

GUIDE TO PEACE OF MIND

MENTAL WELLNESS



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I CAN DO THIS!

As you read this document, I want you to remember something very important. Healing is a full-time job, as is staying healthy, whether you are a sufferer or not. In my walk to healing, I quickly realized how difficult each day can be with every obstacle I confronted. Sometimes the battle seems never-ending. I am proof that it isn't. You can heal, you can find a positive quality of life despite stumbles and setbacks. Healing does happen, and it is not accomplished overnight. It takes loving support from here and above, doctors and therapy, hard work, and a multitude of life changes. It all begins with finding hope in your life. In my worst days, I never thought healing was possible. I now know that it is. Make your healing number one. With every step you take, remember that each step is equally important in building you as a strong and confident person. Life is neat that way, and we are resilient when it comes to healing. We should never give up, we should never lose hope, we should never stop reaching for more in our lives. Healing is exponential. It builds momentum, taking you faster and further. It starts with one decision, and builds up slowly and, when it picks up, it is unreal how far you can go. The amazing thing about healing is this. You will stumble, you will fall, but it is not the end. Steps forward are always great, but steps backward are not failures. They prepare you for a leap forward. I have learned just as much from my mistakes and stumbles. We find stability, we redirect, and we march on. That is why every single decision you make in healing is so crucial. I have never stopped fighting for my life, and it is amazing what has happened.

Help brought hope, hope brought healing, and healing has brought forth much happiness. It can for you, too. You just have to believe that it is possible.

How can I make a difference?

JUST BEGIN BY REMEMBERING - WE NEED TO BREAK BARRIERS

- We all suffer in some way
- Never confront/interrogate a staff member or a family member
- Approach a sufferer one-on-one, and love them unconditionally
- Ask people about "their" lives - get to know them on a new level
- That person that stresses you out probably needs more love and attention - ask them about "them" - then they aren't so annoying!
- No one should have to hide such a severe secret (by living a lie)
- Get to know your family, TALK. I knew my family well - Mom, Dad, and my sister saved my life
- Get to know your principal/boss, although on the outside they look invulnerable, they are not - they are just like you, and under a lot of pressure. They need a friend
- TALK and try to understand each other
- We must know that we are NOT alone - hugging is healing
- If we fear, people suffer more - educate, learn, understand (no ignorance)
- Reaching out EARLY, getting help early prevents years lost
- It is NO ONE'S fault. Remember that.
- TALK TO ONE ANOTHER ... 1 question for every person you see / 1 act of kindness every half-day!
- Ask others about themselves (turn your eyes out, not in) - how can you increase trust and dependability with your staff or family?
- Unconditional love - love saved my life - overcome misunderstanding
- Do NOT ostracize ... BRAVERIZE one another (a word I made up!)
- We need to look UP at sufferers, not down - they are NOT LESS THAN ...

"1 in 5 suffer from mental illness.

4 out of 5 support them.

We are all affected."

WHAT CAN I DO AT HOME?

- Share a secret - have a time to talk about things you are afraid to bring up
- Talk about drugs, alcohol, bullying, and sex (say what??) with your children at home, YES! You should be the one to do these
- Get to know your family ... they are your best friends
- The more you get to know: higher level of trust, higher level of acceptance, higher level of hope, higher level of healing
- Ask your kids or spouse about THEM
- Eat dinner together, at the table, no TV
- Listen to peaceful music - during homework (if it does not interfere) or anytime
- Watch and read things that are educational (yes, movies too, as a family)
- Watch TV with a purpose - limit the time in front of the tube
- Mental Health magnet - especially teenagers - on the fridge - mental health phone numbers available and visible
- ALL prescription medications out of reach
- Get to know your doctor - watch for EARLY SIGNS
- Don't wait too long to get help
- NOT EVERYTHING IS a mental illness - it is quite normal to feel anxiety, sadness, etc., but if it begins to affect your quality of life, get help ASAP!
- Have opportunities to share challenges - at the dinner table
- "How was your day?" Positive things, but also difficult things
- Less technology - try for no video games during the week - NO technology before bed - what about a board game? So fun!
- READING, WRITING, COLOURING (calms the mind), EXPLORE TALENTS
- Websites easily accessible for mental health information, signs, symptoms at home
- With signs/symptoms, be aware, but do NOT panic
- Get to know other families in your community. Form friendships and share resources.
- Do not scare your children by sharing symptoms with them - Mommy, Daddy, or child will be okay - don't be afraid to talk about challenges with your children in age-appropriate ways
- Reflection of thoughts before bed - share your childhood stories

- Read a book or tell a story at bedtime - one that has morals/values attached to it. Are they too old? Well then, have them read you one, or tell you a story

WHAT WORKS AT WORK?

- A question or concern box in the staffroom or classroom
- Buddy up - find a work partner you can confide and trust in
- Get to know EVERY staff member on a level other than work
- Reaching for anonymous support - seek someone you can trust
- Get to know your staff ... they are friends
- When you really get to know your staff, you create a higher level of trust, and therefore, a higher level of acceptance
- Ask them about THEM
- Mental Health magnet on staff fridge - numbers available and visible
- NOT EVERYTHING IS a mental illness (quite normal to feel anxiety, depression, etc.) - don't make doctor time too late!
- Don't be afraid to talk to someone in a caring way
- With your staff members or students: emphasize READING, WRITING, COLOURING (calms the mind), TALENTS
- Bringing in health workers and survivors to talk to staff
- Reach out to principal and resource teacher, however, there needs to be more "go-to" people
- Get to know your staff and students on different levels
- List of websites easily accessible for mental health information, symptoms, signs - a mental health binder in the staffroom
- Do not scare your students or staff by bringing up symptoms - be delicate with this
- Making/brainstorming a list of how to make your environment safer

ULTIMATE GOAL: Show Compassion, Acceptance, Empathy, Sympathy & Respect

"I'm only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do something that I can do." - Helen Keller

WHAT ABOUT OUR CHILDREN?

First:

Ask your child or students what they know about mental illness.

Do you know what mental illness is? What have you heard about it?

Where have you seen it being talked about?

Do you know anyone who might be suffering from a mental illness? Can it be treated? YES!!

1. How can you tell if someone suffers from a mental illness?
2. How is a physical illness different from a mental illness? Remember, pain is pain ...
3. Should someone with a mental illness be treated differently than someone with a physical illness?
4. Many physical illnesses can heal. Can someone heal from a mental illness? What do you think is worse, a physical, or a mental illness?
(they are equal - pain is pain, whether it is from the body or the brain)
5. How can you be a friend to someone who suffers? What can you do to make a difference in the life of someone who suffers mentally or physically? We ALL deserve to be treated equally.
6. Who are some amazing heroes in your life? In the world? What makes them heroes?
7. You can make a difference in life. How will "YOU" do it?

SOME HEALTHY TIPS FOR YOUR MIND



Here are some ways to work on yourself whether you suffer or not. They really worked for me in my battle with mental illness. Make your healing a full-time job.

1. MEDICATION (NEVER miss it), PSYCHIATRIST, and SUPPORT FROM LOVED ONES

2. EARLY INTERVENTION - reach out for continual help

3. HEALTHY EATING - HEALTHY SLEEPING - EXERCISING DAILY - a daily walk is a good start - RELAXED BREATHING

4. AVOID ALCOHOL AND DRUGS - if you're on prescription medication, avoid both of these. Prescription medication **can lose its effect**, and damage can occur - higher levels of anxiety and depression. Doctor-ordered prescription medication will help you heal; drugs do the complete opposite. **Healing is way too important. Make healing a full-time job.**

5. Write in a JOURNAL, or just plain WRITING - SO therapeutic - look at me!

6. VOLUNTEER WORK - always give of oneself - your life will change forever

7. LAUGH - it really is the best medicine!

8. READING - is HUGE! Explore one of your TALENTS

9. BUILD UP MENTAL STRATEGIES - ex: fill a jar with loonies as you avoid acting on an obsession, or implementing a strategy that keeps anxiety from paralyzing you (going to a social gathering).

10. **BUILD A BALANCED "FAITH" LIFE** - this can be a spiritual faith with God, or having faith in your family members, your friends, loved ones. There is always someone to reach to.

11. **HEALTHY TELEVISION and MOVIES** - LIMIT THE TIME ON THESE

12. **JUST SAY NO TO DRUGS** - I am an activist in the fight against the legalization of marijuana, a decision that would negatively affect our whole country. Marijuana destroys lives, especially the lives of our youth, whose brains are not fully developed until the age of 25. After 25, it is just as damaging. Should marijuana become legal, promise me that you will **NEVER** touch the crap. It is damaging, it is a depressant, it kills our brain, and it is especially dangerous for those suffering from mental illness. Doctor-ordered prescription medication was a crucial part of my healing, and it helped save my life. Marijuana, or any type of self-medicating, would have destroyed it.

Join in the fight. Just say NO. Your life is too important.

SOME HELPFUL WEBSITES

www.chrisnihmey.com (my website)

Ottawa Crisis Line: www.crisisline.ca

WITHIN OTTAWA **613-722-6914**

OUTSIDE OTTAWA **1-866-996-0991**

Ottawa Distress Line at **613-238-3311**:

www.dcottawa.on.ca

www.cmha.ca

www.mentalhealthamerica.net/recognizing-warning-signs

www.mindhealthconnect.org.au/signs-mental-health-issue

www.nami.org/Learn-More/Know-the-Warning-Signs

www.psychiatry.org/patients-families

"One step forward, two steps back was often the case. This had to change. Eventually, it did. It became two steps forward, one step back."-Chris Nihmey