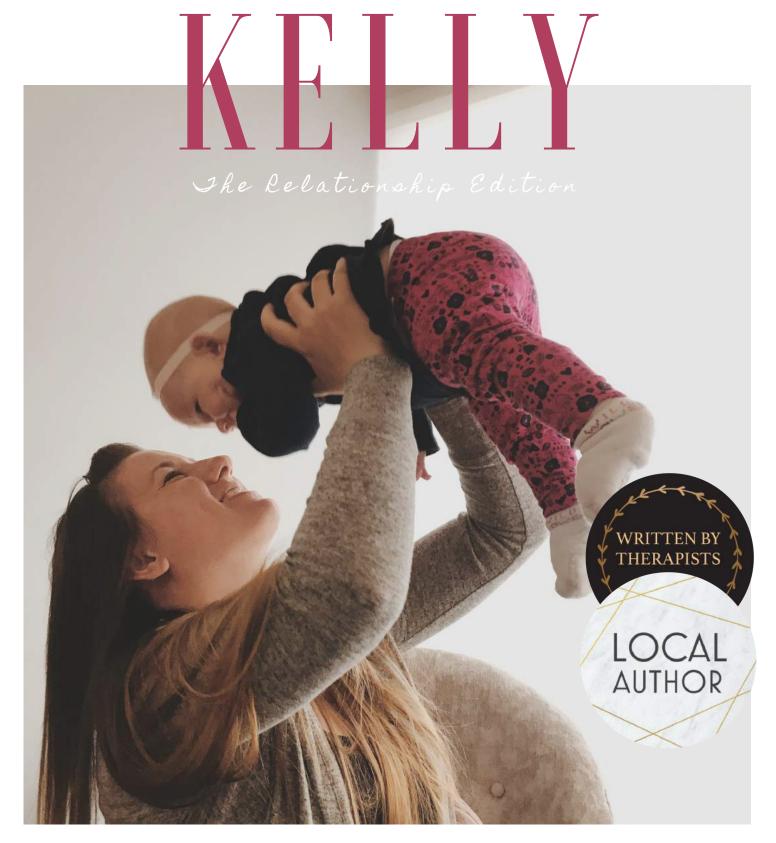
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RELATIONSHIPS ど MENTAL HEALTH /

ARTICLES, WORKSHEETS & QUIZZES

WELLNESS ど LIFESTYLE



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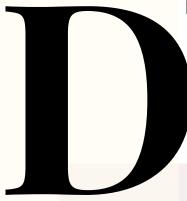
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ISSUE NO. 3

spring / summer

EDITOR'S Note





o you ever just get sad for the kid you used to be? It's so hard to be the in-between generation, the one that breaks the cycle of abuse, mistreatment, or even plain-old cruelty (often minimized as political incorrectness).

You get to go through the process of acknowledging what has to change, grieving what was lost, learning how to make things better, and fighting against the current that tries to pull you back into the comfortable and familiar.

You get the satisfaction of "being the change," ensuring that the next generation never knows that kind of pain and insecurity. You create a better life for them, but you can't recapture any of the time you spent under the spell of what you believed to be normal. You can't change the past, and you have to live with that.

This edition of Kelly Magazine is about relationships. It's about the ones that define us, challenge us, excite us, and betray us. Relationships, after all, are the connections we have that define who we are and who we will become.

We need healthy relationships to support us when we try to change our lives for the better, since we all know how hard it is to do it alone, letting go of everything you knew for the chance to be something more. This edition is full of stories and advice about how to face tough issues with family and friends in a way that preserves your connection with them while remaining true to yourself.

Our hope, with this edition, is that every individual reading this will find something that helps them to make peace with the past, to learn how to cope with the present, and to give as good as they get to create healthier relationships and to be part of an open-minded, flexible, and adaptable community of people.

So if you decide to "be the change," stepping out of your comfort zone with the hope of making life better for you and everyone around you, know that you're not alone.

We're with you.

Linda Kelly, MLW, PLW

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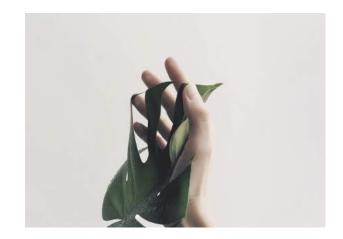
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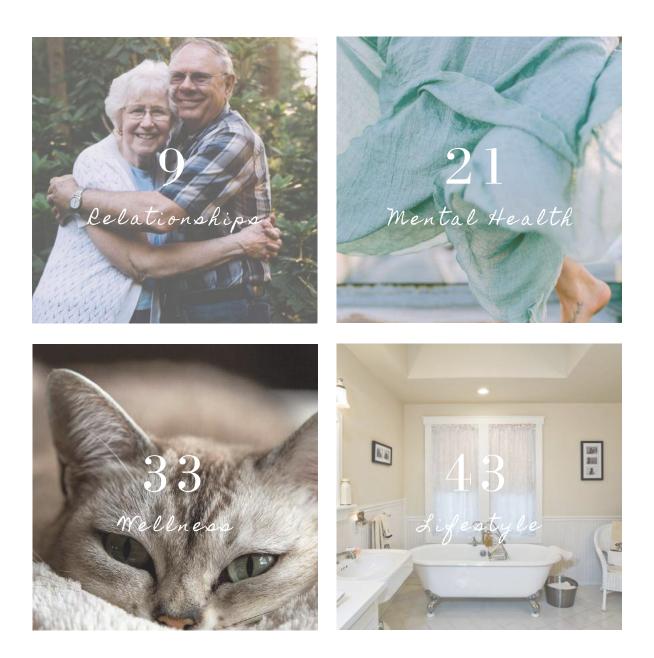


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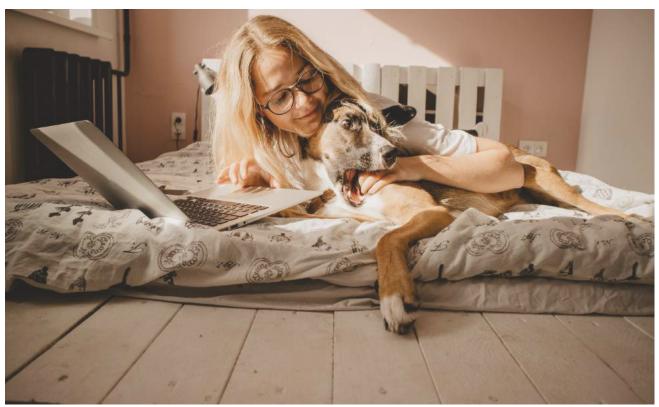
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Mental Health Tip:

WATCH OUT FOR CATASTROPHIZING.

Think about all the possible outcomes — not just the most feared ones that hold you back from taking action. And, remind yourself that research shows we tend to overestimate how long negative feelings will last after we suffer a disappointment.

Bad things can happen, and life goes on.

Relationships

01

Healthy vs Unhealthy Relationships

by Laura Groulx, BEd, MSW, RSW

Relationships are complicated. They all are, including ones with parents, friends, and colleagues, but intimate partner relationships can be especially complicated. This type of relationship requires two unique individuals, with two different perspectives, backgrounds, strengths, weaknesses, and even baggage, to come harmoniously together and share a life.

The thing is, individuals grow and change, as do relationships. Sometimes, a once seemingly flawless union can take an unexpected and confusing turn for the worst. When things start to go awry, how do we know the difference between a rough patch in an otherwise healthy relationship, versus the emergence of toxicity? The following are important elements of intimate partner relationships, broken down to explore a few examples that speak to the differences:

Communication

In a healthy relationship, open communication is necessary in order to create safety, intimacy, and partnership on daily obligations and stressors. There are two parts to healthy communication: 1) speaking, and 2) active listening. During healthy communication, each partner **listens to understand**, and is not just waiting for their turn to speak; this allows both partners to feel heard. Couples won't agree all of the time, but there should be a level of felt respect and emotional safety that allows each individual to speak freely without worry of repercussions from the other.

In an unhealthy relationship, an indicator of toxic communication is a sense of walking on eggshells, because emotional safety does not exist and one partner fears the other partner's reaction to their communication attempt. Various toxic communication styles may contribute to this experience. For instance, relationship expert Dr. John Gottman identifies the following communication styles as indicators of separation/divorce in his book The Seven Principles of Making a Marriage Work:

- **Criticism** (complaints against an individual's character or personality)
- **Defensiveness** (deflecting accountability, blaming the other partner)
- **Contempt** (hostile humour including sarcasm, eye-rolling, sneering, or mockery), and
- **Stonewalling** (disengaging from communication altogether).

Conflict Resolution

Conflict is normal. Even in a healthy relationship, we can lose our temper and say things we don't mean; it is how we recover afterwards and what we learn that matters most. Healthy conflict resolution includes taking accountability for your role in the conflict, genuine apologies, learning from mistakes to change future behaviour, and a willingness to compromise. If compromise cannot be met, or conflict prevails, partners are willing to work through the issues on a deeper level, for instance in couples counselling.

Conflict can certainly be toxic. When extreme, this can take on the form of emotional and physical abuse, which is never acceptable. Less obvious emotional or psychological abuse can emerge. An example of this is Trauma Bonding. If your partner picks unnecessary fights, and argues to win rather than to solve the problem at hand, it is possible that Trauma Bonding is occurring. Trauma bonding is the cycle of punishment (the argument) and reward (the make-up) that creates intense emotional bonds that can be difficult to recognize and detach from.

Influence

In a healthy relationship, there is give and take. Influence refers to the degree in which one partner takes the other partner's thoughts, opinions, and feeling into consideration. Shared influence equates to shared power; both partner's inputs are equally respected and valued. One partner may have more influence in one decision, with the other partner having more influence in another; this exchange of influence and power is welcomed by the couple, because it leads to solutions and best possible outcomes. Importantly, shared influence is necessary in order to compromise.

When one partner does not allow influence from the other, power and control dynamics become off balance, which can be a sign of toxicity within a relationship. One partner may seek total power and control over the relationship, not allowing influence from the other partner. To gain this totalitarian influence, multiple tactics can be used. Examples of such tactics include minimizing, denying, blaming, intimidating, creating isolation for the other partner, and solely controlling the finances. It is also possible that this can escalate to physical and sexual abuse, which again, is never acceptable.

Keep in Mind

Communication, conflict resolution, and influence are only a few elements of any relationship, and merely scratch the surface of the dynamics at play within an intimate partner relationship. If you are questioning whether or not your relationship may be wavering on the side of unhealthy, have identified it as unhealthy, or are looking for strategies to improve your healthy relationship, talking to a professional can help you to gain some clarity, define the issues, and seek proactive resolutions.

never argue again

3 TIPS TO CALM THE NEXT ARGUMENT

by Marianne Wylie, MSW, RSW

12

1. Validate

A lot of the time, at least one person in the argument feels misunderstood or dismissed. which causes the defences to go up or you end up avoiding each other. Validating how the other person is feeling, whether or not you agree with their response or point of view, can not only help your loved one feel heard and understood by you but also reduce the intensity of the emotion. You can do this by acknowledging the feeling they are trying to convey. For example, "You feel insulted that I did not include you in this financial decision," or "you feel used when I don't help out with the things you need help with."





2. Pay Attention to Body Language

The majority of the messages we send and receive from others are non-verbal. Being mindful of your facial expressions and body stance can go a long way. Leaning forward, keeping arms uncrossed, making eye contact, and keeping a relaxed face tells others that you are interested and open to hearing what they have to say. Whereas, keeping your arms crossed, sitting back and looking or turning your body elsewhere send the message that you are not interested in what the other person has to say. Remember, body language can speak louder than words.

3. Take a Break

If things are too heated and you have difficulty validating and using attentive body language, then taking the time to cool off is needed before anything is said that will feed tension. Pause the argument and promise to come back to it when both of you are calm. This allows both of you to come back to each other in a more relaxed and open-minded place. When our emotions aren't so intense, we can reason better and be open about what the other person is saying. It is important to come back to the issue and not avoid it. Avoiding it will only make the problem creep up again and likely end in another heated argument.

ARE YOU THE **PURSUER**

1

OR THE

DISTANCER?

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

So, before we get into the nitty gritty of things, let's start with the basics. What exactly is a "pursuer" and a "distancer" in a relationship? While we all go through periods of both behaviours, a less balanced relationship will have partners occupying these very different roles most of the time.

Essentially, the Pursuer is the one who feels they are consistently seeking quality time, attention, and affection from their partner. They are persistently trying to fix what they think is wrong and are anxious about the distance their partner has created. Do you often feel like you are the one constantly asking your partner to open up more? Do you find yourself frequently longing for more of their attention and never feeling fully satisfied? Chances are, you are the pursuer.

On the other side is the Distancer. This is the person in the relationship who responds to the pursuer by constantly withdrawing and always wanting more space. They see themselves as private or not very "mushy gushy". Often, we label this type as unavailable, withholding, or the "shut down" one in the relationship.

Whether you are the pursuer or the distancer, it's really not healthy. What this does to a relationship is it creates a neverending dance of wanting more and then pulling away, so continuously pursuing more and getting less.

Harriet Lerner, Ph.D from Psychology Today explains; "Pursuing and distancing are normal ways that humans navigate relationships under stress, and one is not better or worse than the other. A problem occurs only when a pattern of pursuing and distancing becomes entrenched. When this happens, the behavior of each partner provokes and maintains the behavior of the other." So, what do we do about it?

Here are a couple ways to break free of the toxic pursuer-distancer dynamic:

The pursuer needs to stop the pursuit. You can't control your partner's behaviours, but you can make sure you are doing everything you can for the relationship. Sometimes that means giving space and having faith that your relationship is healthy. As a pursuer, you may feel the need to seek affection and emotional connection, but it's important to realize that your actions can cause the distancer to feel suffocated, frustrated, and in need of some alone time when their need for independence is not being met.

Distancers need to make less distance in the relationship. This is a two-way street. Understanding your partner's needs is an important job for the distancer. It's time to have a "we" attitude. Making extra time and effort for your partner will help ease their anxiety and break this vicious cycle.

Slow down and think. You and your partner can ask yourselves "Okay, what do I want here? What does my partner need? What do I need?" Being able to talk about this in a soft, gentle way can be very powerful. It can break the pursue-withdraw pattern and replace it with a cycle that's supportive, loving, and nurturing.

Be understanding of your partner's needs. Understanding this common dance in relationships from both sides can help rebalance your relationship. We all bring our own pasts, emotions, attachment styles, anxieties, and insecurities to a relationship. However, if we can make the effort to understand our partner and their differences, we can develop happier and more loving relationships.

ATTACHMENT STYLE

Give yourself 1 point if the statement represents how you are in a relationship. See next page for results.

points

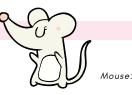
1. Are you constantly afraid of losing your partner's love or	
attention?	
2. Does your need to be very close to your partner	
sometimes scare them away?	
3. Do you worry that your partner doesn't really love you?	
4. Do you worry that you're not as good as other people?	
5. Do you get mad when you don't get the support or	
affection that you need from your partner?	
6. Do you worry about your relationship a lot?	
7. Are you comfortable showing your partner your true	
feelings?	
8. Do you find it easy to depend on your partner?	
9. Can you let your partner get close to you without being	
nervous?	
10. Are you able to easily show your partner affection?	
11. Does it help you to talk to your partner when you need	
support?	
12. Do you tell your partner about almost anything?	
V AA ma	

Kelly Magazine



Cat:

You tend to distance yourself from your partner emotionally. You live a more independent life, and may deny the importance of having a connection with people. Even in heated emotional situations, you have the ability to turn off your feelings and not react. While it is good to be independent, know that it is important to have a connection with other people. While a cat may be able to survive on its own, what fun is life without someone to share it with? Know that you can still keep your independence while being in a relationship, like a house cat and their owner. It can be scary to show vulnerability, but healthy connections with others can ultimately bring more fulfillment than being alone.



You are afraid of being too close and too distant from your partner which causes anxiety. Your relationship may tend to have many highs and lows. Because you can't run away from your feelings, this can create emotional storms or cause your mood to be unpredictable. You want to get close to your partner but fear getting hurt at the same time, like the mouse wants a piece of cheese but fears getting hurt by the mouse trap. You fear being abandoned but struggle to be intimate which causes you to feel trapped when you're too close or rejected when too distant. Not only do you have to heal from the pain in your past, but you have to learn to trust and be vulnerable again. Identify your fears and examine if they have any basis in your current relationship. Are your fears all in your head or is there evidence to support them? Focus on thinking before you act. When you feel hurt or rejected, think about why and evaluate what happened. Calm yourself by temporarily leaving the situation and taking a few deep breaths. When we are calm, we can better focus on the evidence of the situation, instead of just our emotions. If we act out on our emotions without taking time to think first, we could potentially damage the relationship. By evaluating your thoughts and emotions, and looking at the relationship for what it is (not what you fear it may become), you can begin to see yourself, your partner, and your relationship in a new light.

Total number of points from questions 1-6: 1-3 points: A 4-6 points: B

Total number of points from questions 7-12: 1-3 points: C 4-6 points: D

AC = Cat BD = Koala AD = Wolf BC = Mouse Wolf:

You tend to be fulfilled in your relationship. You feel secure and connected to your partner, while also maintaining your individuality. You can be with your partner while still being part of the pack or hunting on your own. Just like a wolf couple, you know that you and your partner can rely on each other when needed. You have open and honest communication and have no problems trusting or being loyal to your partner.



You are frequently looking for a partner to help complete you. Some may have called you "needy" or "clingy" in the past. You tend to hold on to your partner too tight for fear they may leave you, like a Koala hugging a tree. However, this ends up pushing them away. You're also quick to interpret your partner's actions as evidence to support your fears. For example, if you see your partner socializing with other people, you may think "they don't need me to have fun, they're going to leave me." These behaviours may be caused by hurt you've experienced in the past. Know that not every person is going to hurt you. Try to recognize the thoughts in your head and evaluate if they are rational or not. Is there any evidence for these thoughts? For your relationship to grow, you need to open yourself up to trusting again. While this can be a scary thought, it will help your relationship blossom.

Kelly Magazine

when JEALOUSY HURTS by Marianne Wylie, MSW, RSW



L ike all emotions, jealousy sends us a message about how we are reacting to our environment. Yes, it is okay to feel jealous. Jealousy happens when we believe that an important relationship is in danger of being damaged or lost. Sometimes overwhelming feelings of jealousy can lead to unhealthy behaviours that risk the health of the relationship.

To clarify...envy occurs when you want what someone else has. Jealousy happens when you're afraid of losing what you have.

While jealousy is normal and acceptable, it can influence behaviours that damage the health of the relationship. Common issues related to jealousy are:

- Urgent need to change your partner's behaviours
- Threatening to break up if your partner's behaviours do not change
- Invading partner's personal property (e.g., wallet, phone, social media accounts)
- Isolating your partner
- Feeling like you and your partner must spend all your spare time together

If you can relate to this, you are not alone. That's right, you are not alone!

However, controlling your partner will not take away the underlying reasons for how you are feeling. You can shift the relationship towards a healthier place by finding ways to build trust, allowing for a healthy amount of time together and apart from each other, supporting your partner's goals in life, and accepting responsibility for your own feelings.

It can also be helpful to ask yourself: Do you find that this is a common theme in your intimate relationships? What do you fear would happen if you didn't use the jealousy behaviours? If that fear came true, what would that mean? Is your fear completely realistic? Do you feel safe in the strength of the relationship?

You have a right to feel what you feel. You have a right to be loved, respected, and feel in control of your own life. Your partner does too. We can change how we feel, how we look at a problem, and how we respond to a problem, but we cannot change someone else.

Mental Health Tip:

CHALLENGE YOUR SELF-TALK.

Being as objective as possible, question whether what you're saying to yourself is really true. And, if you hear yourself saying "always" or "never," that's a warning sign that you're probably not taking the whole picture into account.

Mental Health

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by Laura Groulx, BEd, MSW, RSW

Grief does not come with a manual.

; O P I N G

GRIEF

It is a raw, powerful, and all-consuming emotion and experience. When we lose somebody significant in our lives, we will always feel that loss, because their significance never goes away. We never get over it. However, taking it day by day, we can slowly start to heal from the shock and trauma of the initial loss. Additionally, grief can result from more than just death.

We grieve when someone dies. We grieve when a pet passes away. We grieve when a relationship ends. We grieve when we lose our jobs. We grieve when we move. We grieve when our health declines. Essentially, we can experience grief anytime our life changes in a way that is unwelcome and out of our control.

There is no easy way through grief, but here are a few examples of ways in which we can help ourselves along the grief journey:



1. Bring it back to basics.

When I say basic, I mean really basic. For instance, focus on your breath – long, deep breaths, in order for oxygen to circulate throughout your system to help regulate your emotional state. Also, don't forget to eat. It's not uncommon to lose your appetite under extreme stress, but so important to continue to fuel your body. Focus on nutrition-packed meals in order to make the most of what you can take in. Further, If you can, sleep. Being in a heightened emotional state is exhausting. Listen to your body; if you need to nap, take that nap.

2. Ask for what you need.

Now is not the time to be strong for everyone else: you are grieving. If the people around you are offering to help in different ways, take them up on their offer. Don't be a grief hero, and allow yourself to lean on the people around you that you love and trust.

3. Don't give yourself a timeline.

Society tells us that we should be put back together after losing someone/something within a reasonable period of time. This is a myth. Grief Waves may hit you at different rates and strengths for the rest of your life, which is normal and to be expected. You may find that you are coping well for a period of time, and then out of nowhere, *BOOM*, another Grief Wave hits. There is no timeline to grief, so don't place expectations on yourself that cannot be met.

4. Stop listening to others' wellintended but unhelpful comments and advice.

People get awkward about grief. It's not uncommon that someone wants to express their condolences, but doesn't know what to say. What ends up happening is that what is expressed is the opposite of comforting. Examples of this would be, "I know how you feel". Wrong. No one can ever know how another person is feeling. Another example would be, "you're being so strong". This lacks empathy, and also may be reinforcing those unrealistic expectations that the person has on themselves. Just because someone presents as composed, does NOT mean they are not hurting and struggling on the inside.

5. Talk about it.

Grief can sometimes feel like a taboo topic to discuss; it can make people uncomfortable. However, it is essential to discuss in order to process our grief; we need to talk about it with the right people. Not only can it be therapeutic to talk about it, but it can also be seen as a way of honoring the loss.



HOW TO BE AN LGBTQ + Ally

and Help Make the World a Friendlier Place (from one ally's perspective)

By Seija Grant, MEd CP, RP

This article is an opportunity to explore the impact we can make on others, and to learn how to support our friends, family, colleagues, employees and fellow human beings as allies. How does this tie into mental health you might be asking...? By use of language (written, spoken and body) we all impact our environments and in doing so—other people. If we sometimes use words that hurt and oppress other people (knowingly or not), we are contributing to an unsupportive environment. There is plenty of research to show that living in a non-inclusive environment contributes significantly to mental health issues. 24 What does LGBTQ+ stand for? This acronym is thrown around a lot, so I figure I should spell it out. LGBTQ+ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans (umbrella term for Trans-Gender and Trans-Sexual), Two-Spirited, Queer/Questioning. The + is a beautiful addition which signifies the endless other possibilities on the spectrum and you know it, you are surrounded by people of varying sexual orientations, gender expressions, and gender identities and it is important to learn how to be kind, thoughtful, informed, and supportive of others.

How can I help?

Taking steps to use supportive and inclusive language can seem daunting but is really important as language is integral to culture and sets the context for any environment.

encompasses the fluidity of identification. If you are unsure what any of these terms are, please take the time to understand them and to inform yourself of their meaning.

Why is this important?

Well it comes down to human rights. We are all human, and simply put—we all deserve respect and kindness. Some things you may not consider if you are not part of the LGBTQ+ community is the impact that others can have on mental health. More often than not (sadly), LGBTQ+ identifying individuals face isolation, mistreatment, discrimination, stigma, and prejudice on a regular basis from people in their lives whether it be family members, friends, colleagues or employers.

What does it mean to be an ally? It means you are a person who is unconditionally accepting and supportive of LGBTQ+ identifying people. Whether or not It's really just about taking time to get to know people and understand their preferences. It doesn't take much effort to perform a Google search, read an article, watch a TV show (Netflix has MANY LGBTQ+ friendly shows), where you can hear people's stories and get to know more about their experiences as well as learn how to use language that is inclusive and supportive. Knowledge, understanding, and love are the antidote to ignorance.

We are all people. When it comes down to it, we have more commonalities than we have differences. I challenge each of you to consider the impact your language has on others, also to open your hearts and minds and to get to know people for who they are.

Ask the Therapist: How to build resiliency and keep calm and carry on by Kristen Sohlman, HBA, MACP (Candidate), RP



Resiliency means that you learn how to protect yourself and adaptively change in the face of difficult and stressful experiences. By being resilient you are able to recover more quickly from difficulties and can bounce back. Resiliency means not dwelling on failures, acknowledging situations for what they are, learning from mistakes, and moving forward. Sometimes experiencing hardships means that you develop more resiliency and you become stronger than you thought possible. It is important to remember that it is possible to develop resiliency no matter what life experiences you have had.

Here are some things to consider in order to build resiliency:

- Foster caring and supportive relationships.
- Don't worry what others think of you, and do not submit to peer pressure.
- Make realistic plans for yourself.
- View challenges and failures as opportunities to grow. Remember that failures are not a negative reflection of your abilities or value.
- Develop a good relationship with yourself. Be your own cheerleader, have confidence in your ability to make healthy changes, and develop a positive view of yourself and your skills.
- Develop your communication and problemsolving skills.
- Work on your ability to manage your emotions and feelings, including intense feelings and emotions, as well as your impulses.
- Learn how to manage stress within your life.
- View challenges and failure as an opportunity to grow. Remember that failures are not a negative reflection on your abilities or self-worth.
- Try to avoid seeing difficult experiences, or even crises, as insurmountable problems that cannot be solved.
- Remind yourself that you are not a victim, you are a survivor, and that brighter days are ahead.
- Engage in self-care and personal hygiene.
- Exercise!
- Get enough sleep!
- Have fun! Play! Laugh!
- Accept that change is a part of life and a part of living. Embrace that change may be necessary and may be just what you need in order to make a healthy change within your life.
- Make goals and make a commitment to move towards your goals.

• Avoid focusing on things that you cannot change and instead focus on the things that you can.



Self-Care Checklist Tip: Use a pencil and reuse this page!

Name:

Positive Affirmations:

е <i>э</i>	I a	111	01	,ea	1.							

Self-Care Ideas:

- 1. ex. unplug for an hour
- 2.
- З.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

Things I Love About Myself: ex. my smile

Things That Make Me Happy: ex. the birds singing in the morning

Kelly Mental Health

Why It Is A Good Idea to Go to Therapy

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



Why is it a good idea to go to counselling? Because there is absolutely nothing wrong with seeking help. Counselling is there to support people trying to cope with a wide range of circumstances. Unfortunately, there are so many misconceptions all over our society about what it means to talk to a mental health professional. So often, the need to talk about your emotions is taken as being weak. That stigma is so powerful that it often prevents people from seeking help in the first place.

But here's the reality: therapy is an incredibly useful tool that helps with a range of issues anywhere from anxiety to sleep to relationships to trauma. Continuous research shows that counselling is incredibly effective in helping people manage mental health conditions. Just being able to talk to someone without fear of judgment or criticism is a powerful way to better ourselves.

When friends and family aren't always the best sources of support or information, we often find ourselves resorting to the internet to solve our programs. Most of the time, neither of those options are effective. Friends and family can mean well, but they are coming to the table with their own thoughts and opinions that could influence the advice they are giving you. As a therapist, we make sure to approach your issues neutrally and learn to understand your thought process in order to give support that will truly serve you. A professional counsellor can help you work through just about everything. They go through years of education and training, and many of them have seen a huge variety of situations and experiences. You can always feel comfortable seeking help from a counsellor because they are as objective as it gets, and the best part is that everything is confidential.

The most important thing to remember is that counselling can be extremely beneficial to you and your overall health. Everyone deserves some time to focus on themselves. There are so many things life can throw at us, and we aren't meant to get through them alone. If you need to talk, we are here to listen.

MAKING ROOM FOR SW PAIN

by Lara Hollway, MSW, RSW

I have spent a great deal of time in my life trying to avoid pain. To numb it, drown it out, or make it go away. And I know I'm not the only one, as in almost every counselling session clients say the same thing to me: that they are tired of feeling pain. They want the pain to go away. And sometimes the only tools they have to make the pain go away (e.g., drinking, hurting themselves, and/or otherwise numbing themselves, etc.) are actually making the pain worse in the long run. They come into session hoping that I have another way for them to cope; they are hoping that I can offer a way that can make the pain go away right now, while also not making it worse tomorrow or a month from now.

Maybe you are wondering the same thing – is there a way to make this pain go away right now without making it worse later? Well, there is... and there isn't. It is definitely possible to reduce and even eliminate the majority of the suffering that you are currently experiencing. It is absolutely impossible to live a pain-free life.

Pain - whether it is emotional, physical, spiritual, or mental - is the sensation of hurt. Pain is your brain telling you "Something has happened. Something might be wrong". This is a very important message to receive: as living beings we need to know when things have the potential to hurt us. We need to know when we've been injured, or when we are in an experience or an environment that is harmful to us.

Sometimes it is clear that the pain we are experiencing is fine and will pass, like the burn of muscles while exercising, the pain of feeling fear before doing something outside of our comfort zone, the quick "ouch!" of coffee being too hot to sip. For the majority of people, these are experiences of pain without suffering – the experience of our brain sending the stimulus "something has happened, something might be wrong", and our response of "yep, this is a painful moment, and I will be fine."

Suffering, however, is when we experience pain and WE DO NOT WANT TO FEEL IT. It's when we do everything in our power to try to turn the sensation of pain off, or when we anticipate pain (thinking that something in the future might be painful) and do everything possible to avoid that potentially painful future experience. Suffering is also when we remember pain that we felt in the past, and react to it again, even if in this moment we are no longer experiencing the thing that brought us such pain. If pain is the message, suffering is our interpretation and reaction to the message. Suffering is the story of anger, avoidance, shame and/or frustration that we attach to the message of pain.

The thing about pain is, if you're experiencing it, it's already happened. The stimulus or message has already been sent, and now the only thing to do is to decide how you are going to receive and react to it.



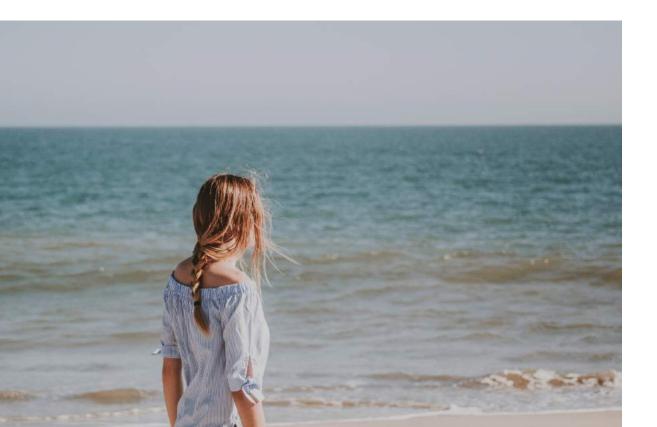
What would it feel like to stop and acknowledge that message of pain? To say: "This is painful. This moment right now. Something has happened and I am experiencing pain." Notice what comes up for you. Does your brain want to add a story about whether the pain is good or bad? About whether you are good or bad for experiencing this pain? Does acknowledging the pain make it feel bigger or smaller? What do you need to do about this experience of pain? Wait it out? Take action? Ask for help?

Sometimes by getting curious about pain, we can recognize it for the temporary sensation that it is and let it be. Sometimes our curiosity can lead us to realize that something is happening that needs attention, and that action needs to be taken. And sometimes, the pain message is so loud and overwhelming that it can feel like too much. If asking yourself what you need to do about your current experience of pain caused you to feel panic or overwhelm, or led to feelings of wanting to avoid or turn off, that is ok. There is nothing wrong with you, you simply need more support in this moment of pain than you can offer yourself right now. I would recommend seeking out external supports, such as a counsellor, to help you in acknowledging and healing in this experience of pain.

Working with pain is incredibly difficult, taking immense time and effort. I sincerely believe that the effort is worth it. Creating space for pain in your life without attempts at avoidance or judgment will ease your suffering. And the space opened up by not attempting to avoid or numb pain leaves room for other emotions and experiences that make life worth living, such as feelings of contentedness, curiosity, and hope.

If you are interested in reading further about accepting and working with pain in the moment, here are some books I enjoyed and found helpful:

Radical Acceptance by Tara Brach, Ph.D The Happiness Trap: How to Stop Struggling and Start Living by Russ Harris Full Catastrophe Living by Jon Kabat-Zinn





Mental Health Tip:

TALK TO YOURSELF LIKE YOU WOULD A CLOSE FRIEND.

A lot of times, we say horrible things to ourselves that we would never say to anyone else. You don't deserve that! Be compassionate with yourself, have your own back, and speak to yourself kindly.

Kelly Magazine



Lights, camera, confident!

Words by Kelly Graham, MSW, RSW / Photo: Boudoir by DNdark

hroughout my life, I have had trouble loving and accepting my body. I have been called fat, been made fun of for my acne, and had other comments directed at me that destroyed my self-esteem. So, you may be surprised to hear that I had a boudoir photo shoot, and loved almost every picture of myself. While the thought of having your picture taken (especially with less clothing on) can be terrifying to people who don't love their bodies, trying to see yourself in a new or different way can help you fall in love with yourself again.

Early last year I joined a local group on Facebook which showcased boudoir photoshoots. All of the women looked fantastic, and I thought about doing a shoot myself. But I was scared of how I would look. Would my lack of a flat stomach ruin the picture? Would I realize just how unattractive I am? In the year before my photo shoot, I was completing my Master's Degree and in a relationship. While both of those things brought so much happiness to my life, it did cause my healthy habits to become less of a priority. I was heavier than I had ever been and hated my body. My pants were tight; my shirts didn't fit the same; I kept wondering what my boyfriend even saw in me. With my Master's coming to an end, I wanted to give myself a graduation present. I was thinking about this boudoir shoot, but would I really want to pay for photos to show my body that I wasn't happy with? I ended up winning a prize on the Facebook group that put money towards a shoot. I figured it was a sign and decided to go for it.

Going into the day of the photo shoot, I

was nervous. I had no idea how these pictures would turn out. How would my body even look in lingerie? I sprung for the more expensive package and got my hair and makeup done, because why not. That helped give me some confidence. As I put on my first outfit and started to pose, I felt very weird and awkward. I wasn't a model. There's no way that I look good right now. All of these self-defeating thoughts were running through my head. And then the photographer showed me a few pictures on her camera. I couldn't believe what I was seeing. I looked amazing! My stomach didn't look like the mountain I thought it was. I looked sexy and hot! As the photo shoot went on, my confidence grew. She would show me more and more pictures, and I started to let go and have fun.

The more into the photoshoot I got, the more I remembered what I loved about myself. The colour of my hair, my eyes, my boobs, my tattoos, even my stomach looked good! I felt more confident than I had in awhile. I didn't care if I had gained some weight; I looked good! I got what I wanted out of the experience; to help myself see how beautiful I am when I was feeling very down about how I looked. That's why I did this photoshoot. Not for my boyfriend (although he liked it), not to "show off" my body to anybody; I did it for me. To see how beautiful I am, even when I believe I'm not.

While photo shoots can be scary, having someone who knows how to take flattering pictures can help you see the beauty in yourself that others see. It helps you see yourself differently, instead of staring into the mirror and picking apart everything you hate. Even when you think you look bad; your mind makes you think it's a million times worse than it really is. You may be skeptical and think "well of course with my hair and makeup done, professional lighting, nice settings, and photoshop I'll look good!" And why shouldn't you? You deserve to see yourself in the best way possible. However, you don't need all of this stuff to realize how beautiful you are. While all of this can accentuate your best features, that is still you in the picture. That they cannot photoshop. You look that amazing because, in reality, you look that amazing! For my shoot, we used sunlight, lingerie I already owned, her house, and she only lightly photoshopped the final pictures (shadows or blemishes).

She did not use photoshop to change the way I looked. Even just looking at the raw images on her camera, I saw how amazing I looked. Just me. Laying on a bed in the sunlight. All it took was looking at myself in a different way to see how beautiful I was all along.

While boudoir shoots may not be for everyone, my experience shows that there are a variety of ways people can learn to love themselves again. We have to get out of our self-criticizing thoughts and learn to love ourselves again. Focus on what you love about yourself (even if it's just one thing). Ask others you trust what they love about you. Even just dressing yourself up to look fancy by what clothes you wear or how you do your hair and makeup, can help you feel better. Find your own path that helps you see how amazing you are. If you can get out of your own way by doing something different (like a photo shoot), you'll see just how beautiful you are again.



HOW TO CREATE A COPING KIT

with Jennifer Robinson, MSW, RSW

When it comes to physical health, nobody thinks twice about having a first aid kit handy. It is smart to be prepared with the necessary tools you may need in case of an emergency. Why can't we do the same with our mental health? This brief article explains how creating a coping kit can be helpful when faced with difficult emotions or a psychological emergency.

When people become overwhelmed by difficult emotions or thoughts it can feel intolerable. Sometimes even when we know deep down what we need to do in the moment to calm ourselves, we are so distressed that we can't think straight! Planning ahead and having a "coping kit" can assist you in tolerating these moments. A coping kit can be a container, a bag or whatever it is that you prefer, that is filled with items that can help you cope in the moment.

Suggestions of items to put in your coping kit:

Use Your 5 Senses. Put things in your coping kit that are comforting and allow you to self-soothe by utilizing your senses, grounding yourself back into the present moment. Some ideas:

si	ght:	smell:	touch:
	 pictures of your pet, family or friends Pictures of your favorite vacation location or one you'd love to visit A motivational quote A favorite book or magazine 	 Your favorite perfume/scent (or the scent of someone who brings your comfort) A candle or body lotion with a soothing scent Essential oils 	 Bubble wrap Soft fabric Fidget toy Stress ball Wool socks Play- Doh or clay
Tea	taste: Gum Hard candy/ sour candy mints Coffee/juice packet Your favorite tea	 hear: IPod with a playlist of your favorite songs Recording of a comforting voice A guided meditation on a recording device 	
Activities you can include: Put some of your favorite activities in your coping kit, use them as diversions from your unwanted thoughts/emotions or jot your thoughts into a journal to help you process them:		activities: • A journal and a pen • A coloring book and pencil crayons • A crossword • Sudoku • Phone applications for coping (Headspace, MindShift) • A puzzle • Handouts with reminders of relaxation techniques, or thought restructuring techniques	
tips: . Decorate	this box/bag/container to fit your personality!		

- Remember to put healthy/helpful items that will make you feel better, not worse!
- You can also put a list of names and numbers of your support system in your kit, to remind you that you have people who can offer you comfort and support.
- Put any of these suggested items in your kit OR items that are completely different. This is for YOU therefore YOU will be able to decide what content will be most helpful in moments of distress.

Kelly Mental Health

build

YOUR OWN GOPING TOOL KIT

Include items in your tool kit that will help you calm down when you feel sad, angry and scared. Let's explore some options by thinking of items that soothe you/calm you down (think about your 5 senses: touch, taste, hear, smell, see).

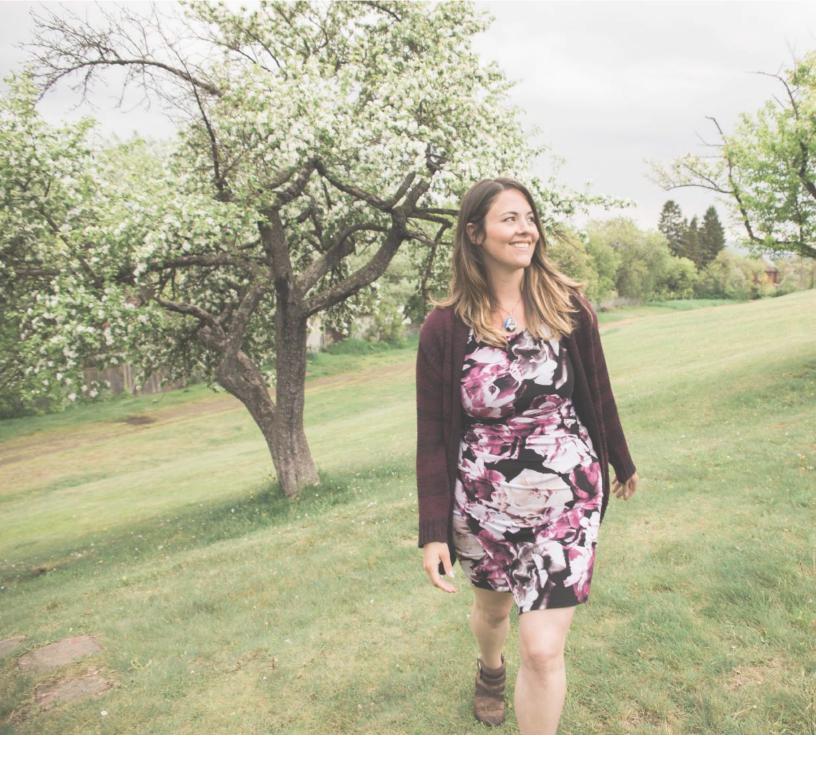
touch	taste	smell
		Which other items
see	hear	could you include in your kit?
		your kit!
		your ku:
		-

Kelly Mental Health

Linda Kelly, MSW, RSW:

Ignoring Our Progress

I still have a long way to go...



D

o you ever see progress pictures for weight loss or bodybuilding? Despite the incredible progress and effort put towards their goals, the tag line is almost always the same: *"I know I still have a long way to go..."*

Why do we do that? Is it because we're worried that being proud will jinx our progress and we'll lose momentum? Or is it the tendency to discount the positive because we can't let ourselves be happy with what we've done?

At one point in my life, I lost 90 lbs (275-185). Incredible, right? That's like a whole (small) person fell off my body. And I worked for it. My lifestyle changed. I learned a lot, changed a lot, and stayed consistent. Even so, I constantly said that I still had a long way to go.



After I became a parent and my lifestyle changed again, limiting my energy and severely increasing my stress, I gained about half of it back. For years I LONGED for the days when I weighed 185. Even 190 – I would have been happy forever with that, I told myself. I beat myself up for failing. I could never consider it a win in the long run that I kept half of it off. Every time I'd see pictures of 190 me, I'd marvel at how tall and slim I looked, and feel terrible about what I had become.

Years later, I lost weight again, this time 70 lbs. It was amazing! I felt like I was fully in control, and I felt like finally, I've solved the riddle! I dropped to 160. I haven't been this weight since grade 7, I told everyone. I even humble-bragged (I know, I know). I'd go on fitness sites and try to figure out what the lowest weight could be for my height, and I'd fantasize about what that would be like because finally I'd be a normal weight for the first time in my life. I'd look at pictures from when I was 190 and notice flaws that I hadn't seen before.

And then, the numbers started to climb again. And I stopped bringing attention to myself. I had days where I'd feel tremendously uncomfortable in my clothes. I wore more layers to hide it, and became fixated on what I l had looked like when I was 160, as it became completely and utterly out of reach.

And today, at 182, which was to me an unreachable weight for most of my life, I realize how I completely discounted the progress I made because it was too easy to believe that it was not good enough. Where I would have killed to be this weight after I became a parent, I often saw it as failure, which then increased my stress levels and made progress all but impossible.

Is this body dysmorphia? Perhaps, though it doesn't interfere with my functioning. Is this about body positivity? Not necessarily. I think there's a big difference between celebrating who you are and avoiding and ignoring the signs of an unhealthy lifestyle.

This is about our tendency to discount the positive, to assign blame without considering all of the factors involved, and to think in terms of all-or-nothing. At the end of the day, what has all of that negative thinking accomplished?

It has merely caused suffering and prolonged the issues. It has increased feelings of inadequacy, stress, exhaustion, and hopelessness.

It has negatively impacted everyone around me, because of the limitations I place on myself out of some strange and ridiculous belief that a little extra weight makes me unwanted by society. And it's not true, because that conclusion is just. too. simple.

The next time you hear that line, "I've got a long way to go..." whether it's someone talking weight loss, battling addictions, developing their career, or learning a new skill, remember that this is a state of mind that has us focusing on what's wrong rather than what we have accomplished, and it takes away from our ability to do well.

Notice, and celebrate the positive. It's the effort and the willingness to try that makes you exceptional.

Mental Health Tip:

REMEMBER, PEOPLE ARE PEOPLE.

Avoiding social comparisons can help improve satisfaction with your own body-image. Realize that we are all just people, with various quirks and insecurities. Don't let your concerns about others dull your shine!



$H \ O \ W \quad T \ O$

DECATASTROPHIZE

Tip: Use a pencil and reuse this page!

Cognitive distortions are ways that our mind convinces us of something that isn't really true. These inaccurate thoughts are usually used to reinforce negative thinking or emotions; telling ourselves things that sound rational and accurate, but really only serve to keep us feeling bad about ourselves.

What is worrying you? Why are you worried about it?	How likely is it that your worries will come true? Has it happened before? Has it happened to someone else? Is it common or uncommon?			
If it does come true, what is the absolute worst that can happen? Be careful not to exaggerate.	If it does come true, what will most likely happen? Will it <i>really</i> be the end of the world?			
If it does come true, will you be okay				
In 1 week? % In 1 month	? % In 1 year? %			

Kelly Mental Health

What to do when you are feeling stuck or uncertain in your career

by Jennifer Robinson, MSW, RSW



Aving reservations about what to do as a career is normal no matter what stage of life you're at. Some lucky people find their passion at a young age, however, it's not realistic for everyone to expect that. Experiences, opportunities, resources, supports and values as well as your own self-awareness are important factors in being able to confidently know what career is a good fit for you. And still these factors can all change over time, altering your career goals (sometimes many times).

If you are feeling stuck or uncertain about which direction you want to go or about the job you are currently in, consider:

Don't let the opinions of others dictate your decisions

Another important thing to consider is the impact others have on your decisions regarding employment. There will always be people who make you question your career; is it a good fit? Am I making enough money? Is money what is most important? Will this business survive? Am I even making a difference?

Sometimes caring individuals tell us what they think is best for us. However, if we feed into their perspectives too much, they can alter our own values, beliefs, and employment-related decisions, sometimes leading to resentment, confusion, and discontent if those choices don't work for us. That's not to say that another person's point of view is never helpful because sometimes we do need someone unbiased or distant from the situation to give us a clearer perspective. Still listen and consider their advice, but keep in mind what it is YOU want. Listen to your values, be assertive with your needs and put yourself first. You are the one who will have to live with the decisions you make and holding onto blame towards others for a decision that didn't work out is an unhealthy way to project feelings of disappointment. Ultimately the decision is up to you. Even if you later realize the employment or career decision is not working out, it does not have to be permanent. 46

Know your values and let them guide you.

Choices we make are a reflection of what we value, however sometimes being bombarded by others' opinions, suggestions, and advice can persuade us into making decisions that do not reflect what we believe in most. If we listen to our values and allow them to help guide us, we can make meaningful decisions which can enhance our overall satisfaction with life. However, if we don't act in accordance with our values we can be left with a feeling of dissatisfaction. When choosing a career or making a change to your professional life it is important to consider this.

Ask yourself, what do you value in employment? (i.e. making a difference in the community? Maintaining work/life balance? Using creativity?) And consider working with organizations that have a mission and values that align with yours, that act in accordance with those values. It is not only important that the job reflects your values in employment but that it also nicely compliments other values in your life. Do you value family with utmost importance but are in a job that requires you to miss birthdays, recitals and work excessive amounts of overtime? Or do you value creativity, but your workplace is resistant to change?

If your values don't align, this can lead to unhappiness in your career which can sometimes spread into other areas of your life. You may not be able to find something with absolutely everything you want and value, however, being aware of this can help you make decisions that meets some (maybe most) of your needs.



Get rid of the "shouldstatements"

When choosing a career/making a change in career, get rid of the "should" statements. "Should" statements are common negative thinking patterns that can contribute to feelings of worry and fear. "I should have applied to that other job, maybe I would have been happier", "I should have taken a different program in school". Thinking this way is unhelpful. It means you are focusing on the past and things that are unchangeable and are not focusing on what it is you do have control over currently. Making "shouldstatements" regarding your choices can leave you feeling inadequate, as if you are not doing enough or making the right decisions. Each decision you make has a reason behind it. Just because what you wanted a year ago or a month ago does not align with what you want now does not mean that you did anything wrong and that you can't take steps to make changes now. If you notice yourself thinking this way, take a step back and observe where this negative thinking is stemming from... try to look at the situation in a different perspective: " That job I chose not to apply to may have been a better fit...Maybe there will be other opportunities in the future or I can find something similar somewhere else", "I learnt a lot from the program I took in school but I think my interests may have changed since".



Take control over what you have control over.

If you are feeling stuck or unhappy in your role, take a step back and see if there are any changes in your role that could help you feel more satisfied. Maybe you have flexibility within your role or can adjust your schedule to better fit your needs, maybe simply sharing your feelings with a boss/supervisor can help resolve any problems that may be interfering with your happiness. Take control over what you have control over. Sometimes simple changes can make all the difference.

You can be fulfilled and find satisfaction by doing things you are passionate about, that align with your values outside of your career.

If you are in a job that does not fit your values or does not feel rewarding, but you are okay with that then that is totally acceptable too. Some people feel it's necessary to have a career that they find fulfilling, others do not. A job to some may just be a necessity to make an income and provide for themselves and their family and nothing more. You can find fulfillment engaging in opportunities outside of your day-to-day job that reflect your values and inspire you to grow as an individual.

Remember, you are never stuck.

You are never too old to go back to school or to change your career path. Don't let these common misconceptions prohibit you from doing something you love and being happy. You are working to live, not living to work. Regardless of the position you are in, leave the pressures of career related stress at the door each day and go on and live your life!

"You'll regret not having children."

by Linda Kelly, MSW, RSW

 Actually, no, you won't gou don't want them.

Going childfree is a more popular and acceptable choice these days. But childfree couples often face backlash from friends and family that view parenthood as a vital part of life. While good-intentioned, such fundamental disagreements often cause serious distress and chip away at formerly supportive relationships.

A brief foray into the online forums welcoming "childfree" individuals will leave many feeling stunned after reading what happens when confronted about their choices. Responses vary between general clichés: "You're wrong. You'll want them when you get older." (Minimization) "Your (husband/wife/partner/family) will be so disappointed if you don't have them." (It's your obligation) "My kids are the best things that ever happened to me!" (You're insulting my choices)

"Who's going to take care of you when you're older?" (Fear-mongering) "Your future child could be the one to cure cancer!" (Guilting) "You need someone to carry on the family name." (Why?!)

...all the way to outright abuse:

"You're just selfish!" "Your doctor should be fired/sued (some commenters went so far as to say KILLED) for agreeing to that." "I hope you got programt by accident."

"I hope you get pregnant by accident." "You're denying us grandchildren!" "You're not a real family unless you have kids. Why even get married?"

Then when people try to make that choice permanent, it's pretty easy to find rampant stories of discrimination and outright denial from healthcare providers. Women who have never had children or are under the age of 35 are routinely subjected to intensive interviews and dismissive, paternalistic attitudes about surgical birth control options, leading to unwanted pregnancies, distrust of the healthcare system, and trauma that persists for generations.

There are many reasons, of course, why the #childfree movement makes sense. But that's not the point of this article.

Bodily autonomy is a nonnegotiable human right. No matter how strongly a person feels about having children, threatening and berating those who disagree, or having a hand in them being forced to procreate is harmful and abusive. And it certainly doesn't contribute to the nurturing of a healthy generation of children. The real issue is when people, perhaps motivated by positive intentions, blur the lines between themselves and others, imposing their views without respecting that conflicting opinions are equally valid. Doing so means that we forget where they end and we begin.

So having children or not, vegetarian or not, pro-choice or not, religious or not, it doesn't really matter what the subject is. Attacking and criticizing the personal choices of others simply creates hatred and division among us.

If you feel strongly about having children, then by all means, have children, knowingly taking on everything that comes with the immense responsibility of being a parent.

A person who chooses not to have children has already thought about those responsibilities and has decided that there is more to life for them than parenting. And that is perfectly okay. It's the right choice for that person because it is a better reflection of who they are.

If we can get to a place where we understand and respect the diversity of thought and personal choices of those around us, our relationships will inevitably become stronger and more supportive.







Find ecstasy in life; the mere sense of living is joy enough.

EMILY DICKINSON



Kelly Magazine



"Kelly Magazine is

more than just articles.

It's about providing support and validation that we are all in this together."

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