

# UW Student Brings Mental Health to the Forefront with “Behind My Mind”

Shruti Bagmar  
Reporter

A campaign called “Behind My Mind” founded by Mia Chan in 2019 aims to provide a platform for individuals to share their mental health issues and their journey in dealing with them.

Chan, a pharmacy student at UW, was deeply disturbed by the increased suicide rate in 2017 and started discussing mental health with the people around her, soon realizing that even her own mental health had



been down for years.

She took the initiative by confiding in her friends and saw a positive change in her life as a result.

She has been spreading mental health awareness since then and participates in Mental Illness Awareness Week every year.

“Behind My Mind” also contributes to the Canada Mental Health Association in support of all Canadians to continue spreading mental health awareness and resources.

It was in October 2019 that she felt the need to start her own campaign in order to encourage everyone to open up about their mental health.

“Behind My Mind” aims to bring together many individuals who have suffered or still suffer from some form of mental illness, and motivates them to share their experiences and how they cope with their individual issues.

She said believes that every story is worth sharing because there are many people who could relate to you and you could make a difference by just being open

about your own struggles.

Lauren, a contributor to the campaign, described the state of her own mental health by saying,

“This doesn’t mean every day is perfect or that I don’t have days where I feel like I can’t do it anymore. I now know my worth and that I deserve to be here.” She shared her own journey to help guide others who may be facing the same obstacles.

Chan said anyone can contribute to the campaign, with many students at UW sharing their stories and reliving their lives in a way they’d never done before. The objective

of sharing stories is not only to normalize the prevalence of mental illness, but also to remind the affected that they are not alone.

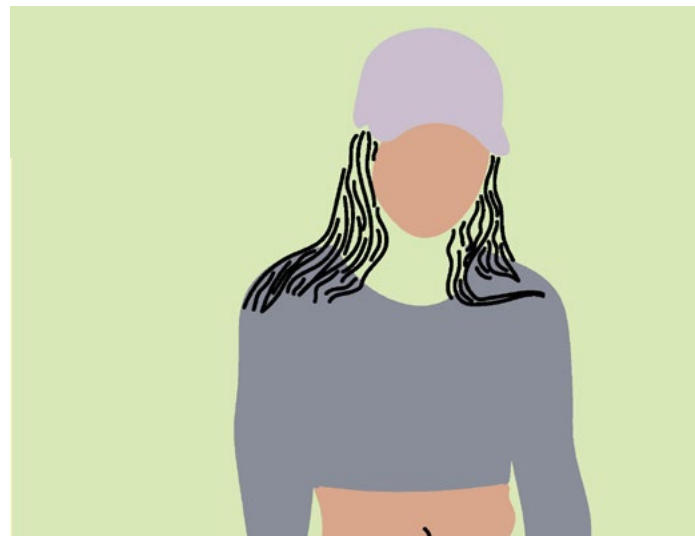
Every individual’s story is its own unique journey — a pleasurable form of self-discovery following a confrontation with their own issues.

They each describe why they felt the need to change their approach to life, along with the measures and steps they followed to

maintain mental wellness. A support platform like this is beneficial not only to those going through a rough phase in their lives, but also to those who have robust mental health. It helps everyone understand how people suffering from mental illnesses feel and think, and what they should do to help these individuals.

The name “Behind My Mind” is thoughtful and clearly conveys the objective of the campaign.

Every person is faced with challenges but



learns to hide their problems by putting on a strong and happy face mask. Chan says that its common for someone to be battling something devastating on the inside but appear strong on the outside.

As part of the campaign, participants post a picture of themselves along with their stories — portraying that they are more than their physical appearances and that a book cannot be judged by its cover.

She has expanded her team with the inclusion of other Pharmacy students and is delighted with the support and diversity of ideas they each provide.

However, it is essential to acknowledge that mental health problems do occur and are very common.

According to the World Health Organization, one in four people meet the criteria to be diagnosed

with a mental health disorder. Mental health issues can occur due to a variety of reasons which many might not have even thought about — a difficult year at university, social isolation, family problems, substance abuse, a sense of inferiority, etc.

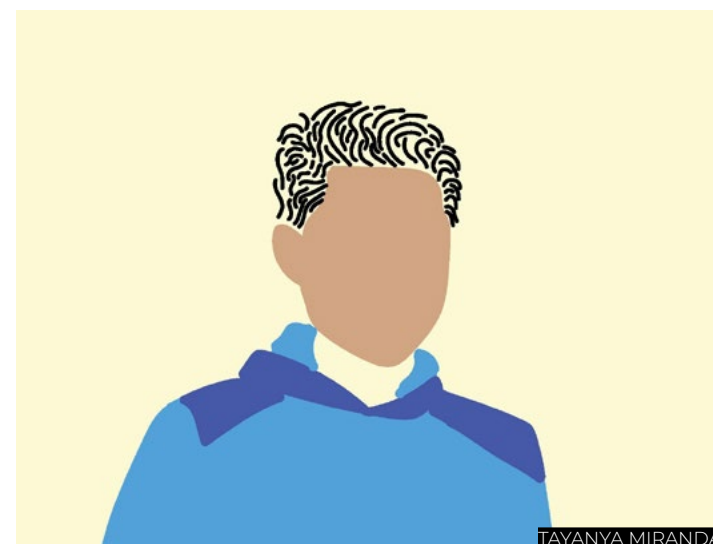
Chan said she wants others to understand that mental health is just as important as physical health and should not be compromised, and anyone who seeks therapy is not crazy.

Therapy aims to help affected people to solve their problems in effective and

healthy ways, and any negative labeling associated with the practice should be frowned upon. Chan also emphasizes that it is wrong to tell individuals who are suffering to just “get over it,” adding that “it creates an unsupportive environment and pushes them deeper into social isolation, making matters worse. If it were that easy, there wouldn’t be professional therapists,

there wouldn’t exist medications that alter the chemicals in your brain, and suicide wouldn’t be the second leading cause of death among youth and young adults.”

The slogan for the campaign — “shining a light on the realities of mental health and illnesses, one mind at a time” — encourages



TAYANYA MIRANDA

everyone to share their journey and to show others that they are not alone. Better mental health means better progression and a better quality of life.

Chan was overwhelmed with the huge response to her campaign and states that “even if we positively influenced just one person, I would be content.”

Chan says that her long-term goal is to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health, especially in marginalized communities, and hopes that one day discussing our mental health becomes as normal as discussing our physical health. More information about the campaign can be found at [www.behindmymind.com](http://www.behindmymind.com)