

A Closer look at Mental Health!

Because a healthy mind is just as important as a healthy body.

Author(s): Harjot Suri

With this unprecedented year coming to a close, I wanted to write about a topic that is important to me - mental health. It's a topic that has been a challenge for many, especially with all the things we faced this year, but it's become more acknowledged and discussed. I have had my own bumps in the road, but I wouldn't be where I am today without them. In this article, I want to discuss some techniques that have helped me overcome challenges, and some of my own experiences. However, I do want to say that this can be a gateway to exploring your own mental health; don't be afraid to seek help should you feel overwhelmed from a professional.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

I have experienced feelings of anxiety and nervousness in my life throughout high school and university. Along with my personal obstacles, the transition to post-secondary education was a massive scare for me, like many others. It was overwhelming, and initially, I told myself to tough it out. I grew up in a community where the idea of mental health was frowned upon and a sign of weakness, but **it's okay to not be 100% all the time**. I expressed my concerns to the right individuals, such as my family and mental health professionals, and I decided to take the steps to better my situation even when it seemed impossible. I want to continue discussing mental health because of its importance and ensure it continues to be addressed.

MENTAL HEALTH & PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

If you feel any sort of anxiety or nervousness with this new start, that's perfectly normal. Going to list some things that can help you in any of these cases, and also when you just want a piece of mind:

Meditation

I personally cannot stress enough (no pun intended) how helpful it has been for me personally to meditate. I attempt to do this as frequent as possible, trying to do so every day. It's a great way to get a clear headspace on one's day or in the morning to prepare you for the day ahead of yourself. It's a great stress reliever and has proven to be a great way of self-reflection

Self Reflection through Journaling

Again, another excellent way for problem-solving and reflecting on situations that may be harnessing negative emotions in your mind. Whatever the case may be, it is a beneficial tool to get to the root of issues, venting your problems on the page, and find methods to deal with them. We can approach topics better when we can see them rather than always thinking about them.

Talking to a professional

If you feel overwhelmed and are facing experiences you need help with, talking to a health care professional can be a lot of help, such as a doctor who can refer you to further support such as therapy. I will be including links to some essential numbers should you want to reach out for more information.

Breathing Techniques

Many breathing techniques can help oneself calm down. Often, we can feel a lack of control of a situation, so the best thing to help is to gain control of our breath.

- The first technique consists of **breathing in for 3 seconds and then out for 6 seconds**. You breathe out twice as long as you breathe in. It also helps if there is progression to this point (for example, breathing in for 3 seconds out for 3, in for 3, out for 4, all the way to 6).
- The second technique consists of **flexing every muscle you can in a standard sitting position**, from your abs, arms, calves, and hamstrings. While doing so, you want to **take a breath and hold it as you flex**. Try to keep it for 10 seconds, and then release the contraction on your muscles as well as the air you are holding it. It gives a very relieving sensation.
- You can also modify breathing by chanting a particular word as you breathe out (this is done often in yoga)

Focussing on positive activities

These can include playing instruments, singing, reading, dancing and much more! Performing activities that can boost your morale and help channel your feelings can help better process them and provide a healthy outlet to express them. I personally really enjoy writing poetry or music, as well as playing the piano.

- Finally, a big way to relieve stress or any negative emotions is with **exercise**. Exercise has been reported in various studies to help reduce stress and anxiety and can cause a boost in confidence. Furthermore, it really helps achieve a state of relaxation.

Thank you for reading the article! I hope you found this helpful and took it away from it, and again, I encourage you to continue discussing mental health and its importance.

HELP LINES

The following services are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

- Good 2 Talk (for post-secondary students)
- 1-866-925-5454
- Toronto Distress Centres
- 416-408-4357 or 408-HELP
- *hold times may be greater than 15 minutes
- Ontario Mental Health Helpline
- 1-866-531-2600

Multilingual Distress Lines

If you need to talk to someone in a language other than English. Open Monday to Friday, 10 a.m – 10 p.m. Offered through Spectra Community Support Services

- **Mandarin & Cantonese: 416-920-0497**
- **Hindi, Urdu & Punjabi: 905-459-7777 ext. 2**
- **Spanish: 905-459-7777 ext. 3**
- **Portuguese: 905-459-7777 ext. 4**