

# Kelly



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## The Wellness Edition

On Doing Better and Living Better



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# Kelly Mental Health

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# WINTER

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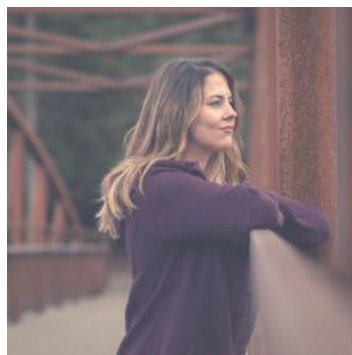


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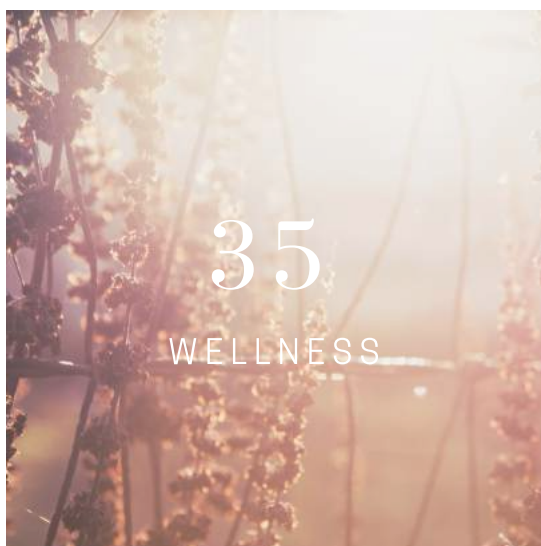
## #KMHLOVE

Keeping Up with KMH: What We're Doing and Where We're Going

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# KELLY MAGAZINE

*HAPPY MIND, HAPPY LIFE*



*In support  
of Kelly Mental Health Foundation*

# Letter

## FROM THE EDITOR

"I've always noted the concept that like in video games, if you are encountering enemies, you're going the right way. But it does become exhausting when you are genuinely striving to make the world a better place, and certain people cast you into the role of a villain.

Why? Perhaps it makes them feel like a victim, or like the good guy in the story. Maybe they don't like change. They will use everything, your actions and lack of actions, to reinforce their view that you are cruel. And you can't win or even reach an impasse because they are determined to maintain this dynamic.

It's true that you don't get to decide whether or not you hurt someone. Feelings aren't wrong and people aren't wrong to feel them. But their interpretation of what caused the hurt feelings can often be very wrong. That interpretation is often based on unfair

assumptions, hurtful beliefs, and a perspective that leaves a lot of blind spots.

Being on the other side, cast as a villain to some, feels unjust and unnecessary (and confusing) when you spend your life taking care of others, trying to do all the right things, trying to make the right moves. But that's their view. And you don't have to share it.

Part of getting older comes with learning to accept, and not fighting, when someone decides that you are the cause of their problems. You can't change their mind, because they need you to play the role. And there is no solution. Human interactions are complex and complicated, fraught with emotions and traumatic histories and multi-faceted dynamics that only become more complicated with time. And since you can't fix it, you can only settle into an uncomfortable, tense sort of peace. But it's still peace, because the story cannot continue.



*Acceptance is about acknowledging that which you cannot change, and moving on. So for anyone who has had to make peace with the utterly unacceptable, here's to us, moving on."*

*- Linda Kelly, MSW, RSW*



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A woman with long brown hair, wearing a dark sleeveless top and blue jeans, is sitting on a rocky shore. She is looking off to the side with a slight smile. The background shows a lake, trees with autumn foliage, and a cloudy sky with a warm sunset glow.

# LINDA *Kelly*

"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 most sense was to start with individuals, because one person can change the lives of everyone around them.

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."



# CHANGING THE FACE OF MENTAL HEALTH IN THE NORTH

BY LINDA KELLY, MSW, RSW

## **Mental health. Mental health. Mental health. Are we used to this yet?**

It's about time that we started seeing mental health as a normal, everyday part of being human. Because it is. Enough with the stigma. Enough with the fear. It's not a communicable disease, though there's no denying that being around someone who struggles with mental health issues has an impact on you, just like being part of a struggling community creates a sense of powerlessness. So why continue to perpetuate this vicious cycle that prevents people from getting help? Make it okay, because it is.

Let's help each other out and start asking questions, empathizing with someone who's having a bad day, rather than encouraging people to suck it up, get over it, or deny their experiences. Let's stop trying to sweep everything under the rug, and start acknowledging the issues so that we can find solutions.

In the time I have been in this field, I have learned that at the heart of every seemingly odd or distressing behaviour, a series of logical steps occurred to get people there. Abuse, violence, and vandalism are often consequences of poverty. If I have nothing and it seems like everyone else has it better, and I don't have the resources to change my situation, I feel angry, bereft, and powerless. Destroying something might make me feel better for a short time. Lashing out gives the person a sense of power that they otherwise don't have. We have all been through something that made us feel for a little while that we just didn't care anymore, because to care would open us up to more pain, and we didn't have the capacity to take on any more. If you can understand the sequence of events, it's not that far-fetched to empathize with the consequences.

This is what it is to be human. In the North, we face unique issues related to our cultural mosaic, geographical isolation, and our economy. And let's not kid ourselves. The state of one's mental health is determined by many of those factors. Mental health is about our overall functioning, and the state of that health depends on a few things: Physical health (adequate sleep, nutrition, exercise, sunlight, fresh air), Home environment (safety, stability), Relationships (friendships, romance, social connections), Personal growth (learning, developing skills, goals)

With the right supports, our functioning isn't impacted as much when something bad happens, which it inevitably will. So for someone who has a decent home, financial stability, some semblance of a social life, and purpose, they will be more resilient during a crisis. But for someone who lives in fear, who has never known safety, whose relationships are dysfunctional, their reaction to a crisis will be much more intense. They have less of a safety net; less holding them to the earth.

The greatest obstacle to being okay is feeling alone. And loneliness is quite different from being alone. It's the difference between solitude, which is healing and restorative, and loneliness, which is destructive.

So help us make it okay. Stop adding to the stigma of mental health issues so that we can work together to be the change in the North that makes all the difference, creating healthy, resilient people, and putting Northwestern Ontario at the forefront of social change.

# PIPER

## *Rasmussen*

"I started working in the mental health field because I wanted to be a light for other people. To let people know that whatever they're going through is okay. And that they're going to be okay."

Kelly Mental Health allows me to do that. I feel honoured to be such a big part of the difference we're making in the community."



# The Problem With "Perfect 10" Mentality

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They say that perfectionism can lead to depression. They're right. Countless studies explain how perfectionists continually set unrealistic standards for themselves, and feel like failures when they fall short on their expectations. Anything less than perfect is unacceptable, yet perfection is unattainable. It's one thing to feel as though you're not good enough unless you're flawless. Imagine being told that, over and over. I'm going to tell you a story about how my childhood sport distorted my adult reality. First, imagine you are 9 years old, competing in the biggest gymnastics competition of your life.

*You begin with a perfect 10.*

*Your mistakes, or the lack thereof, are what define you in this moment. You are just a number attached to a score. You are scrutinized by a panel of judges whose sole job is to not let an error go unnoticed. You can feel your competitors' eyes digging into your back, begging you to screw up. You can hear your mother's heartbeat from the other side of the gymnasium. You go through the motions that you've rehearsed a million times. Your coach's words ring in your brain. Point your toes. Suck in your stomach. Chin up. You look sloppy. That was awful. Do it again. Do it better. Work harder. You're not going to win the competition. You're not going home until your routine is perfect.*

*Wobble. Deduction. Bent arm. Deduction.*

*You perform each of your skills as well as you can with an arena full of people staring at you, and a stomach that is twisted up in knots. Your heart rate picks up with each mistake that you make as the panic sets in. You need to be perfect. But that wasn't perfect. You are painfully aware of the silence that is only broken by the sound of your feet on the 4-inch wide beam. You just want it to be over.*

*Finally, you dismount and pray to God that you stick your landing. Step. Deduction. You'd think that the worst is over. You'd think that you got through the most nerve-racking part, but as you stand on the cement floor waiting for your score, you realize you forgot how to breathe. You physically cannot take your eyes off of the scoreboard as your coach relays to you everything that you did wrong. You weren't perfect, you know*

*that. All of the hours you spent training, all of your tears and injuries, all for nothing. There it is. Your score. Your defining factor. It's not a 10. You weren't good enough.*

*Next, they post your deductions - all of your mistakes magnified and put on display. You begin with a perfect 10, and what you end up with is a failure in the form of a number. Before you have time to berate yourself, you're moving on to the next event. You still have 3 more to go.*

*Again, you begin with a perfect 10.*

...

When you are taught at a young age that success stems only from perfection, you are set up for a life of disappointment. The more you let yourself down, the less confidence you have in yourself. You eventually get to a point where you stop trying, you stop putting yourself out there, and you give up on yourself because of your fear of failure. The thing is, lack of perfection does not equal failure. It equals humanity. We are not made to be perfect, and that's okay. Making mistakes is okay. Not being the best at something is okay. The only thing that truly matters is that you do what makes you happy. Success will follow. This is something that took me a very long time to learn.

For me, depression was unavoidable. Years and years of perpetually feeling inadequate really takes a toll on the human mind. I passed up a multitude of opportunities along the way because I was afraid of what the outcome might be. I couldn't stand the thought of failure. I hated competitions, just in case I lost. I felt that if what I was doing wasn't perfect, I might as well not do it at all. I wouldn't try new things. I decided I would never be good enough. I reflected this outlook on all aspects of my life; at school, at work, even my appearance. It was completely debilitating. I always had "perfect 10" mentality.

The truth is, the perfect 10 is a myth. It doesn't exist. It wasn't until I allowed myself to understand this that I stopped drilling myself with irrational fears and expectations.

I allowed myself to live, and to live is to be flawed.



“

**ROBERT BRAULT:**

**TO FIND SOMEONE  
WHO WILL LOVE  
YOU FOR NO  
REASON, AND TO  
SHOWER THAT  
PERSON WITH  
REASONS, THAT IS  
THE ULTIMATE  
HAPPINESS.**

”

# RELATIONSHIPS

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KELLY MAGAZINE

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RELATIONSHIPS, MENTAL HEALTH, WELLNESS, LIFESTYLE



# Technology's Impact on Our Relationships



**By Kelly Graham, MSW, RSW**

Technology seems to be dominating our lives today. Whether it is your cell phone, computer, PlayStation, TV, or anything else, we are always surrounded by it.

Don't get me wrong, I love watching Netflix and checking Facebook; I'm not a technology hater. However, I have noticed that a common theme among people today, myself included, is that technology is beginning to interfere with our relationships.

If you were to add up the time you spend using technology throughout the day, you would probably be surprised just how often you're on it. Many people can't even make it through a meal without checking their phone. When we see everyone else checking their phone, we then feel compelled to check ours. Instead of talking with each other face-to-face, we bury ourselves in our technology. When we are continually using

technology in the presence of others, we are ignoring them. While you may be listening, to them it looks like you are more interested in what is on your phone than what they have to say. Remember how you have felt when you've been ignored. Hurt, angry, sad, frustrated? All of those are valid responses. While this may be annoying when you're trying to have a normal conversation with someone, imagine if they are trying to talk to you about something important. Then it may feel like you are ignoring their feelings, that Facebook is more important than them. When this happens frequently, the person may just stop trying to engage with you. This causes a rift in relationships when we feel like we can't express our thoughts and feelings because the other person is too busy being lost in technology. We end up burying these feelings which eventually can turn into resentment and anger. If these feelings are not dealt with, it can ruin a relationship.





**"When we are continually using technology in the presence of others, we are ignoring them."**

How can we fix this?

1. *Set Aside Times That Are Technology Free.* This can be during meal time, date nights, anytime that works. Connect with those around you without the distraction of technology. Go for a walk, play a board game, go out to eat, or do something else fun without technology. While you may point out that restaurants have TVs and you can't avoid that, just ignore the TV and focus on who you are at dinner with.

2. *Limit the Time You Use Technology.* Begin to cut back on the time you spend watching TV or playing video games. Instead of checking your phone every few minutes, challenge yourself to wait just a little longer. Eventually, it will become easier. There are also apps, or features depending on your phone that show you how often you use your phone and allows you to put limits on yourself. You can also ask others in your life to help you with this goal so they can hold you accountable.

3. *Be More Aware.* Try and be more aware of how often you use technology, how others may feel when you're always using it, and how it may be affecting those around you.

4. *If You Are Feeling Ignored, Speak Up.* Let the person know how you are feeling. Many times, people don't understand that them being on their phone, watching TV, or playing a video game makes people feel this way. Use "I feel" statements, and avoid accusing them of what you're assuming. They probably don't realize how it feels to be staring at the back side of a phone while you're trying to have a conversation with the person behind it!

While technology has helped make our lives a lot easier, and possibly more interesting, it contributes to people drifting further apart from one another. Instead of spending time connecting with the people around us, we are fixated on what is happening in the digital world. While we may think we are connected to more people with technology (I mean, just look at how many Facebook friends you have), these connections may be more on the surface level, and are less likely to provide us with the love and support we need in our lives. We need to value those around us and show them that we care, and we can do that by taking much-needed breaks from our devices!

# HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

By Kristen Sohlman, HBA,  
MACP (Candidate), RP



**What is a boundary?** A boundary is an invisible border or limit where one person ends and the other person begins. Boundaries are defined by our own personal limits, values, beliefs, and life experiences. Sometimes when someone makes you feel uncomfortable or hurts you they may have crossed your personal boundary. Boundaries teach others how much they can talk with you, how much they can touch you, or how they can treat you.

**What a boundary is not!** It is important to realize that boundaries are not walls! Boundaries are invisible, they do not close you in or keep others out.

By establishing a healthy boundary, you are actually letting people into your life by respecting your own limits, values and beliefs. When you communicate with others you are teaching others how to treat you by letting them know what you are comfortable with, as well as to help them to become closer with you. We cannot assume that others know what our limits and boundaries are and we cannot assume that we know what other people's limits and boundaries are. In order to understand boundaries, we must be willing to communicate with others and speak up for our own values and beliefs.

# QUIZ: HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

*Check any/all that apply to you.*

- ☐ You can say yes or no, and are alright when others say yes or no.
- ☐ You respect yourself and have a good sense of identity.
- ☐ You expect reciprocity in your relationships with others.
- ☐ You share responsibility and power.
- ☐ You understand when a problem is yours versus when it belongs to someone else.
- ☐ You share personal information gradually in a mutual sharing and trusting relationship.
- ☐ You do not tolerate abuse or disrespect.
- ☐ You know your wants, needs, and feelings and communicate them clearly within your relationships.
- ☐ You are committed to and responsible for exploring and nurturing your full potential.
- ☐ You are responsible for your own happiness.
- ☐ You value your opinions and feelings as much as others.
- ☐ You know your limits and do not let others define your limits.
- ☐ You can ask for help when you need it.
- ☐ You do not compromise your values or integrity to avoid rejection.



*Results:*

*10-14*

*Great work! You have a healthy knowledge of boundaries. Keep it up and share your wisdom with others.*

*6-9*

*Almost there! You have a working knowledge of healthy boundaries, but may benefit from learning more.*

*1-5*

*We all have to start somewhere. You're aware that your boundaries need some more attention. It can only get better from here.*



# HOW TO KEEP YOUR RELATIONSHIP ALIVE

By Kelly Graham, MSW, RSW





*We all hit a point in our relationship where we're out of the honeymoon phase and may feel like we are stuck in a rut. Sometimes life gets busy, and you don't set aside time for your relationship. It's okay; this happens to everyone. So how can you connect with your partner again and regain that spark?*

#### **MAKE TIME FOR EACH OTHER.**

Make sure you are setting aside time for a date night, or even just time to spend as a couple. Life can get busy and sometimes taking time to be a couple is forgotten. Make sure your relationship is a priority in your life.

#### **BE GRATEFUL.**

Take notice of everything your partner does for you. Make sure to thank them. Showing them gratitude can help make them feel appreciated for everything that they do.

#### **OPEN AND HONEST COMMUNICATION.**

This is key to making a relationship last. Having open and honest communication is important for understanding each other and having a healthy relationship.

#### **BE REALISTIC.**

Know that all relationships have their ups and downs. It's not always going to be perfect. By taking time to be supportive of your partner, and showing them that you care, it can help keep the relationship strong even during the tough times.

#### **THE LITTLE THINGS COUNT.**

Making sure that you take time to say, "I love you" everyday and being affectionate can go a long way. Even just doing little gestures that show the other person that you care, like making their lunch, buying them flowers, rubbing their feet, starting their car, whatever it may be.






# INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNICATING ASSERTIVELY



By Seija Grant, MEd CP, RP

According to the dictionary, communication is a means of connection between people. However, communication is so much more complex than that. It can be direct or indirect, it can be written or oral and there can be many subtleties, variables and factors. Communication is a difficult task for many of us. Sometimes we struggle to explain ourselves, or to have others understand our feelings or needs. Sometimes we might get angry or frustrated when trying to share opinions or perspectives with others. Sometimes we keep things to ourselves for the sake of keeping the peace. Do any of these sound familiar to you?





If so, don't fret! The goal of effective communication is to minimize misunderstandings and overcome barriers in communicating with others. Luckily, I have some information to impart that can help you to communicate more clearly, calmly and efficiently—ultimately leading to strengthening your relationships with others.

Assertive communication is an interaction style which can help you to ensure things are fair, that you can express yourself clearly and confidently and can actually help to build your self-esteem! This approach to communication can make it more likely to have your needs met within an interaction as you are expressing yourself in a direct manner while also being fair to others.

Some of the core principles of assertive communication are: recognizing that your needs are just as important as others, compromising, talking and listening equally, ensuring fairness is the goal of the interaction, advocating for yourself, and expressing yourself clearly. This is different from passive communication (which is more about keeping the peace, listening and not being heard, and giving in to others) or aggressive communication (which is more about thinking that only your needs matter, talking over others, and looking out for yourself). I will outline some strategies for starting to think, act, react and respond in a more assertive manner which can help you to change the way you interact interpersonally—hopefully also modeling this type of communication with others in your life.

One such strategy is the use of “I” statements, which you may or may not have heard about before. “I” statements refer to speaking about your feelings and opinions by presenting them as your own, rather than as facts, blame or generalization. Using statements such as “I feel”... “I think” .... etc. can help to express yourself without the other person feeling attacked. A technique that I often talk to my clients about is called “WIN”.

WIN is an acronym for:

W—“when you (insert action or behaviour here)”

I—“I feel (insert feeling/emotion)”

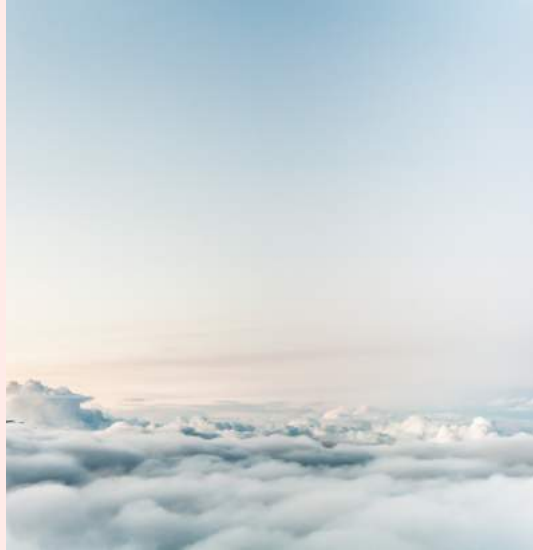
N—“I need (insert need, compromise, behavior change suggestion)”

This strategy can be helpful because you are allowing others to know how their actions impact you personally, and are also suggesting a solution for this issue. Some compromise may need to be reached, but this can be a great place to start. Often times we don't realize the impact our actions or words can have on others, so this technique can open up communication, help to minimize misunderstandings, and help to define the problem.

Some other really important things to consider when you are learning how to communicate assertively are: use of empathy (to try to understand the other person's perspective), asking for more time (so as not to respond when you are feeling too emotional or don't know how to respond), use of language (ie. changing your verbs—won't vs. can't, could vs. should) and use of scripts (such as the WIN technique mentioned earlier to prepare ahead of time).

Now, having said all of this—changing our behaviours and mannerisms is challenging. It takes time and patience with ourselves as it is a process. Try not to feel defeated when you find yourself falling back into old communication habits. Just pick yourself back up, acknowledge your slip ups, and move forward with your head held high. The benefits of communicating assertively are HUGE and well-worth the effort. This type of communication can greatly improve your relationships with others, self-confidence, improve the likelihood of having your needs met, and decrease misunderstandings.

Don't believe me? Give it a try!



*"Change your thoughts  
and you change your  
world."*

**NORMAN VINCENT PEALE**

# MENTAL HEALTH

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KELLY MAGAZINE

RELATIONSHIPS, **MENTAL HEALTH**, WELLNESS, LIFESTYLE



# I AM NOT AN A\$\$, I AM ANXIOUS

**By Kristen Sohlman,  
HBA, MACP  
(Candidate), RP**

"I realize that sometimes I may come off as angry, aloof, quiet, unapproachable and difficult to talk to, but there is more to me than what others may realize. I have anxiety!" Having anxiety means that one may come off as a bad friend, a coworker that doesn't care, or even somewhat antisocial to others, but this is hardly the case. The actuality is that people who are struggling to cope with their anxiety care and they care a lot! Fear is a big component of anxiety and keeps those that struggle with it from having meaningful conversations with others, from texting friends whom they really want to spend time with, and fear that they may be a

nuisance if they build up the nerve to pick up the phone or to actually have that conversation. People who are struggling to cope with their anxiety are overwhelmed, may feel like crying, and may even get angry if the thought of breaking down crying in front of others would be just too embarrassing. Anxiety is the reason why they may not make good eye contact, that they may be quiet in groups of people, and it is not because they are distracted, don't care, or are quietly

judging others. People with anxiety are not just quiet! While they may present as quiet on the outside at times, there is often an internal turmoil boiling over inside. Inside they may be struggling with trying to minimize the symptoms of their anxiety that others might see on the outside, they may be trying not bring attention to themselves, they may be going over and over again in their mind trying to figure out what is next or how to say what they really want to say out loud.



# How to support someone with anxiety:

1. Try not to judge too quickly. When someone is angry, quiet, and seems unapproachable understand that there is likely more happening than what meets the eye.
2. Slow down and give others the time and space to think about what is being discussed, to process it, to process their feelings, to prepare to respond, and then respond. Yes, there is a lot of cognitive work that happens in a conversation! Moving too quickly may mean that the anxious person does not get a chance to share what they would like to or how they are actually feeling.
3. Remember that coping with an anxiety disorder does not mean that the person is broken, inferior, or deficient.

By Kristen Sohlman, HBA, MACP (Candidate), RP



4. Use your own active listening skills.
5. Be patient.
6. Remember that anxiety is not something that someone can just get over, snap out of, or be rid of immediately. By showing your support you can help!
7. Stay calm! Moods are contagious and if you are able to maintain your cool this can help.
8. Empathize, don't patronize. Try to be supportive and as loving as you can.
9. Celebrate successes together!
10. Encourage and support any help with anxiety, whether that is from you or from a more formal support like a counsellor or therapist.
11. Offer hope.
12. Education yourself and learn more about anxiety.



# Warning Signs for an Incoming Addiction Relapse

By Marianne Wylie, MSW, RSW

Do you find yourself in a pattern of promising yourself that you won't use or drink again but then find you have slipped again and again? Feeling discouraged? It might be helpful to get to know your signs of an incoming relapse or slip. The following are common "warning signs" that an addiction relapse may be on it's way. That's right, there are emotional, physical and behavioural signs that one commonly experiences before the slip.

Note: The warning signs do not mean you will slip. They are just signs to watch out for so that you can better prepare yourself to prevent a slip. The first step is building your awareness to what you are experiencing. Then you can take action to do what is helpful for you to prevent a slip (i.e. take time to rest, reach out to your supports, keep those guards up if feeling too confident, etc.). Need more help? We can help.

1.

Over-confidence – This happens when you start to believe that you have mastered recovery early on and no longer need to use the behavioural changes and supports you had been using to help you. This, then, can lead to letting your guards down and placing yourself in vulnerable positions to relapse.

2.

Depression – Are you noticing that many of your days include mood changes where you are either feeling low and tearful or angry and irritable? Have you been diagnosed with depression but it is not being treated? There is a relationship between mental illness and addiction. Untreated depressive symptoms can increase vulnerability to fighting off urges to use or drink.

3.

Omnipotence – This is the belief that you do not need anyone's help and you can master recovery on your own. While some people can do this, many people find that they need support as they make substance use changes. Believing that you don't need support can make the changes in recovery harder as you ignore suggestions from others.

4.

Impatience – This can include feeling like changes in life aren't happening fast enough or you feel that loved ones aren't trusting you as quickly as you had hoped. Changes that you make with addiction takes time. Reward yourself for the changes made thus far and see that even though you may not be where you hoped you would be by now, you are still on your way. Also, remember that it takes time for loved ones to build trust. They have been hurt by the addiction too.

5.

Dishonesty – Starts with little white lies to others then comes lying to yourself. It involves finding excuses why it's acceptable to do what you should not to do or not do what you should. This pattern often leads to major dishonesty that is often part of active addiction.

6.

Isolating from support system – Have you stopped attending the programs that have been helpful? Stopped talking to those who are a support to your recovery? Avoiding positive people? Isolating yourself from your supports often leads to relapse. Support people and programs are there to help you stay on track through support and education.

7.

Exhausted and Overwhelmed – Feeling exhausted and overwhelmed often leads to feeling tired and like it is difficult staying afloat. A lack of rest and down time will lower the threshold for the impact that stressors have and urges to use often increase.





The use of animals to help people emotionally and mentally seems to be on the rise lately. But can they actually help? While an animal is not a replacement for medical treatment or counselling, they can help to improve your well-being... as long as you like animals.

There are 3 different types of animals that can provide support:

## 1. Service Animals

These animals are specially trained and paired with someone who needs assistance physically, mentally, or emotionally. (For example, people who are blind, have epilepsy or PTSD, etc.)

## 2. Therapy Animals

These animals have training (not as much as service animals) and are used in short-term sessions to help improve people's well-being. They can also be used in a group setting or one-on-one.

## 3. Emotional Support Animals

These animals do not have specialized training, but are more than "just a pet" because they provide comfort to their owner when they are in distress.

How can animals help? When with an animal that you like, it releases the chemical oxytocin in the brain. This chemical generates feelings of love, trust, cooperation, optimism, calmness, and safety. This chemical can help in a variety of ways. Some benefits include:

- Lessen feelings of anxiety and depression
- Reduce loneliness
- Help build trust
- Provide a sense of purpose



# ANIMALS AND MENTAL HEALTH

*By Kelly Graham, MSW, RSW*

Animals can encourage people to become more physically active because they need to be exercised and looked after. They can also help improve social interactions by being with the person, so they are less afraid, creating a shared topic of interest for discussion, and by putting people in social situations (such as the pet store, the dog park, etc.).

Animals don't judge us for how we are feeling or what we are going through. They are always there for us providing love and friendship. This can help comfort people, especially when they are in distress. While not everyone likes animals, and therefore they would not get these benefits or have these feelings, they can be a good option for those who love them.

To gain the benefits you don't necessarily need a trained animal, but instead, enjoy the time you spend with them. Try to focus solely on the relationship and interaction you have with your pet. Stop thinking about what you're going to make for dinner tomorrow night, or how much work you have. Just focus on being with them, and they can help increase your well-being, even if just a little!

The background of the entire page is a photograph of dry, brown branches covered in a thick layer of white frost. The branches are silhouetted against a clear, deep blue sky. The focus is sharp on the branches in the foreground, while the background branches are slightly blurred.

# Ask The Therapist: Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

By Kristen Sohlman, HBA, MACP (Candidate), RP

Do you ever notice that you struggle with a low mood, that you are lacking energy, or are moodier in the fall and winter seasons? Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is a type of depression that occurs seasonally and is related to the changes in level of sunlight that you are exposed to during seasons of low daylight. It is important to realize that SAD can occur at other times of the year, for example, for those who work nightshifts who may not have access to as much natural light as those that are awake during the day. Some of the reasons that SAD may occur involves a lack of natural light that may actually affect your biological clock or circadian rhythm and may influence the release of chemicals in your body such as serotonin, dopamine, and melatonin, affecting your mood.

## *What are some of the signs of SAD?*

- Having a sad or low mood that persists throughout the day for more than two weeks. Sounds like major depression? The key is that SAD symptoms appear, disappear, and reappear seasonally.
- Low mood that begins to impact your performance, work, or social relationships.
- Changes in appetite or changes in weight.
- Difficulties with sleep. Either too much, too little, or a disturbed or restless sleep.
- A loss or lack of interest in other activities such as work, recreation and leisure activities, hobbies, relationship with others, or even sex.
- Isolation and withdrawal from family, friends, supports, coworkers, etc.
- Having the feeling of helplessness, hopelessness, guilt, not feeling worthy or worthwhile, etc.
- Feeling fatigued, sluggish, slow, irritable or agitated.
- Difficulties with memory, concentration, problem solving, and decision-making.
- Crying more than usual or feeling like crying, but being unable to.
- Having frequent thoughts of suicide or death.

## *What are the risk factors?*

- Women are more likely than men to report and be diagnosed with SAD.
- SAD is more often reported by individuals who are living further away from the equator, that is, those that are living in more northern or southern communities around the world.
- The risk of developing SAD decrease with age. Therefore, more young people will be affected by SAD more frequently.
- If someone else in your family has identified concerns with SAD, or even depression, there could be an increased risk for you.
- If you already cope with major depression or bipolar disorder, your symptoms may worsen seasonally and may be related to SAD.

## *What can you do to reduce the impacts of SAD?*

- Try not to brush off or minimize how you have been feeling by telling yourself this is just winter blues. Seek out help and support.
- Try to rule out other experiences that may be affecting how you are feeling. These can include other mental health concerns such as eating disorders, substance abuse, and other stresses within your life.
- Light therapy is the primary treatment of SAD. So, get outside during the day when you can, take a walk, exercise regularly, and enjoy natural sunlight.
- Try engaging in light therapy. Light therapy is the use of a bright artificial light that can be used at home, work, etc. but keep in mind that purchasing your own light can be costly.
- Try making your environment sunnier and brighter by opening blinds, trimming tree branches next to your home, or moving your desk closer to a window.
- If you are able, take a trip to a sunnier location.
- Therapy and counselling may also help to reduce symptoms. Therapy can help you identify negative thoughts and behaviours that may be making you feel worse, and can help you to reframe or change these thoughts so that your mood may improve. Therapy can also assist you in learning about healthy coping mechanisms and learn how to manage stress.
- Talk to a doctor if your symptoms persist. Sometimes medication management may be necessary in some situations.
- Try engaging the mind and body through relaxation, meditation, yoga, tai chi, guided imagery, music or art therapy.
- Take care of yourself and actively engage in self-care!



# Functional Depression: It's not all in your head.

By Linda Kelly, MSW, RSW

Are you just going through the motions and wondering what it's all for? Are you questioning your purpose in life? Do you feel like you even have one? Or worse, are you blocking out negative thoughts and feelings with impulse shopping, binge-watching, emotional eating, or an unflagging need to stay busy?

You might be experiencing functional depression, which is one of the more common, unacknowledged issues impacting the quality of our lives. Functional depression is different from the more well-known Clinical Depression (or Major Depressive Disorder) because it doesn't come with a major breakdown. That means that you still wake up on time, perform adequately at work or school, and meet expectations in the variety of roles in your life.



*Mom can be struggling with this issue but still taking care of everyone around her. The family might notice her irritability, but she keeps busy enough so they don't ask her what's really going on. And when things slow down, she experiences a profound sadness; an emptiness that plays on her fears of inadequacy and self-doubt.*

*In other words, she lacks joy. She seeks constant fulfillment in short-lived, impulse activities that ultimately leave her feeling worse. Shopping feels good while you're doing it, but you regret the money being spent, and you struggle to keep your place tidy when impulse purchases keep piling up. You romanticize a new vehicle, thinking this is what you're missing out on. This void you feel in your life will be remedied with that 4-wheel drive, sleek, roomy dreamboat.*

*But it doesn't help. Eventually, that vehicle reverts to being an expensive*

*mode of transportation. And you continue to seek connection and fulfillment in the wrong places.*

*And speaking of connection, you don't feel like doing things you used to enjoy. The guitar sits in the corner gathering dust. The weed-ravaged plants stay alive, but just barely. Painting seems like clutter and mess. It's too hard to get the bike out of the shed and it doesn't feel like a worthwhile exercise when there are so many more important things to do.*

*The longer the feeling persists, the more we function like a cell phone at 5% power with 50 apps running. We malfunction. We put almost all of our energy towards productivity, devaluing the time we should be spending connecting with ourselves. But instead of shutting everything off and recharging, we keep opening new apps to stay busy while we somehow expect ourselves to recover. But it's not all bad news.*



1. Be introspective. Ask yourself questions to reflect on how you got here, and tap into your own passions once again.
2. Turn off electronics. Recharge. Stop accepting new information until you deal with the things that are leaning too heavily on you. Get lost in the quiet.
3. Get your body moving, not to lose weight or build muscle or look good in a bathing suit, but to clear your mind and get to know yourself. Revel in the sensations of touch, taste, smell, sight, and sound.
4. Notice the thoughts you're having. Notice the feelings. Don't react. Just be aware. Let them pass without reacting to them.
5. Do something that you used to enjoy, even if you can't find the motivation to do it. Get on the bike. Pick up the guitar and play around with it until it makes a sound you enjoy. Force yourself. The momentum to continue will come AFTER you get started.
6. Take time for yourself. Get the other adults in your life to rely on themselves, make sure the necessities (e.g., kids, dogs, work) are cared for and then postpone the rest. Don't worry, they'll be waiting for you when you're ready to take them on again.
7. Get off of autopilot. Do something new and unexpected, like getting a friend in the driver's seat and pointing in random directions to have a new, unplanned adventure.
8. Make a commitment to do one thing for yourself every day. Journalling, napping, walking, listening to a motivational podcast, and even forcefully complimenting yourself in the mirror are all ideas that take barely any time at all.
9. Step back and look at the big picture. If you had the chance to do anything over, what would you change? Get comfortable with your own judgment and the decisions you have made, because you can only take one of two possible roads: be proud of what you've done, or grow wiser because now you know better.
10. Talk to a professional. When we feel disconnected, we want to talk about it. But the negative feelings can make us feel like a burden to others if we disclose too much. If this is a problem and it has lasted for more than a month, talking to a professional can help with getting you back on track to feeling in control once again.

*A depressive episode represents an opportunity for significant change. Take it as a muted message from your mind that has been screaming that something is not okay. It is an opportunity to examine your life to make real decisions about where you need to go next.*

*Maybe this path you're on isn't what you thought it would be. And you need to do some work, taking time to get back to basics, finding joy in the little things so that you can come home to yourself. Once you rediscover the person that 10-year-old you imagined you'd be, things in your life will truly start falling into place.*

*That's the connection we long for. It's not external at all. It is within.*



# The Importance of Finding a Good Fit

By Seija Grant, MEd CP, RP



When I talk about ‘finding a good fit’ I am referring to the therapeutic relationship between client and therapist. One of the most important factors of therapeutic success is having a strong therapeutic alliance. The importance of this is significant, as you (the client) need to be able to trust the therapist enough to share some of the most vulnerable parts of yourself. Outside of a therapy context, you probably wouldn’t go around sharing all of your most secret, private (possibly darkest) parts of yourself with just anybody, so why should it be different when it comes to therapy? As a client you have the right to try out counsellors to find one that suits you. If you don’t feel it is a good fit, don’t be

afraid to ask for an appointment with a different counsellor next time (if this is an option at the agency or organization you are attending). Therapists are aware of the importance of this factor and ultimately want you to be successful and thrive in counselling...even if it isn’t with them. I personally would much rather have a client transfer to another therapist than for them to miss out on all of the benefits of counselling, just because we weren’t a good match.

There can be several reasons for a lack of ‘good fit’ between client and counsellor. Some of the factors to consider:





**Personality.** This is a BIG one! Just like in the real world, you probably won't get along with 100% of people, the same goes with counsellors/therapists!

**Therapeutic Modality and Experience.** There are hundreds (possibly more?) of variations on therapy styles and techniques and each therapist has their own flair as well. In short, finding a style that suits you (or combination of styles) is also important. Please do not be afraid to tell your counsellor that a certain task or activity you try is not for you. We can't read your minds (despite popular belief), and likely have many other options available to you. Also, each therapist has their own clinical experience, training, knowledge and expertise that they bring to their sessions. Feel free to ask your counsellor questions

about their experiences and areas of expertise to find out more. If a counsellor is outside of their scope of expertise, they must inform you of this or seek external consultation to ensure they are supporting your needs sufficiently.

**Preferences.** As each human being has their own experiences in life (both positive and negative) we also develop biases and preferences. Perhaps your new therapist reminds you too much of your mother/father, your daughter/son or other significant person in your life. Maybe you feel more comfortable speaking to someone who reminds you of these people in your life, or maybe not! It is not to say that a therapist of any age/sex/gender/race etc. wouldn't be helpful to you—more of a caution to be aware of your biases.

If you are going into the session saying “this is not going to work” then guess what...this is not going to work.

**Readiness for Therapy.** Some people want the benefits of seeing a counsellor however are maybe not yet ready for therapy. If you are feeling coerced into counselling or feel like you are not willing to open up quite yet...it may be an indication that the timing is not right for you. If you are willing to work towards building trust with a counsellor but not wanting to delve into it immediately, that is OKAY. This often occurs in counselling as clients want to develop trust and rapport before sharing intimate details of their lives. However, in order for counselling to be effective, it is best if you are open and honest with your therapist. It is a safe place to be able to share any observations, feelings, concerns, etc.

**Attunement.** If you have started the counselling process, do you feel your therapist understands your goals, emotions, and perspective? Sometimes this may take some time and clarification, however if you feel they are empathically attuned (reacting appropriately, following your story, feeling connected), you will likely feel more at ease with them in session which will strengthen the rapport. Some things to consider for you may be genuineness, authenticity, understanding, approachability, and feeling as though the counsellor is relatable. Does your counsellor feel like a good fit or somebody you could become comfortable with? The gut often knows...listen to it.

There may also be different therapists who can be helpful to you at different points in your life. Maybe you need a certain type of person or skillset to help with one area, and then a few years later need something completely different. That is OKAY. As humans we change, we grow, and we also have varying needs. There is a whole spectrum out there, and taking the time to consider what it is that you need in this moment can be a great way of helping yourself to find a good fit in order to flourish in a counselling setting. In short, counselling is not a one-size-fits-all sort of experience. It is a deeply personal and unique venture. As all humans have distinctive differences with individual needs, concerns/issues, and preferences, it makes sense that not every therapist will be exactly the right fit for every client. As therapists we want to be able to help our clients in a collaborative manner to attain their goals, and having strong therapeutic rapport is one of the key ingredients.

*"Believe in yourself. You  
are braver than you  
think, more talented  
than you know, and  
capable of more than  
you imagine."*

**ROY T. BENNETT**

WELLNESS

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KELLY MAGAZINE

RELATIONSHIPS, MENTAL HEALTH, **WELLNESS**, LIFESTYLE



A person is shown in profile from the chest up, looking out over a body of water towards a bright sunset. The person's hand is raised near their face, and they are holding a pair of glasses. The background is a warm, golden-orange glow from the setting sun, reflecting on the water's surface.

Feeling comfortable in who you are and being happy to be you can enrich your life and even improve your overall mental well-being and relationships with others. Here are 3 tips to start building a healthy relationship with yourself!

# **3 Tips to Become Your Own *Best Friend***

BY MARIANNE WYLIE, MSW, RSW

# 1. PRIORITIZE YOURSELF.

Carve out some regularly scheduled "me time". Do an activity that you enjoy, that brings you peace and enjoyment. Do a puzzle, get into some arts and crafts, watch that game or show, have a bath. Consider something that you used to do often but don't anymore. No, taking time for yourself is not a bad thing. It's good to have some time to focus on just you. It doesn't mean that you care less about others. It means that you care about yourself as much as you do others and that is healthy.

# 2. WRITE A JOURNAL THAT LISTS YOUR POSITIVE QUALITIES.

It doesn't have to be a narrative, even a bullet point list of your positive qualities. Consider asking yourself: What do others say they like about you? What do you like about yourself (no matter how small)? What skills do you have? What makes you unique? Here's a list to consider to start you off: kind, hardworking, loyal, strong, friendly, cheerful, honest, funny, patient, helpful...

# 3. GO ON A DATE WITH YOURSELF!

Yes, you heard that right. Take yourself out on the town, alone. When we begin dating a potential partner, we go on dates to get to know them - to learn about their likes and dislikes. Taking yourself out to dinner somewhere, for a nice walk at the waterfront or to the movies can be a great way to learn more about yourself. Feeling hesitant? Exploring this can be a way of getting to know yourself too. Consider asking yourself: What is this hesitation about? Is it because it is something new or are you worried about what others think? You never know what you'll discover about you!



# self-care

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implementing & practicing / by Seija Grant, MED CP, RP

You may have heard about, or read about the elusive 'self-care practice' and wondered...what the heck does that mean anyway? Well, I am here to enlighten you. It is something that we often over-look, take for granted or push aside. To practice self-care is to deliberately engage in activities that improve your mental, emotional and physical well-being. This seems pretty simple, but in reality, can be a challenging task for many.

There are so many benefits to self-care, such as regulating your mood, reducing anxiety symptoms, and strengthening relationships with self and others. A quote that I enjoy that emphasizes the importance of this is "you can't pour from an empty cup". In short, you cannot give of yourself to others (job included) unless you have taken the time to 'recharge your batteries' or 'put fuel in your gas tank'.





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It is NOT selfish to self-care but in fact necessary to avoid burning yourself out. To take time to self-care means that you know yourself, your needs, and you are being responsible for yourself. Sometimes that means saying no to extra responsibilities and simply knowing what you can or cannot take on.

Where should I even start? Good question! Just start small by asking yourself the following questions. How often do you:

- get sufficient sleep? (the average needed sleep for most adults is 8 hours per night)
- eat a well-balanced diet on a regular basis? (approximately 3 times per day)
- drink enough water? (varies depending on your size and activity level)
- spend time in nature?
- exercise for more than 20 minutes?
- engage in stress-reducing activities? (often physical or creative outlets)
- spend time relaxing?
- seek out things or people that make you laugh? (videos, comedy shows, animals)

If you answered “never”, “rarely”, or “sometimes” then you likely need to up your self-care game. These questions only relate to some of the physical well-being components of self-care, and only a few of the more basic needs.

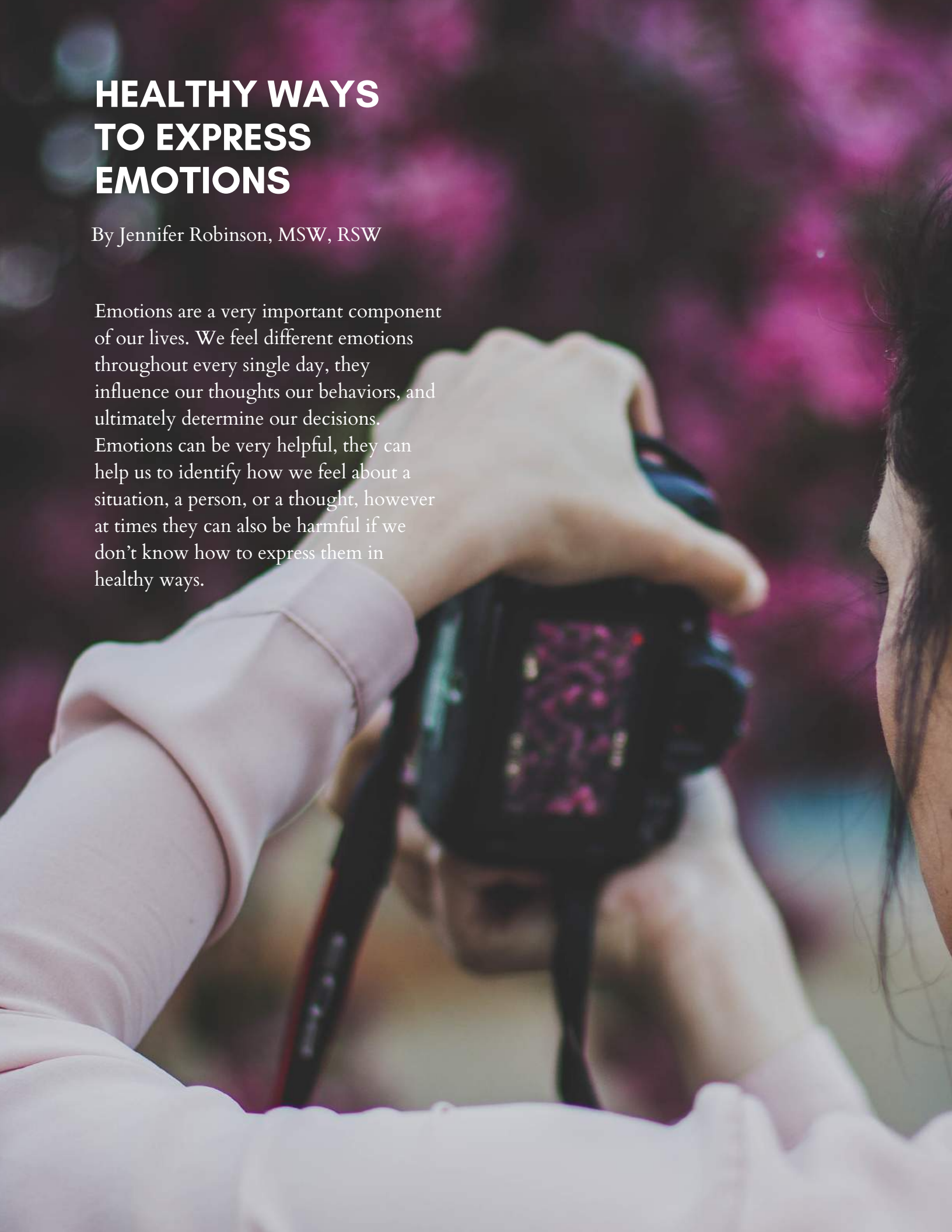
Having good self-care practice means to have a balance of activities in your life that make you feel refreshed and renewed, rather than draining or depleting you. I would encourage you to take some time to reflect upon your life, where you spend your energy, and ask...what could I let go of? What could I do more of? How could I feel more balanced?

From my own personal experience, I know that I need to exercise nearly every day to take care of my emotional, mental and physical needs. I know that isn’t everyone’s cup of tea, but maybe yours is painting, making music, having some solo downtime, meditation, playing with puppies or kittens—whatever your thing is, make sure you do it often! Schedule self-care into your life, don’t just use it as a filler activity. Taking care of yourself is important to maintain balance in your life. It is never too late to begin a self-care practice, so sit down and create a plan to implement some of these activities into your routine and see how it makes you feel.

# HEALTHY WAYS TO EXPRESS EMOTIONS

By Jennifer Robinson, MSW, RSW

Emotions are a very important component of our lives. We feel different emotions throughout every single day, they influence our thoughts our behaviors, and ultimately determine our decisions. Emotions can be very helpful, they can help us to identify how we feel about a situation, a person, or a thought, however at times they can also be harmful if we don't know how to express them in healthy ways.



### *A few healthy ways to express emotions:*

**Talk about it:** The first thing that comes to mind when we are feeling upset is to talk to someone. We are constantly encouraged to reach out for help or to turn to a trusted person to express how you are feeling and there are very good reasons for this. Talking about how you feel can allow you to make sense of your thoughts and emotions and if you are talking to someone in your support system, it helps you feel validated and supported. You can talk to a friend, family member, co-worker or therapist. However, if talking about feelings and emotions is something unfamiliar to a person, this may be something they struggle with which is why It is important to know that there are other ways to express emotions other than talking.

### *You can also:*

**Write about it:** Journaling can help you make sense of your emotions, it can assist you in organizing your thoughts to pinpoint exactly what it is that you are feeling. It is a form of emotional release, allowing you to remove whatever it is that is causing you distress from your mind, onto a piece of paper. It can allow you to move on from emotions that may be holding you back, to refocus back to the present moment and to feel a sense of relief. Journaling can also allow to trigger an emotional release such as tears which may be very helpful in the moment.

**Exercise:** Exercise can be another healthy form of emotional expression, it allows you to take ownership for how you are feeling and release it in a healthy way. When you are exerting physical energy, you are releasing pent up emotions from your body. Exercise can help you process your life through movement.

**Be Creative:** Art and creativity can also be a healthy way for individuals to express their emotions and experiences. It is a unique way to let out how you feel, to make sense of your emotions and communicate through something other than words. Expressing emotions creatively can be through drawing, coloring, making music, photography etc.



# TAKE A WORRY BREAK

By Marianne Wylie, MSW, RSW

*Here are 4 steps to improve your mental health by easing your mind of worry so that you can enjoy the here and now.*

## 1. PAUSE.

Take a moment to close your eyes and visualize yourself constructing a wall between you and the worrying thoughts. It is okay to put them aside for now.

## 2. BREATHE.

Notice your breath... the sounds of your breath, the feeling of the air as you inhale and exhale, the temperature of the air. Bring your shoulders back and let them fall from your ears. Allow your next breath in to be a little deeper and your next breath out to be a little longer. Continue to breathe this way.

## 3. DISTRACT YOURSELF.

Engage in an activity that stimulates the mind.

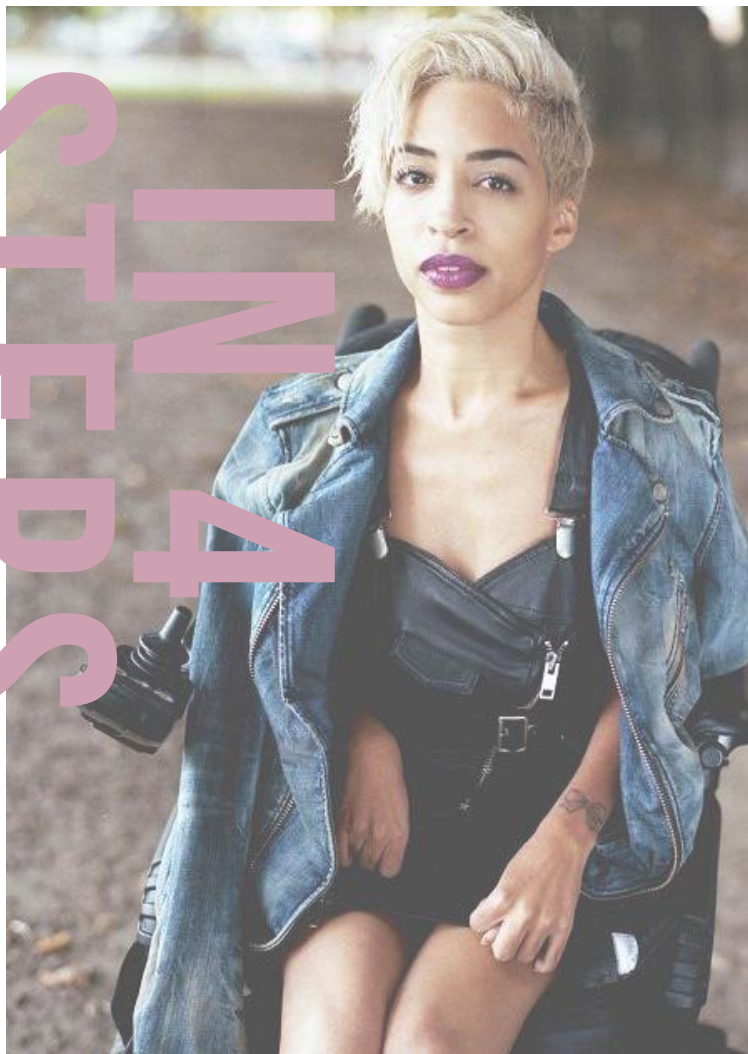
Read an interesting book or article. Call a loved one. Do a craft. Write a list of things you are grateful for. Play a board or card game. Tidy up. Listen to music. Watch funny videos. Go for a walk and bring your attention to as many details in your environment as you can.

## 4. BE COMPASSIONATE WITH YOURSELF.

You may notice your worrying thoughts keep trying to return. This is normal. Just notice that the worrying thought is there and allow it to leave as you focus on your breathing. After all, there is nothing that can be done about the thing you are worrying about in this moment. Be gentle with yourself, with the thoughts you have and enjoy the now.

WORRY  
STEPS

4  
STEPS  
TO  
STOP  
WORRYING





**MENTAL HEALTH TIP:**

*Smiling when you don't feel happy has been shown to actually increase feelings of happiness and contentment.*





# *The Importance of Getting a Good Sleep*

*By Jennifer Robinson,  
MSW, RSW*





# 5

## *Reasons Why Sleep Is Important for Your Mental Health:*

- 1. Lowers stress levels.** Being tired can make people feel impatient and easily agitated which can increase stress levels. Being well rested helps individuals be more prepared to manage stressful situations in healthier ways.
- 2. Improves your memory.** Sleep allows your brain a chance to process the information you consumed throughout the day which can strengthen your memories. This could mean that you'll be more likely to remember that important information you learned, or that positive experience you had which can contribute to a healthier well-being.
- 3. Increases attention and focus.** Being tired can slow down your thought process which can interfere with your concentration. This may hinder your work/school performance as it can impede on your ability to use logical reasoning or complex thinking.
- 4. Increases ability to regulate emotions.** Not getting enough sleep can interfere with an individual's ability to monitor their emotions and can heighten reactivity. Being well rested allows individuals to have more control over their emotions and how they react to stressful situations.
- 5. Allows you to make healthier choices.** Being well rested allows individuals to think clearly about their decisions. If you are tired you may be less likely to make healthy food choices, to engage in leisure activities, or intimacy and exercise, all of which contribute to a healthy lifestyle.

# 5

## *Tips to Help Get a Better Sleep:*

- 1. Set a schedule.** Establish a consistent sleep schedule for every day of the week. Even on days off, try to follow this routine. Creating a bed-time routine is a helpful way to prepare your body and mind for rest each night.
- 2. Avoid caffeine, nicotine and alcohol before bed.** Caffeine and Nicotine are both stimulants, meaning they increase alertness. Although some people feel a sense of relaxation from smoking, it does produce adrenaline which can interfere with an individual's quality of sleep. Alcohol is not a stimulant, however it can interfere with the body's sleep regulating mechanism which can hinder the overall quality of sleep.
- 3. Exercise and eat well.** Eating a balanced, evenly spaced diet can help prevent indigestion or hunger throughout the night, which can be a common interference for a steady sleep. Exercising during the day can also help you have a deeper, more restful sleep.
- 4. Create a calm and comfortable space for sleep.** Lighting, sound, temperature and appearance can all affect the quality of your sleep. Adjusting these factors to best fit your needs and eliminating clutter from the space can help your brain associate the bedroom with relaxation to prepare you for sleep.
- 5. Use your bed for sleep.** Avoid using your bed while watching TV, using your phone, eating etc. Doing this will allow your brain to associate bed with sleep and not with other stimulating activities.

# Time to Be A Happier You

*By Maria Drohan, HBSW, AS  
Eng. (MSW Candidate)*



*"Be happy for this moment.  
This moment is your life."  
- Omar Khayyam*

*The science of happiness tells us that being happy is basically... a choice. Yup, you heard me, a choice. As if it was that easy. But, if you're struggling to make lemonade when it feels like all life hands you are lemons, you are not alone. Here are a couple things to keep in mind when you're struggling to see the sunshine amongst all that rain.*

**You are wanted & you are needed.** Take a second and think about the most important people in your life. I guarantee you, whoever it is, they want to see you happy. Have you spent time with them lately? If you're looking for a reason to be happy, this is the place to start.

**You can't buy happiness.** Time to let go of the jealousy and materialistic longing. Happiness doesn't come from having the nicest car, or the best clothes. Happiness comes from confidence and knowing your worth.

**Sleep more.** We know that sleep helps our body recover from the day and repair itself. Sleep helps us focus and be more productive. It turns out, sleep is also important for happiness. Allowing your brain to rest will make facing those tough emotions easier and more manageable.

**Happy people are healthier.** "Happy" habits include letting go of grudges, expressing gratitude, treating others with kindness and regarding your problems as challenges. Living in the present, waking up at the same time each morning, eating right and exercising are other "secrets" that happy people tend to embrace.



# Secrets for Controlling *Your Thoughts*

*By Maria Drohan, HBSW,  
AS Eng. (MSW Candidate)*

Life is here for us to experience, to learn, and to grow. Sometimes we learn the hard way, and sometimes we learn through joy and happiness. But, believe it or not, many people unconsciously choose to learn the hard way. Never really believing in themselves and putting it down to “it always happens to me” or “I deserve this”. Managing when you find your thoughts getting out of control is a necessary tool to master for positive mental health.

There are different types of common negative thought patterns known as “Thought Traps” that occur whenever we are thinking negatively. When you are able to identify the common negative Thought Traps you can then challenge these by applying a more rational, balanced approach to your thinking.

One of the first things you need to do is to learn to stop in the middle of your thoughts. Usually, when you’re feeling frustrated, upset, tired, or angry about something, your tendency will be to “press on” or “fight through” or “get past” whatever it is that you’re feeling. This is not a good strategy. Instead of pressing on, take 5 minutes to stop what you’re doing, and think about your thoughts.

*"To enjoy good health, to bring true happiness to one's family, to bring peace to all, one must first discipline and control one's own mind." - Buddha*

The better you become at stopping your thoughts, the faster this step will become for you. In the meantime, I can give you a tip to make it a little bit easier – begin with how you’re feeling and work backwards. Every feeling we have is the direct result of something we were thinking. Therefore, if you’re feeling sad, begin by stepping back for a minute, and asking yourself, “why do I feel sad?”.

Behind every negative thought is a lie about ourselves that we are choosing to believe whether consciously or subconsciously. A key step is to identify what that lie is. The lie could be that you deserve this or that you’re a failure. Whatever it is, the only way to combat a lie is with truth and right now is the time to seek out what the truth about you is. Once you have the truth ready to go, write the truth next to the lie. Write the truth in the first person and write it in positive phrasing. So, instead of writing, “I am not a failure,” write down, “I am a successful person who has accomplished many great things.” Slowly you will notice you are able to not only challenge your negative thinking but refocus thoughts through a more positive lens.



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AUDREY HEPBURN:

THE MOST  
IMPORTANT  
THING IS TO  
ENJOY YOUR  
LIFE, TO BE  
HAPPY,  
IT'S ALL THAT  
MATTERS.

”



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RELATIONSHIPS, MENTAL HEALTH, WELLNESS, **LIFESTYLE**







# HANDLING FEAR OF SUCCESS

By Kristen Sohlman, HBA, MACP (Candidate), RP

## **W**hat is fear of success?

A fear of success is a fear that you will accomplish all that you set out to, but that you still will not feel happy, content, or satisfied once you reach your goal. It is a belief that you are undeserving of all the good things and recognition that come your way as a result of your accomplishments and successes. It is the opposite of a fear of failure, in that fear of failure is the fear of making mistakes and losing approval.

Fear of success is the fear of accomplishment and being recognized and honoured. A fear of success is a lack of belief in your own ability to sustain your progress in your life, and the fear that your progress can self-destruct at any time. A fear of success can result in a lack of effort to achieve goals you have

set for yourself, can result in self-destructive behaviour, may affect your ability to make healthy decisions, may result in a lack of motivation to grow, achieve, and to succeed.

## *What is success?*

**S**uppressing anxieties of not being good enough.

**U**niting all talents and virtues for a greater good.

**C**onfronting and dismissing existing fears in an appropriate way.

**C**hance to triumph over competition without feeling unworthy or underserving.

**E**xpressing views and opinions without hesitation.

**S**etting sights on a goal and achieving it with both sacrifices and rewards.

**S**teps that if completed always lead straight to success, rewarding those who persevere.

## *How do I overcome a fear of success?*

- Learn to celebrate your successes by giving yourself credit for effort, hard work, and sacrifices that you have made in your life.
- Learn to honestly appraise your achievements, success, and accomplishments.
- Accept yourself as being healthy, happy, successful, and accomplished.
- Do not give yourself excuses for being unsuccessful.
- Give others permission to give you honest and open feedback.
- Monitor your level of commitment and motivation.
- Visualize your life when you are successful.
- Give others credit, recognition, and support for their achievements, successes, and accomplishments.
- Practice honest, open, realistic, and kind self-talk.
- Accept compliments from others with an open mind.





## HOW TO HAVE A HAPPY WINTER

By Jennifer Robinson,  
MSW, RSW

Although the official first day of Winter was not until December 21st, living in Northern Ontario we are well aware that Winter begins much sooner than that (what is Fall even?) and whether we like it or not, it also typically lasts a lot longer than anticipated too.

It is no secret that Winter is cold, dark and snowy. It is often a chance for people to hibernate, stay in and wait until Spring. However, intentionally making an effort to engage in healthy leisure activities and practicing positive self-care can help you enjoy Winter and can also help boost your mood during these dreary months.

It is common that individuals' notice a decrease in their mood and energy levels during the Winter months and this is due to the lack of day light, colder temperatures and other lifestyle changes like eating habits and decreased socialization. A decrease in mood and energy levels can have a big impact on our day to day lives, how we interact with others and how we feel about ourselves.

The change in seasons can have a slight impact on an individual's mental health or in more serious cases people can develop Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) which is characterized by symptoms similar to depression which commonly presents during the seasons of Fall and Winter due to the limited amount of sun exposure and the colder temperatures.

Whether you do or do not experience severe changes to your mood based on the change of Seasons, it is so important to take the necessary steps to maintain your happiness especially during the darkest (and coldest) of months.

# HERE ARE SOME HELPFUL TIPS:

**Start a Winter Activity:** Although it may sound unappealing to spend time outside in the Winter, having something to look forward to, to practice and progress in can make being outside a lot more enjoyable. Being outside and exercise have many benefits to an individual's mental health and physical health which means a combination of the two can have a very positive impact on your overall well-being (and it gives you a reason to leave the house).

**Dress warm:** Being comfortable, warm and prepared can help protect your body and prepare you for the cold making it much more enjoyable. This doesn't mean you need to spend hundreds/thousands of dollars on winter clothes but having the necessities you need (hat, mitts, snow pants, winter jacket/parka, boots etc.) can definitely make a huge difference in enjoying the Winter months. Dressing properly to stay warm can help motivate you to get outside even on cold/dark days.

**Find an indoor activity:** Let's face it, some days are just too cold that it is probably a better choice to stay inside which means it is also important to also have healthy indoor leisure activities/interests to engage in. You don't want to feel like a prisoner in your own home, so even if you'd rather be outside, find some things you can do and enjoy inside! Engaging in healthy leisure activities is a positive way to engage in self-care.

**Increase exposure to day light:** In the Winter it can be hard for most people to get enough exposure to sunlight which is a major source of Vitamin D, which means that it is important during these months to make adjustments to your routine to increase exposure to sunlight or to regulate your Vitamin D intake in other ways. Vitamin D has many health benefits, one being that it helps boost your mood! Eating foods rich in Vitamin D (Tuna, Salmon, Egg Yolk, cheese) or taking Vitamin D supplements can help boost your Vitamin D intake as well as increasing exposure to sunlight.

**Plan for spring:** Planning ahead can be a helpful tip as well. Spring is often a chance for people to have a fresh start. It's a chance to do some cleaning/organizing, for nature to thaw and regrow. Planning for the season can help prepare you for the sunlight and warmth to come. You can do this by planning your garden, thinking of projects you may want to start and maybe redecorating/rearranging your environment or routine. Thinking ahead about potential positive experiences can help you get through those dark and cold days.

**Take care of your physical health:** This one is SUPER important! Making sure you are taking care of your physical health is essential to maintaining positive mental health. You can do this by continuing to eat a healthy/balanced diet, exercising regularly (inside or outside), drinking enough water/liquid and promptly taking care of any health concerns.

**Practice Gratitude:** When moods are low, it is easier for individuals to resort to automatic negative thinking patterns which can further worsen difficult feelings. Educate yourself on the thinking patterns/thoughts that contribute to your low mood and try and shift this negative thinking to a more positive perspective. One way to do this is to focus on the positive aspects of your life. Focusing on things that we are thankful for, looking forward to, proud of or grateful for can have a positive impact on our overall mood and levels of happiness. Since we are more likely to feel down in the Winter months, gratitude is especially important to practice and pay attention to during these times! (and always!).



# 5 Mood-Boosting Foods

By Maria Drohan, HBSW, AS Eng. (MSW Candidate)

Salmon is a nutritional powerhouse full of omega-3 fatty acids, a key nutrient that our bodies don't produce on their own. Research has shown that consuming fish like salmon with omega-3 fatty acids can even help ease depression.

## 1. Salmon

Are you feeling run down, irritable, or just a little 'blah'? Don't reach for a tub of ice cream or a big bag of chips. There's growing evidence that you can boost your mood by simply incorporating select foods into your diet.

Diet decisions that improve the rest of the body, also improve mental health. Try adding these five mood-boosting foods to your everyday diet.

## 2. Berries

Fruits are all good for you as part of a balanced diet, but berries are particularly powerful for the brain. Berries are rich in flavonoid, which helps regulate mood and improve memory and reduces inflammation.

## 3. Dark Chocolate

Cocoa is known to significantly improve cognitive function in elderly people with mental impairment. It's been shown to improve verbal fluency and several risk factors for disease, as well.

Adding this antioxidant-rich superfood to your diet will aid in better physical and mental health.

Almonds are a healthy fat, which boosts brain health. They are also rich in a compound called tyrosine, which has been found to prevent a decline in cognitive function, especially in response to stress.

## 4. Almonds

## 5. Spinach and Kale

Dark, leafy greens like spinach and kale are full of omega-3 fatty acids and are rich in magnesium, which plays a major role in brain function and mood.



# Mental Health Benefits of Yoga

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calm



happy



mindful



connected



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*By Jennifer Robinson, MSW, RSW*

According to the Yoga Journal, there are many physical health benefits to practicing yoga; improved flexibility and muscle strength, it perfects your posture, prevents cartilage and joint pain, protects your spine, increases blood flow, drops your blood pressure, improves balance... the list could go on...

Yoga is not only beneficial for physical health, it also has many qualities that can help encourage positive mental health too.



**It calms your nervous system.** When faced with real or perceived danger, the body reacts by triggering the fight-or-flight response which causes increased arousal and heart rate, and often even dizziness, nausea, and sweating. Everyday stress or anxious thoughts can trigger this response. Engaging in yoga practice can allow the body to calm down, slowing down heart rate, lowering blood pressure, and regulating digestion. It also allows the body to release tension and increase relaxation, which can help reduce symptoms of anxiety. The more often your body experiences this relaxed state, the more prepared it is to calm down when faced with stressful situations.

**It allows you to practice being mindful.** According to Webster dictionary, mindfulness is “the practice maintaining a non-judgmental state of heightened or complete awareness of one’s thoughts, emotions or experiences on a moment-to-moment basis”. Some benefits to practicing mindfulness include; reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety, improved memory, focus and mental processing speed, improved ability to adapt to stressful situations, greater satisfaction within relationships, reduced ruminating thoughts and improved ability to manage emotions. Yoga encourages individuals to focus on their own personal practice, to be aware of their body sensations, and to focus on their breathing, which is also a technique used in practicing mindfulness. Laying on the mat or completing poses can allow individuals to sense where there might be tension or pain in their body, to reflect on how they may be feeling, and encourages them to be present.

**It can strengthen the relationship between the body and mind.** Yoga has many physical and mental benefits and it allows individuals to recognize the connection between the two. For example, because Yoga encourages individuals to be mindful, by practicing being in this state during Yoga it can encourage individuals to be mindful in other aspects of their life i.e. being more aware of healthy eating habits, or recognizing physical warning signs, like tension in the shoulders when feeling stressed at work. Noticing these sensations or decisions could increase an individual’s self-awareness and improve autonomy, allowing them to make more informed decisions in

regards to their physical health. If individuals are taking care of their physical and mental health, there is a greater chance for improved quality of well-being.

**It encourages positive feelings correlated with improved happiness.** Yoga can encourage feelings of gratitude, empathy, forgiveness and can create a sense belonging. Being forgiving and eliminating self-judgement is a key component to yoga, as accepting what your body is capable of and providing it with compassion and care by making modifications to fit the practice to your own needs is highly encouraged during most practices. Practicing yoga can allow individuals to create a sense of belonging which can assist in finding value in life and also helps with coping with difficult life experiences and emotions. All of these feelings that Yoga can evoke can encourage individuals to experience these emotions in other aspects of their life, which can increase their overall happiness.

# Tidying Up:

By Jennifer Robinson, MSW, RSW

## Why Marie Kondo's Method of Tidying Up Could Help Improve Your Mental Health



If you use Netflix, you may have noticed a new show released in 2019 called “Tidying Up with Marie Kondo”, if you were curious like me then you probably watched the first episode and then decided to clean your whole entire house. For those of you who are unfamiliar with the show, according to Netflix, it is series of home makeovers in which world-renowned tidying expert, author and parent Marie Kondo helps clients clear out the clutter—and choose joy. Although Netflix made Marie Kondo more well-known to the general public, she previously already had a significant presence being an author writing about her expertise in tidying, de-cluttering. **Aside from the obvious benefits to having a tidy home, tidying/de-cluttering can have positive effects on your mental health as well.**





Marie breaks down the tidying process into 4 stages;

*Clothes*

*Books*

*Komono (miscellaneous)*

*Sentimental items*

In the Netflix Series, it shows how she encourages people to tackle each category one at a time, each time putting everything from the category into a pile in the middle of a room. She then

encourages people to take each item one by one and decide whether or not it “sparks joy”, this feeling is unique to everyone, she believes the more you practice this concept the better able you are to determine what sparks joy and what does not. If the item does not spark joy, she then asks individuals to thank the item for being a part of their life (practice gratitude) and discard of it. Her concept, Konmari™, places emphasis on being mindful and encourages people to make conscious decisions about each item they have in their home.

Tidying and de-cluttering can be a daunting task. Difficult feelings can arise when individuals feel like they don't have the time or resources to tidy. Although feelings of accomplishment can be present once the tasks are complete, knowing that it won't stay tidy/organized for long can often be discouraging for many people, preventing them from tidying all together which creates more clutter. Clutter can create difficult emotions: feelings of guilt, shame, and frustration can arise due to feeling unable to keep up with the mess which can make people feel uncomfortable in their own environment. This can interfere with one's ability to think clearly or feel calm, as it encourages negative decision making in regards to spending and food choices and can ultimately have a big impact on the nature of your home and the relationships within it.

Marie Kondo's approach does not shame people for accumulating a lot of things or for not being able to maintain tidiness, it is about allowing individuals to build a connection to their items. This connection allows individuals to hold more value for each object they own which in turn means they are more likely to take better care for it. Because each item in the home then has significant value, it is important that each place has a “home”, a place it belongs which helps people feel more prepared when it comes time to tidy/organize.

Whether you try her method, someone else's or your own, de-cluttering and tidying up can have many benefits on your mental health and over all well-being. But if you do choose to try this approach, let go of the pressure. Life is messy. Sometimes things are cluttered, and that is okay. Mindfully taking the time to find meaning in each item you own can allow you to feel more connected to your environment and hopefully let go of any feelings of guilt, frustration or shame, even when things do get untidy. To recap, **here are 5 mental health benefits of living in a tidy environment;**

1. Reduces stress and depression
2. Helps you make better decisions regarding spending habits and food intake
3. Improves relationships
4. Improves your sleep
5. Increases productivity

#KMHLOVE



KMH Staff Photoshoot 2018 with DZ Photography. Pictured (left to right):

Mandee Hochins, Kristen Sohlman, Jennifer Robinson, Seija Grant, Linda Kelly, Piper Rasmussen, Amanda Hampton, Kelly Graham, Elizabeth Perzan.





Recording our Mental Health Breaks with Dougall Media



Visiting Gammondale's PumkinFest



Celebrating Halloween at KMH



Trying our Holiday Mental Health Challenge



Hanging out with a therapy pup from St. John Ambulance



Hosting Seminars & Workshops at KMH



Celebrating Christmas at KMH



Volunteering for Operation Red Nose



Donating to the Christmas Cheer Fund



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