.

**Meditate.** One minute focusing on your thoughts, feelings, and sensations; one minute focusing on breathing; one minute focusing on the body as a whole.

**Be Healthy.** Drink an extra glass of water each day, or have an extra portion of veggies each meal.

**Be Rested.** Ten to twenty minute naps can reduce your sleep debt and leave you ready to take on the day.

**Create.** Whether it's a batch of brownies or a pastel drawing, getting artistic allows you to feel mindful and productive.

**Unplug.** Free yourself from the constant bings of social media and email, even if just for an hour.



# secrets



# "PEOPLE ARE NOT AGAINST YOU, THEY ARE FOR THEMSELVES."

**BY SEIJA GRANT, MED CP, RP**

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Some of the sentiments related to this topic that have been relayed to me include: hurt feelings, breach of trust, and feeling as though they have been stabbed in the back. None of these things have a positive impact on a person, unless it is to increase their resilience. However, if you are one of these people who have been affected by another's decision to better themselves, then I have some recommendations that you may want to try out to ease the pain.



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*"People aren't against you; they are for themselves. The most dangerous risk of all – the risk of spending your life not doing what you want on the bet you can buy yourself the freedom to do it later. He who conquers others is strong, he who conquers himself is mighty." – Laozi*

I may start sounding like a broken record, but I truly believe we need more of this in our world: try on some empathy for size. What I mean by that is, put yourself in the other's shoes. Can you see how they might have come to this decision? Do you think they intended to hurt you personally? Might this have been a once in a lifetime opportunity for them? Usually, this technique can help us to understand both sides of the story instead of being stuck in a one-sided loop, creating more resentment and anger towards the situation and the person who had 'wronged' you. Also, it is a great exercise to practice that may cause you to have a deeper understanding of the human psyche.

Another idea is not to take it personally. Of course, this is easier said than done. As humans we are hard-wired for survival...however, sometimes these reflexes work to our detriment. If a person has wronged us, we are weary to let them do it again by putting up walls to protect ourselves. Learning from our mistakes is a great thing, but not if it means closing yourself off to the world. Instead of keeping it to yourself, isolating, brooding, emotional stuffing, or passive aggressive behavior—try talking about it to someone you trust, increasing your positive relations with people in your life. However, there is a thin line.

Some venting can be beneficial, but don't become engulfed in the negativity--get it out and move on. Try to challenge yourself by coming up with a different way you may be able to view the situation, such as finding a silver lining, or a positive flip-side. Changing your negative thoughts to a more positive framework can go a long way in increasing your overall happiness. Another thing to consider is that

we can't read people's minds. Simply reminding yourself of this can assist you to let go of those ideas we had about the person's malicious intent or double agent status. Since you can't read their mind, you don't actually know what their intent is, unless they have told you. The first step to correcting this unhelpful thinking style is to notice you are doing it, and STOP the thought in its tracks. Take a deep breath. Ask yourself, is this a fact or an opinion? Is there any evidence that the person thinks this of you? If it's your opinion and you have projected that on the other...well then, it's not a fact, and probably not true.

Another technique that may bring you some peace is coming to some acceptance of the situation. Sometimes situations are unpleasant and we can't do anything to change the outcome. The best thing YOU can do for your own mental health is to embrace radical acceptance. What is radical acceptance, you ask? Well, it is about accepting life on life's terms, not being resistant to things you cannot change or choose not to change. The caveat is this requires practice, and it may not be easy to do at first. However, accepting something does not mean you agree with it—do not confuse the two. This should provide you with some relief and allow you to let go of some of the negativity burning inside of you.

Everybody deserves their own happiness, and at times we all must make decisions that could cause others pain. Please try to encourage yourself to be your best self, letting go of pain that no longer serves you, and embracing positive change. Who knows, this situation may end up in a happy outcome for you and others around you (we can't predict the future!). Be compassionate towards yourself and others,

and the rest will follow.



# "WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME?"

## WHY COULDN'T HE LOVE ME IF HE'S SO HAPPY WITH HER?"

"I was so good to him! I did everything I could to be a good girlfriend and now he seems so much happier with someone else. Am I broken? What is wrong with me?"

Do you remember building puzzles as a kid? I do.

Sometimes you'd find two pieces that fit together so well that they had to be right. But...the pictures didn't line up. No matter what you did, they just didn't fit. You'd look around the table, searching through a sea of other pieces that just weren't right,

and you were convinced that the ones in your hand had to fit, out of necessity, out of a lack of options, or because you just wanted them to.

Every living person looks for connection. We all want to be understood; many of us long for that one person who will make us feel complete. And sometimes, just when you think you've found the person, they leave.

If they go off and find someone with whom they connect deeply, that does not, and SHOULD not, impact your

value as a human being.

As much as you might have wanted the connection to work, it didn't. The puzzle pieces didn't fit together. It's not a matter of someone being better or worse, valued, or valueless.

**You're not for them. And that's okay. You fit better somewhere else.**

By Linda Kelly, MSW, RSW



COVER GIRL:

# LINDA KELLY

Linda believes that real change starts with individuals; with sincere conversations, understanding, and deliberate steps to build better lives. She has been providing psychotherapy for individuals, couples, and families since 2009, working primarily with First Nation clients from remote communities to resolve longstanding historical and intergenerational trauma.

# TALK ING BACK:

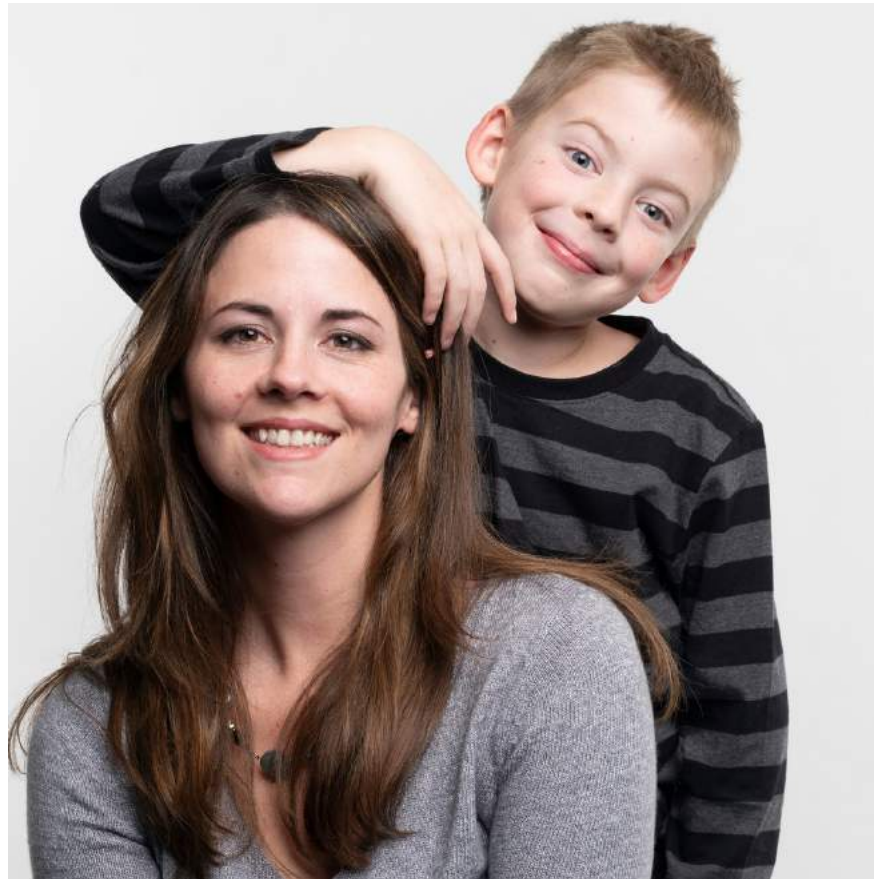
## TIME TO GET OUT OF YOUR OWN WAY

BY: LINDA KELLY, MSW, RSW

I wish people knew how much control they have over how they feel. Life is not about what happens to us, but about how we perceive our experiences. Our story is created in the way we define it, and this story is about how to take control of the thoughts that hold us back.

I've always wanted to do something important. As a kid, I dreamt of singing in front of thousands of people, writing books, and inspiring and motivating others to create a better world. But I didn't. At least, I haven't yet (fingers crossed!). When given opportunities, I let my pounding heart and shortness of breath convince me that it was safer to pass rather than speak up.

I used to tell myself that if I wanted to lead people, I had to be about 50 pounds lighter first, with better hair and clothes. I told myself that I wasn't good enough or smart enough. I was worried about alienating people who didn't agree with what I had to say. When it came to the really important moments, there was too much risk, and in the end, I was convinced I wouldn't make a difference anyway. It sounds cynical, but it was purely a fear of rejection.



Your greatest foe and most powerful advocate is your own mind. I realize now that the greatest obstacle is the battle within. What if that nagging voice had been rooting for me instead of tearing me down? What if I had told myself that the worst-case scenarios weren't really all that bad?

Imagine how many incredible things I could have done if I had been willing to make mistakes. When you are conditioned to criticize yourself, it doesn't seem possible to change the tone of the conversation. But it is.

Maybe it's the fleeting nature of life that makes us fear taking risks. A divorce is that much more painful because we can't get our time back. We only get one childhood, and so many of us suffer intense, debilitating pain because of what happened during those years. We get stuck on the ideals; the "shoulds," the sometimes unfair expectations we have about how life is supposed to be.

A parent is never supposed to lose a child. Car accidents only happen to strangers. People should never come to criticize one another so furiously that they forget the kindnesses that brought them together. It isn't fair when we do all the right things and still lose.

But it happens, and we do. Life is independent of expectations. It simply is. Ups and downs will always occur. Feelings are reactions that inform us without language; they help us to take action. But they can be worsened by negative, self-defeating thoughts that aren't at all true.

Do you remember what your mind was telling you the last time you were hurting? If criticism of self comes more naturally than praise, you probably know regret like I do.

When negativity gets out of hand, bad feelings intensify. We often don't know what to do with the sadness that makes us feel empty at the end of the day, so

we distract ourselves. We buy something new; we eat something tasty. Sometimes we turn to alcohol or drugs, which only makes things worse. When anxiety, negative self-talk, and unfair comparisons were wreaking havoc on my ability to function, I had to start talking back. I learned that the first step is figuring out how to manage stress, and the next is learning to be your own biggest fan.

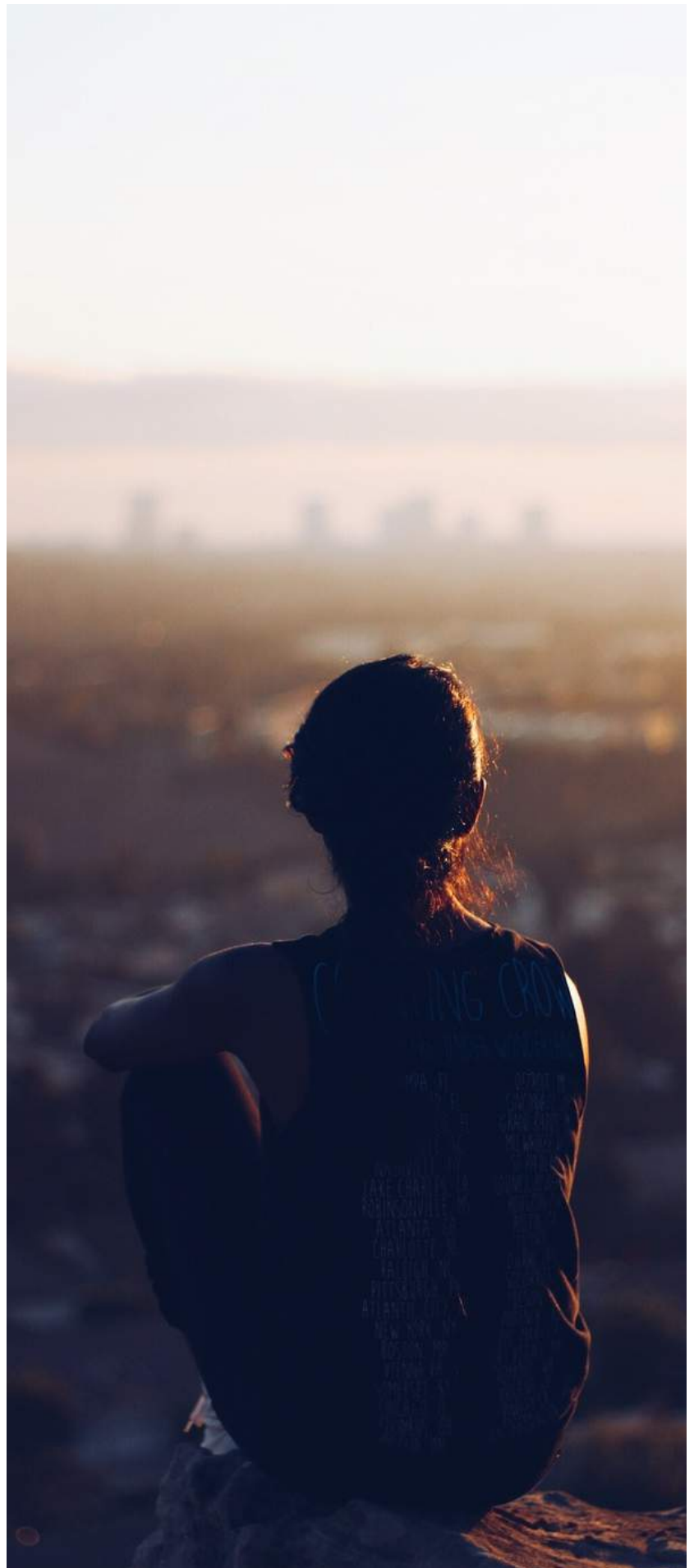
It is unfair to compare yourself to others. Our stories are our own.

You are allowed to feel sad when things aren't going well. Acknowledge it. Feel it. And then do what you have to do.

If you feel ashamed, step back and ask if you are being fair to yourself. If your friend had done the same thing, would you judge them as harshly?

Finally, try showing faith in yourself and the choices you have made. You did the best you could with the information you had at the time. Knowing better now just means that you are learning and growing, and that's something to be proud of.

**Just imagine  
how much we  
could do if we  
got out of our  
own way.**





# You Can Stop Being Overwhelmed Now

BY

Linda Kelly, MSW, RSW

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*I used to call it “piling.” The books refer to it as “the Snowball Effect.”*

*It’s the sense that negative experiences continuously add up to make you feel completely hopeless and overwhelmed. Like a stack of assignments that piles up. Each one adds a little more stress, and eventually it gets so high that you feel you’ll never get through it.*

This is when you have to stop. Breathe.

Notice what’s happening as the slippery slope of negativity takes over. Do you feel the pull?

Ground yourself.

Allow yourself to put those thoughts on the shelf for a moment or two while you appreciate the colours on the walls around you. Someone took the time to pick out those colours. Imagine how they must have looked, standing in front of the colour cards, comparing minute differences between shades, wondering which one was really going to transform the room.

Think about the way the chair beneath you presses up against you. someone, maybe a thousand miles away from you, took the time to experiment with chairs to

find out the best way to support the human body, and their effort is quietly working beneath you every day, allowing you to focus on what’s really important.

Snowballing or “piling” is a common cognitive distortion, and it’s one that we face when we are too focused on the bad stuff, when we haven’t gotten enough sleep, when we face too many disappointments all at once and don’t have adequate time to recover.

Next time it happens to you, force yourself to take the time to recover, because you can. you are in charge of you. Take 30 seconds, ground yourself, and things will seem far more manageable.

How you feel is within your control.

# What to Do When Someone Needs Help

BY JENNIFER ROBINSON, MSW, RSW

**Do you know of a friend, family member or colleague that may benefit from accessing counseling but don't know how to approach them about it? Have they told you they wanted help but just don't feel ready yet? Here are some helpful tips on how you can help them feel ready.**

According to the Mental Health Commission of Canada in any given year, 1 in 5 people will personally experience a mental health problem or illness. Mental illness affects people of all ages, education, income levels, and cultures, and all Canadians are likely to be exposed to a friend, family member or colleague experiencing mental health concerns at some point in their life.

Below are some helpful tips on how you can assist someone who may need to access professional help!

**Educate:** Do the research on the benefits of accessing support and share your research with your friend/family member or speak to them on behalf of personal experiences. Sometimes when we are unaware of what to expect we can scare ourselves into expecting the worst which might mean we avoid situations that can actually be really helpful to us.

You can show the individual the website to a counseling agency, show them pictures of what the office will look like and even walk them through what to expect if they did choose to go access support.

If you've had a personal experience with counseling, tell them how this went! What benefits came from it? What was difficult? This can help someone feel more prepared to access help and allows them to feel supported through this process.

**Listen:** Sometimes we undermine the impact of listening. When our friends/family come to us with a problem we are quick to find a solution when sometimes all they need is to feel heard. Take the time to listen to how they are feeling, validate the feelings they

may be experiencing, and be present in the moment.

**Offer Your Support:** Be accepting and understanding by normalizing their need to seek help- it's common! It's important to have support when going through a tough time. Be there for them as a friend- Offer to drive them to their first visit or follow up with them after they go to see how it went.


**Model Positive Self-Care Behaviors:** Showing that you care about your own mental health may allow your friend/family member to feel empowered to do the same. Show them that you are taking time to engage in activities that bring you joy, that you are taking care of yourself mentally, physically and spiritually and share what the benefits of this have been for you! Being a positive role model for your friend/family member by taking care of yourself may encourage them to do the same.

## **Reminders:**

Sometimes people just aren't ready to access help. Although we sometimes think we can, we cannot control other people's behaviors or beliefs. Sometimes people just aren't ready to access support or discuss what it is that may be causing them grief. Be patient and just let them know that you are there to support them when they do feel ready!

Use "I" statements. Depending on how we approach the conversation, sometimes people can feel as if they are being attacked instead of cared for. Don't say: "YOU need help, YOU haven't been taking care of yourself and YOU need to go to counseling" Instead, try saying: "I have noticed that you haven't been feeling well lately, I am worried about you and I would like to assist you into getting some help".

If you are worried about their safety, access extra support. If it's gotten to the point where you are questioning whether or not this individual will be safe once they are alone, access more assistance. Crisis response services: (807) 346-8282



# *3 Mental Health Tips That Really Work*

BY GENEVIEVE  
CUNNINGHAM

To help get you started on a path to mental wellness every single day, here are 3 easy tips to help protect your mental health.

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## 1 Exercise.

It sounds like a physical health tip, right? Actually it's great for your mental health too! When you exercise, your body produces both adrenaline and endorphins. This makes you feel happier, as these are feel-good chemicals. Exercise also forces your body to disregard mental stress and focus on the physical stress that you're putting it under. And lastly, exercise can make you feel better overall about your body and your life, which boosts mental health for obvious reasons.

## 2 Take a Nap.

Doesn't this sound like a really good way to boost mental health? Most of us don't get the rest that we need, and so both our physical and mental health suffer as a result. Being well rested can change your entire perspective and outlook on everyday life. If you feel tired or even slightly rundown, a nap might make all the difference. Just schedule it into your daily routine, and stick with it, even if it takes a while for your body to adjust.

## 3 Get Spiritual.

Don't worry, this doesn't mean you have to join a new church, travel across the world, or do anything even remotely strange. It just means to take some time to reflect on yourself, the world, and your place in it. Research has shown that people who are spiritual (not necessarily religious) are more confident in their everyday choices and slightly more mentally stable. You can get spiritual by simple reflection, meditation, or even with walks in nature. Just do what works for you.

A vertical silhouette of a person standing on a dark surface, looking up towards a sunset sky. The sky transitions from a deep blue at the top to a warm orange and yellow near the horizon. The person's head is tilted back, and their arms are slightly away from their body.

# TAKING THINGS PERSONALLY

BY LINDA KELLY,  
MSW, RSW

Is it common for you to be disappointed or upset by what people do?

If you feel unfairly targeted, criticized, or downright disliked by others a lot of the time, there's a good chance that you're suffering a lot more than you should, because you're taking things personally.

We often forget that people are much more focused on themselves than on us, just like we are more focused on our own lives and feelings than we are on others. And that's pretty normal. In fact, the more intense one's personal suffering, the more difficult it is to consider the world beyond their own headspace.

To personalize something is to make it about, or for, you, like things engraved with your name on them, or the way a room can be decorated to make you happy by reflecting your own likes and dislikes.

But personalizing is also a way of taking a situation, running it through the grinder of our perceptions, assumptions, and beliefs, and then making it about US.



*There's a  
huge amount  
of freedom  
that comes to  
you when you  
take nothing  
personally.  
-Don Miguel  
Ruiz*

Someone seems quiet and standoffish. They deny anything being wrong, but you know something is up. Your instinct is rarely wrong in these cases, but how you interpret what you see influences how you react to it. A single negative assumption could be the deciding factor between giving someone space to work out their mood, or flipping out on them completely.

You could assume it's because they don't like you, that they are annoyed with you, or you have done something to make them unhappy. You keep running through the possibilities in your mind, feeling worse and worse, finally becoming angry because this has gotten out of hand. And still, the person won't tell you what's going on.

It makes sense that you'd get upset or angry. It might even make sense to lash out at them because clearly they are being passive aggressive. Maybe they're even withholding on purpose, knowing that it's bothering you.

And it escalates. Eventually, you avoid them or address them with anger to show them that they have ruined your day and you're not going to take it anymore.

Alright, so it's not always this intense, but the point is that we all do this to an extent. Women are often more susceptible to this kind of thinking because as a rule, they tend to be more empathic and aware of the subtle signs that tell you when a person is unhappy. That's the whole nurturing aspect of our biology at play; we want people to get along because group cohesion positively influences survival.

Back to the point. Are you making this about you?

When your reaction is far more intense than the situation demands, it's time to examine your thinking.

You've already reached your destination (anger), but you might have made a wrong turn somewhere, so go back and follow the trail.

#### DEFINE THE SITUATION

Think about what you noticed. What were the signs or hints that told you something was up? You noticed them for a reason, so don't doubt yourself. E.g., She's normally bubbly and friendly, but today she didn't make eye contact and left the room when I came in.

#### BE AWARE OF YOUR LIMITS

Our perspective is based on our limited powers of observation. We can only interpret what we actually see and experience, and our mind fills in the blanks. You can't see what a person is doing behind your back, so assumptions make up a big part of the final product. While assumptions are helpful and save time (e.g., I assume my car will start in the morning...I assume the sun will rise), it's helpful to be aware of how truly limited our perception is and how big a role our assumptions play.

#### WATCH YOUR MEANING

Your underlying beliefs about the world will give shape to your assumptions. If you believe that you are not good enough, the behaviours of others along with your assumptions will always prove this to you. That's called cognitive bias.

#### EXPLORE ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS

Think of all the reasons that you would avoid eye contact with someone. Perhaps you did that when you had a headache or upset stomach, or maybe it was stress-related with the mountains of work you had to do. Imagine how many times you have inadvertently upset someone with your silence when it had absolutely nothing to do with them.

#### ASSUME THE BEST UNTIL YOU KNOW BEYOND A DOUBT

You don't know that you're right until you know you're right. And hey, if the person really is angry about something you did, you can eventually take steps to make it better when they are ready to talk to you about it. So don't jump on subtle signs of distress and use them like ammo to attack yourself.

If you take it personally, start acting upset or guilty, and then force a confrontation with the other person, it's like admitting that you've done something wrong when you really haven't yet. And you will make the problem worse. Alternatively, if you act like you are on the same team, give them space, and offer support to them if the behaviour continues, you could singlehandedly resolve or at least lessen the intensity of the situation.

Just keep breathing, loosen up, and remember that every person is as complicated, multi-faceted, and amazing as you are. We all have our battles to face, so let's do each other a favour and stay on the same team.

YOU'RE  
GIVEN THIS  
LIFE  
BECAUSE  
YOU'RE  
STRONG  
ENOUGH TO  
LIVE IT.





## FACEBOOK JERKS

# (THE SUBTLE ART OF PURPOSEFUL POSTING)

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By Linda Kelly,  
MSW, RSW

Yeah, I'm absolutely one of those jerks on Facebook who is always posting about my wonderful life. You secretly hate me. Admit it. I post about going running, playing with my dogs, having fun with my kid who always seems to have a great sense of humour, oh, and gratuitous memes.

What you don't know is that these posts are deliberate. And no, they are not meant to make you feel bad about yourself. In fact, I hope that some of the things I share actually help you along your way, because it is important to me that the newsfeed you see every day is filled with a few more things that make you laugh, make you reflect, or make you feel like you know me well enough to reach out and connect without fearing that I would reject you.

Because I won't. What I don't post about are the dark days when I feel like a complete failure. That run that I posted about? That was one single attempt over the course of about one year, since every other opportunity to go was ruined by my kid (the incessant dawdler who would rather punish me for making him cry than just get his damn boots on), my dogs (who tear something valuable to shreds if I leave them alone for half a minute), or myself.

Apart from the standard everyday complaints I have about my own ability to keep up with basic "adulting" tasks (who knew that you actually need to clean a fridge sometimes?), there are days when I feel completely and utterly alone. Isolated. Like nothing is worth it, I'm never going to get ahead, and life is just meaningless. But I do not post about that. Why?

Having been a Facebook veteran, class of '07, I've been around long enough to know that bad feelings pass and those negative downer posts soon lose all meaning and cause people to form negative opinions about you. In fact, they can cause you to feel even worse about yourself. When you get bored of the Newsfeed and scroll through your own posting history, what kind of story does your life tell? Do you even feel the same way anymore, or have you come to regret vague-posting about that person who offended you that is now your friend?

Facebook can be an incredibly powerful tool if you use it well. Instead of leaving a history of negativity, create memories that you can scroll through during those dark days to remind you of the wonderful things you have done, the people who have been in your life, the little things that made you smile, and even the funniest puns you swore you'd never laugh out loud about.

Purposeful posting means choosing to focus on the good things, and having a solid record of all those good things that you can go back to when things aren't going so well. Negative feelings will pass. So choose to preserve the good feelings whenever you can.



# How To Deal When Your Partner's Ex is a Psycho

By: Seija Grant, MEd CP, RP

Ok...kidding, not an actual psycho, but you know what I mean. We're talking about someone who is extremely challenging to deal with, who knows which buttons to press, and always seems to get involved in your business somehow. I know it's tempting to engage with their baiting behaviour, to take out your anger and frustration at them, to fight back or lash out. Let us help you by recommending some alternatives that will reduce the impact this person is having wreaking havoc on your life. Here are some tips that may be useful:

We can't change other people, we can only impact our own actions. I know this sounds frustrating, and we naturally want to try to change/alter or train others, but this is not a person you are going to be able to change. The best strategy will be to change how YOU deal with this person, not the other way around. If you were to get involved with this person by lashing out or letting them get to you, it could even cause a rift in your own relationship, which could be feeding right into their plans.

Focus on your own loving relationship with your partner. Even though this person may be trying to hurt you, to involve you, to unveil your flaws, to get you to do something you can't take back, just ignore them. Rather than focusing on their attacks or scheming, focus your time and energy on your own healthy relationship.

Modelling what a healthy relationship looks like would be a positive experience for anyone who is in contact with you and your partner, and the ex may eventually see that you are good together and change their tune (with any luck).

Set some boundaries to protect yourself. Maybe you and your partner can work out some agreed boundaries that can help protect both of your sanity. Some examples may be: turning off the phone at night or on weekends, blocking the individual, removing them from social media, or avoiding certain places/times that you might expect to run into this person. If you have mutual friends with them, or children, perhaps trying to minimize the time you would see them or hear about them so this person does not have such a pervasive presence in your life.

Try to embrace a stance of empathy instead of defensiveness. First off, defensiveness begets defensiveness. Try to think of any instance in your life when it didn't. See what I mean? Although it may be hard to do so at first, it will free you of so many negative emotions and will help you to feel more relaxed. The person in question is acting this way for a reason, not just out of spite (even though it probably feels that way). They are hurt, they are suffering, and they don't have the healthy coping skills or mechanisms in place to handle it, so they are taking it out on you. Not to say that this kind of behavior is OK, but it might be able to give you some perspective on what's going on behind the curtain. If you take this stance, you will likely be able to remain calmer when you do have to interact with them, and will be less likely to act out.

**Keeping your cool in the face of hostility and combativeness can be challenging, but I urge you to try these tips and see if they can help you gain some higher ground, perspective or tranquility in your life. If you need a little help accessing your zen, try downloading the app Calm \*it's free\* and can teach you some basic meditation skills.**



# ARE YOU USING

## BLACK-AND-WHITE THINKING?

The truth is black-and-white thinking actually narrows our vision and creates insecurity. It colours all of our experiences, pressures us to live in extremes, and does not account for the "gray area." Thus, if your performance ever falls short of perfect, you will be inclined to see yourself as a total failure. As you can see, this type of thinking can be emotionally and physically damaging. The fact is life does not work that way. Life is actually full of subtle balance and

varying degrees in every area. In fact, there are really very few situations where gray areas cannot be considered.

These are some of the common words associated with black-and-white thinking:

Always  
Success  
Right  
Weak  
Never  
Ruined  
Smart  
Failure  
Impossible  
Strong  
Stupid

If you spot yourself using these words, challenge yourself to think in a different way. Becoming less rigid in our thinking allows us to avoid using black-and-white statements that can be emotionally and physically damaging. Spotting your own patterns can often be easier with the help of a friend or properly-trained professional. If this sounds like you, know that you can gain control and put an end to black-and-white thinking. We can help.

Throughout our lives, we often create undue stress by placing people or situations in "either/or" categories, such as thinking things are either right or wrong or as successes or failures. We create a world that is limited to black-and-white thinking. We do this because it gives us a sense of security and control over life's uncertainties. This kind of thinking tricks us into believing we have everything figured out; which feels good, but only temporarily.

By Linda Kelly, MSW, RSW



# Mental Health & Photography

WORDS AND IMAGES BY  
KRISTEN SOHLMAN, HBA, RP

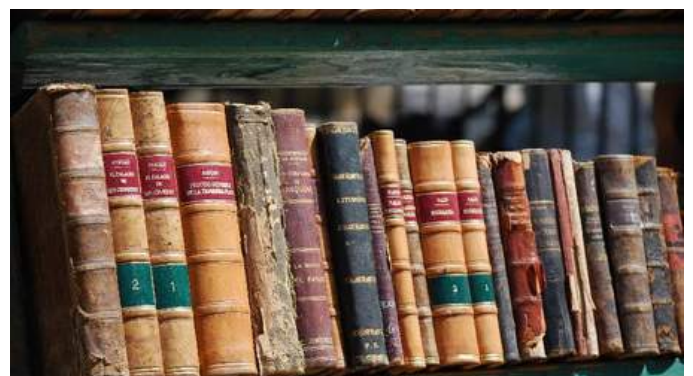
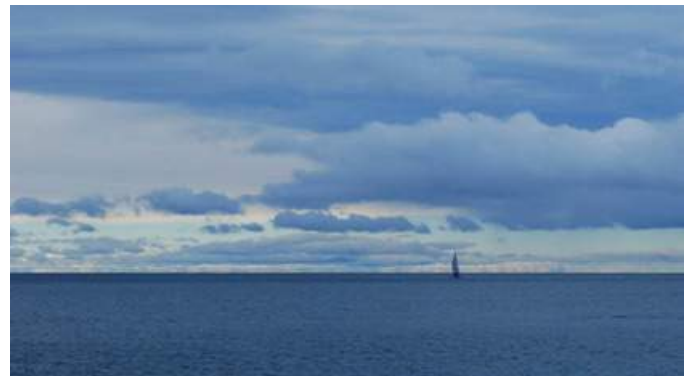
We all experience and cope with mental or emotional struggles at one time or another throughout our lives. This can include stress from school or work, anxiety, depression, or grief and loss. Sometimes it can help to take the time to refocus ourselves and gain perspective on what is happening within our lives. There may be one useful tool in your pocket right now...a camera!

There is much evidence-based research that forms of creativity and art therapy can be valuable tools for emotional wellbeing. Photography is a tool that you can try without being professionally trained, and for some, they find it so rewarding that they continue to develop their skills. Today there are many options for photography including the internal camera on cellphones, automatic point and shoot cameras,

digital SLRs, and the like. It is easier than ever to take photos, and through the simple of action of taking a photo, you are taking a moment to stop and be present in the moment and to look at the environment through a new lens or perspective. It is during this moment that can result in changing your day from a negative one to a positive one, or at least, momentarily distracting and calming you from whatever stresses you may be experiencing within your life.

Here are some simple ideas that may help get your creativity flowing:

*“In photography there is a reality so subtle that it becomes more real than reality.”*





**Take the time to observe before you shoot.** Take a minute to be present in the moment. Look all around you. What do you notice? What do you see? Then look a little closer. By doing this you are not only being mindful of the present moment, but you may also start to see art in the ordinary.

**Close your eyes.** For some who are taking photos, this may sound counterintuitive. However, by focusing on what you hear and smell, you may discover new subjects to photograph all around you whether this is the aromatic smell of cedar or a flower, a bee buzzing or a bird on the fence, or maybe even a dog playing in the distance.

**Pick a colour or a shape.** Look around for that colour or shape. By picking a colour that you may want to see in your own home, you may be able to print out any good photos and hang them on your walls at home. Be sure to surround yourself with art that makes you feel good or makes you feel inspired, as this will help you to create more!

**Carry a prop.** Take an item with you, especially something you find calming or comforting, and photograph it in different locations and ways. Remember to vary the angle and lighting of your shots to keep them fresh and interesting.

**Don't focus on the finished product.** While it's nice to end up with photos you can appreciate and feel proud of, it is actually the process of taking the photo and not the result that is therapeutic.

**Stop and breathe.** Take deep, slow, and paced breathes while taking photos. If you feel stuck or stressed, put your camera down and concentrate on just breathing for 30 seconds. Look around you and start again from a fresh and balanced place. You may even see things that you missed just moments before.

By picking up your camera and using any or all of these simple tools and techniques, you are not only being present and creative, but you are actually practicing mindfulness.

**Mindfulness reduces stress, as well as anxious and depressive feelings, and promotes positive mental health and well-being. It helps leave you balanced and ready to take on the rest of your day.**

So, go on...relax, observe, and photograph your way to a better day!

# The Inside Scoop

## HOW TO ACHIEVE WORK-LIFE BALANCE



In life, we have many different roles and responsibilities related to work, physical health, a career, family, friends, and time. It is no wonder that sometimes we find ourselves feeling stressed or overwhelmed.

It is important to remember that small amounts of stress are healthy and necessary as they help us to be motivated, efficient, helps with good mental focus, and helps us to feel more content and happy within our lives. Whereas having too much stress for a long time results in feeling stressed out, overwhelmed, overloaded, burnt out, and exhausted.

Work-life balance does not mean that we are making our priorities between work and other aspects of our lives equal, and instead, that we are meeting our own individual needs in order to perform optimally at work, as well as in the other aspects of our lives.

*By Kristen Sohlman, HBA, RP*

- **Find what works for you.** Everyone is different, and therefore, everyone's needs are different. Our needs can change over time.
- **Set priorities.** Learn what replenishes your batteries, versus what drains them, and make this your priority. Identify what is important to you, what you value, and makes this your priority.
- **Set realistic goals for yourself.** Break down your goals into small and more achievable steps, break down your day using a time log, and track your progress.
- **Let go of perfectionism.** Work and life cannot be perfectly balanced and is up to you to let go of this unhealthy expectation in order that you can do the best that you can for what is required in the present moment.
- **Learn to delegate tasks.** Learn to let go.
- **Take breaks.** You will actually be more productive if you take breaks and will be a better employee for it! Try something different like going for a walk, socializing, reading a book, meditating, stretching, or whatever makes you feel good.
- **Try to leave your work at work.** Help yourself to transition from work to home by taking a walk, listening to music, or something else that you enjoy. Don't check your work emails or answer work-related phone calls when not at work (unless you are on-call!). This is your time and it is important!
- **Take care of yourself.** Engage in self-care. Don't skip exercise, meals or sleep.
- **Set healthy boundaries.** Don't overbook yourself, learn to say no, respect yourself, know what you value, know what you want and need, understanding your feelings and communicate them clearly.
- **Have fun!** Cultivate your interests outside of work. Enjoy recreational activities and hobbies. Get out there and volunteer.
- **Develop a support network.** Consider who you trust, who will listen when needed, and include both personal and professional supports.

*Ask yourself: "Do I have time that I can set aside to focus on other aspects of my life in order to create a better balance in my life?" If the answer is no, then something needs to change!*



# How to Feel Better Immediately

WITHOUT MAKING THINGS WORSE

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By Linda Kelly, MSW, RSW

Maybe it's loneliness. Maybe there's something you're supposed to be doing and you just can't. Maybe you're on your own and you don't want to be, or you want to enjoy yourself but all of the old vices aren't available to you.

You could be one of those people, like me, who used to turn to food. For some, it's cigarettes or booze. There's an entire culture built around indulging in wine and chocolate, and it's so normalized that if you choose not to go that route, if alcohol doesn't agree with you, and if you're SICK of spending money to feel better about your life, you're left dealing with these uncomfortable feelings.

If you're like me, you're going to skip through this article, read the bolded items, and hope for the best. I'm not going to stop you. But I should tell you... If you're feeling alone,

if you hate how you feel right now, if you wish you could indulge in something that you know isn't going to help, you are not alone. I am right there with you. I HATE how this feels, and I wish I could escape it too.

Negative feelings are signals, like traffic lights. It's up to you to interpret them and figure out what they are trying to tell you. What are the thoughts that are feeding those feelings? Are you making unfair assumptions? Sometimes you have to do some good old introspection to figure it out, so in that case I'd recommend opening a word doc or grabbing a pen and paper, and jotting down the first 10 things that come to mind. Even if they don't make sense, those items will give you a pretty clear idea of what is occupying that very valuable real estate in your head.

**You're going to focus on the negative parts because you're feeling negative. Recognize it, and take control.**

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Rather than being overcome by the negative feeling and letting it dominate your entire being, step back from it. Examine the feeling, making mental notes on how it actually affects you. Keep in mind, feelings are hormonally driven, so there are physiological changes happening in your body that reinforce those negative thoughts.

This is how humans are built, by the way. The worse we feel, the more likely we are to change the situation that made us feel so badly. Notice these things with a sense of amusement. How interesting it is that a mere thought can influence your entire body, and that physical feelings can stimulate more negative thoughts, such as the old favourite, "I feel like I've never been happy."

How close are your shoulders to your ears? Lower those things down! How tight is your stomach? Breathe! Let it loose!

Even if you don't feel like a calm, relaxed, content person, try acting that way for even a minute. Smiling when you don't feel happy has been shown to actually increase feelings of happiness and contentment. (Probably because you imagine yourself looking like Schwarzenegger in Terminator 2 when he's told to smile for the first time to blend in). If it's a really rotten feeling, you might feel like gravity is pulling harder and even your movements are slowed down. Force yourself to move around to get the blood pumping through your veins for 20 seconds.

If the whole of your being is 100% negative right now, you've got to carve out some room for positive. Don't undervalue even a single percentage of positive, because every bit offsets the negative and gives you a much-needed break from the discomfort. What does that mean? Avoid all-or-nothing thinking. If I can't find something to solve this whole issue, it's not even worth trying. Um, no. Give yourself a break and add 1% of fun into your day. Stick your head outside and let the sunlight touch your face. Vitamin D is vital to mood stability (and sunlight feels NICE). Better yet, take 4 or 5 deep, full breaths and get some fresh air into those lungs.

Turn on music that will make you feel the way you WANT to feel. Not the way you do feel. There's a time and a place for listening to depressing music and purging those feelings by crying and looking dramatically out the car window like you're in a music video (you have all done it). But if you want to feel better right this instant, do the opposite of what you'd normally do. Listen to Miranda

Lambert's We Should Be Friends and try to perfect that country twang with all seriousness. Learn Britney Spears's "Drop Dead Beautiful" and try staying serious while singing along with the lyrical genius who wrote "steam me like a pot full of vegetables."

Think of someone you haven't spoken to in a long time, and then reach out via Facebook, Email, or even phone to ask how they're doing and to extend a compliment. This is easier in the age of Facebook because you may be able to find out about their accomplishments or current lifestyle online, enabling you to do this part without the awkwardness of calling them out of the blue. This step gets you outside of yourself, and focused on others. You're also putting good feelings into the world, which is rewarding in itself. Other options could be to write a thank-you card to the last person who did something for you, and actually mail it. People don't get much in the mail apart from bills anymore. Imagine how kindly a person would feel if you put the effort into thanking them!

Avoid setting some impossible standards that are out of your realm of normal, like expecting that you have to go do yoga or run a 6-minute mile for exercise to be worth it. Walk. Stroll slowly. Bring a warm drink with you. This is about making your outsides match your insides, and feel free to speed up if your mood starts to improve. There doesn't have to be a reason or a destination, but if you need one, I'd recommend you going for that walk for the sole purpose of counting the number of people you see. Or making a game of looking for dogs that match their owners, like in the intro of 101 Dalmations.

Do you have friends who own dogs? Do you have one yourself? Are there any dogs that are out walking right now? A well-loved dog is love incarnate. Just be near one and it'll know what to do. Don't be shy of dog owners (though ask before petting!) - they probably know better than most people how much a dog's love changes your life.

Let's just acknowledge that happiness is not the normal, everyday state of being. You do not need to excuse yourself or apologize for feeling low. Sometimes it's just hormones, other times it's lack of sunlight, exercise, sleep, nutrition, human connection, stimulating hobbies, or even just needing a change in your life. Don't try blocking or avoiding it.

**The feeling will pass...if you let it.**



*Kelly Mental Health's*

# MENTAL HEALTH TIP OF THE DAY:

[www.kellymentalhealth.com](http://www.kellymentalhealth.com)

## **Spend some time with a fluffy friend!**

Time with animals lowers the stress hormone - cortisol, and boosts oxytocin - which stimulates feelings of happiness. If you don't have a pet, hang out with a friend who does or volunteer at a shelter.

HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT... AM I IN A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP? KEEP IN MIND NOT EVERY BOX NEEDS TO BE CHECKED. THIS IS A GUIDELINE TO HELP YOU BE REMINDED OF THE INDICATIONS OF A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP.

## SUPPORT

- ☐ Provides words of encouragement
- ☐ Listens non-judgementally
- ☐ Support each other's choices
- ☐ Shares decision making
- ☐ Asks about your opinion while valuing and listening to your answers
- ☐ Shares ideas openly
- ☐ Encourages and supports your relationships with friend and family members
- ☐ Your partner maintains their own friendships and wants you to get to know his or her friends
- ☐ You both continue to pursue your own interests
- ☐ You both encourage and motivate each other to aspire to your own goals and dreams

## SAFETY

- ☐ No imitating or manipulative behaviour to control one another
- ☐ Respects your belongings
- ☐ Respects your relationships with family and friends
- ☐ Communicates non-violently
- ☐ Maintains a safe environment where you two can share your thoughts and feelings
- ☐ You both take control of finances
- ☐ Intimacy and sex is consensual
- ☐ Difference in opinions does not lead to insulting each other
- ☐ Trusting of you and your friendship with the opposite sex

# HEALTHY

By Elizabeth Perzan, MSW, RSW



## COOPERATION

- ☐ Working together on presenting challenges
- ☐ Collaboratively make decisions together
- ☐ Thinking of your partner in decision making
- ☐ Open to change
- ☐ Arguing is normal (and healthy) arguing should be free of threatening behaviour even after the disagreement
- ☐ Thinking of each other as a team rather than hierarchy
- ☐ Conflict is resolved by conversation without acting verbally or physically violent
- ☐ You laugh and play together

## HONESTY

- ☐ Both individuals share words that are truthful and honest
- ☐ Both display actions that are truthful and honest
- ☐ You feel you can trust them
- ☐ They feel they can trust you

# RELATIONSHIPS

## ACCOUNTABILITY

- ☐ Admit they made a mistake
- ☐ Able to recognize they upset you
- ☐ Doesn't blame you for mistakes
- ☐ Apologizes when needed
- ☐ Aware of their own beliefs, values and behaviour

## COMMUNICATION

- ☐ Open communication to talk about how you each feel
- ☐ Communicate about what works well in the relationship
- ☐ You talk about each other's strengths and what you like most about each other
- ☐ Provide each other with compliments
- ☐ Able to speak about difficult conversations comfortably



# let's talk:

## WORKPLACE EDITION

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We design and present formal and informal workplace seminars to help with raising awareness and engaging community groups and organizations in productive, effective discussions about mental health.



### CONFLICT RESOLUTION SERIES

Conflict Resolution Overview, Emotional Regulation, Defense Mechanisms, Anger Management, Communication Training, Emotional Intelligence

### MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

Personality Styles and Work Culture, Team Building Skills, Problem Solving Skills, Work-life Balance, 'Burnout, Self-care and Self-awareness', Stress Management

### CRITICAL INCIDENTS SERIES

Suicide Prevention and Awareness Training, Lateral Violence and Bullying, Vicarious Trauma, Grief and Loss, Addictions Awareness Training

#### **The Presenter:**

**Linda Kelly,**  
MSW, RSW,  
Executive  
Director of Kelly  
Mental Health

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

[www.kellymentalhealth.com](http://www.kellymentalhealth.com)  
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(807) 767-3888



# Ask The Therapist

A BRIEF Q&A WITH SEIJA GRANT, MED CP, RP

## WHAT TO EXPECT FROM COUNSELLING



We realize that counselling and psychotherapy can be a very intimidating process for many, and can feel almost too scary to even consider as an option. So, Seija is here to try to calm your nerves, hopefully answer some questions, and break things down a bit.

### **Q : What type of counselling is right for me?**

First of all, there are a few different types of counselling and many different styles. A few of the types are: individual, couples, family and group.

Individual counselling is one to one, and likely the most common type. If you want to work on getting along with others, maybe couples or family counselling is for you. The dynamics of these types are all quite different, as there are different personalities at play. The other type you might come across is group counselling, which means a group of (usually) unknown to each other individuals who all have a common thread. They all have their benefits, but only you can decide what is right for you at the moment. Some people may see different counsellors for different purposes at different times in their life. In terms of the different styles – well there are so many that I couldn't even list them all here. However, some of the main groupings of approaches on the scene these days are: Psychodynamic, Cognitive-Behavioural, Humanistic and Neuroscience-Informed. Within these groups there are a myriad of different

styles. Each therapist is unique in their own approach and will often have multiple influences within the work that they do with their clients. I know this seems like things are getting pretty complicated, BUT there is a silver lining here. There are several factors unifying counselling styles that are common across the board. Counselling is collaborative, meaning you work directly with your counsellor to achieve your goals. It is a safe-place to be yourself and to talk about your concerns, issues in your life, and your feelings regarding these events or occurrences. Also, you can speak openly and confidentially while having someone listen to you non-judgmentally.

### **Q : Who can benefit from counselling?**

Well I would truly say that anybody could, as we all have complicated histories, concerns and problems in our lives at some time or another. If you are trying to identify if this would be a good idea for you, ask yourself "What

issues are affecting me or preventing me from living my best life?" In counselling you can work on thoughts, emotions/feelings, and behaviours. Some of the topics that come up frequently in counselling are: grief and loss, processing trauma, self-exploration and improvement, addictions, bullying, illness, mental health issues, relationships, stress, anxiety, depression, overwhelming feelings, life transitions, gender or sexual identity, body image, etc. Through the counselling process you can gain an understanding of your issues, concerns, life, and perspective.

### **Q : What helps to make counselling more effective for people?**

I would venture to say that attending counselling consistently is one of the biggest factors, but also being open and honest with your counsellor and providing them feedback on how you are feeling about your sessions together. These things will help the counsellor to adjust to your needs, and tailor their approach to suit you best. Some of the many benefits of attending counselling are an increase in your overall wellbeing, as well as helping to build and increase your coping skills and mechanisms to build a stronger YOU.

# AROUND TOWN

#KMHCommunityInvolvement  
#KMH Loves T Bay



Business Excellence Awards  
hosted by Thunder Bay  
Chamber of Commerce



27th Annual Opening Doors  
Counselling Conference for  
Women's Wellness



GenNext 7th Annual Day of  
Caring for the United Way of  
Thunder Bay



2017 Christmas Cheer with  
Acadia Broadcasting



Jingle Brews Holiday Party at  
Sleeping Giant Brewing Co.



Women's Expo presented by  
Thunder Bay Business  
Women's Network



Business Excellence Awards  
hosted by Thunder Bay  
Chamber of Commerce



After Business Event hosted by the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce



'Dress for the Cause' to support the Breast Cancer Society of Canada



Talking about KMH at Lakehead University's Agency Education Day!



Christmas Cheer Donation with Acadia Broadcasting



Recording our First Commercial with Magic 99



'Ale Yeah! Not Your Average Wine Tasting' with SHIFT



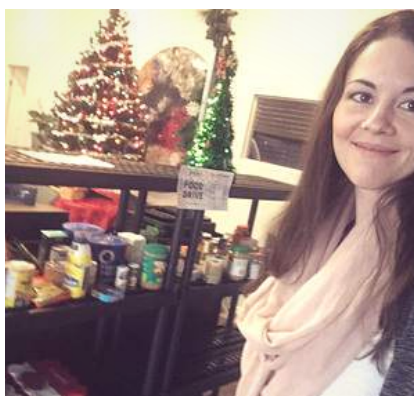
Linda Singing at The Foundry for Open Mic Night



'Around Town' with Dougall Media



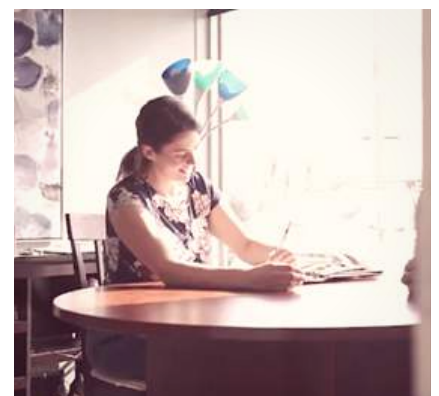
Mental Health Outreach Day at the Superstore



2017 Holiday Food Drive for the RFDA



Lunchtime Walk to Promote Mental Wellness at Work



Filming Our First Commercial with DZ Photography

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