



Aionkwatakari:teke

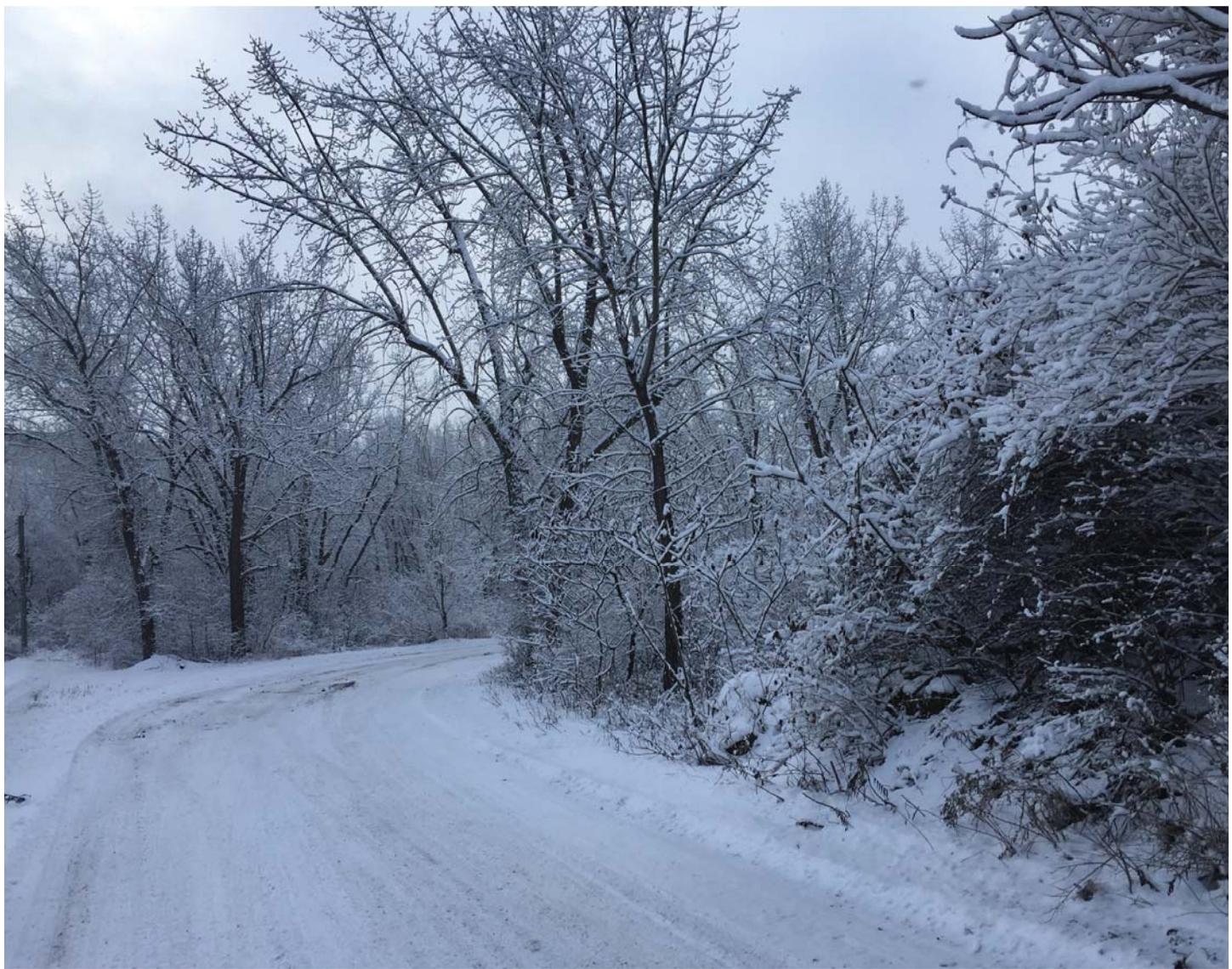
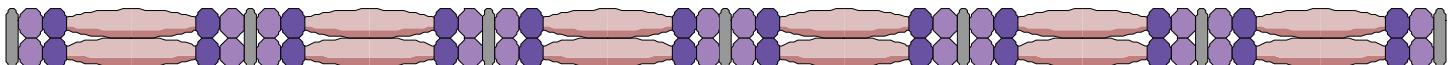
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Aionkwatakari:teke

Aionkwatakari:teke is a newsletter published six times a year by Communications Services of Kahnawà:ke Shakotia'takehnhas Community Services (KSCS). Our purpose is to provide information on health and wellness issues that affect Kahnawa'kehró:non. All community members are welcomed and encouraged to submit articles provided that they are comprehensive to the general public, informative and educational. Slanderous material will not be accepted. Views expressed in the articles may not necessarily reflect those of KSCS. We reserve the right to edit all articles. All questions concerning this newsletter should be directed to:

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This newsletter is intended to complement, not replace, the advice of your health care provider. Before starting any new health regimen, please see your doctor. Check out our Facebook page at KSCS Kahnawà:ke.

Editor's Notebook

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DOES ANYONE ELSE FEEL LIKE JANUARY FLEW BY?

Normally, January feels like such a slow month. Maybe it's the cold and the dark that makes it seem so, at least to me. But this year, January had wings and just flew by and we arrive at February.

I like February. It's a short month. Both of my parents were born in February and their wedding anniversary was also in this month. February also has Valentine's Day and Groundhog Day, a day on which Hollywood made one of the funniest movies ever. During a leap year, February gains an extra day. And February, though it can be snowy and stormy and cold, still brings us that much closer to spring. And each day gets progressively longer too. That's awesome. So, hello! February!

As always, thanks for reading and please recycle this newsletter once you're done with it.

Sken:nen,

Marie

Cover image by Marie David.

Graphic on page 4 by Marie David.

Photo on page 5 by Kat J/Unsplash.

Illustration on page 6 by John Kahonionhes Fadden/Six Nations Indian Museum.

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Bullying and Pink Shirt Day

BY CORINNA PHILLIPS, PREVENTION

THE NATIONAL CENTER AGAINST BULLYING defines the issue as “an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening.”

It's no secret that bullying is a major issue within schools of all levels and you may have even witnessed bullying in the work place. Bullying also occurs outside of these environments and technology has helped facilitate cyberbullying across social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Snapchat.

Cyberbullying helps the bully feel they are untouchable because they are hiding behind their computer or cellphone screens. But that's not the case. The Criminal Code of Canada lists several offences related to bullying — including cyberbullying — that could result in the perpetrator being charged with a criminal offence (Public Safety Canada). Offences include criminal harassment, uttering threats, intimidation, inciting hatred, identity theft, sharing intimate images without consent, and more. In Quebec, the National Assembly passed Bill 56: An Act to Prevent and Stop Bullying and Violence in Schools in 2012.

Bullying does not discriminate against age, race, gender identity, orientation, religion or environment. Bullying should never be a part of someone's story.

Over the years, there have been many initiatives to promote anti-bullying. Within our own community, the in-school prevention team at KSCS has taught the Second Step bullying unit in the elementary schools to provide children with the skills and tools to “recognize, report and refuse bullying” (Second Step). This is not just a message for the children, but a message for everyone.

Pink shirt day began in 2007 in Nova Scotia when two high school senior students, Travis Price and David Shepherd witnessed a younger student being bullied for wearing a pink shirt on the first day of school. Price had been bullied himself and wanted to make sure his peer had a more positive high school experience and that he was no longer targeted.

Price and Shepherd organized a rally and invited their fellow students to wear pink shirts in solidarity with the victim and to promote awareness on the issue. Price and Shepherd purchased 75 pink women's tank tops and distributed them at school the next day. Approximately 800 of the thousand students at their school wore pink to show their support. The initiative was successful and the bully was stopped. The event received media attention around the country.

The last Wednesday in February is now recognized as anti-bullying awareness day or Pink Shirt Day in many places around the world. KSCS invites the community to participate in Pink Shirt Day on February 26, 2020. Show your solidarity by wearing your pink attire and keep an eye out for students' Pink Shirt Day messages to combat the problem of bullying.

If you are the victim of bullying keep a record of the bullying (write it down or take a screenshot of it), don't keep it to yourself; tell a trusted adult, report it to school administrators or the police, report online bullying to the respective social media site and block this person. Don't be a bystander who does nothing. If you see bullying, step in and stop it if you feel it's safe to do so, or find an adult and report it. If you're an adult and you suspect a child is being bullied, talk to them and let them know they can trust you and they shouldn't have to go through this alone. Help them document and report the incident(s).

Resources:

Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868

Kahnawà:ke Peacekeepers: 450-632-6505

References:

“A Bullying Prevention Strategy.” Committee for Children, 5 Jan. 2018.

“Definition Of Bullying.” National Center Against Bullying.

“What Are the Potential Legal Consequences of Cyberbullying?” Public Safety Canada, 4 Oct. 2018.

“Bill 56: An Act to Prevent and Stop Bullying and Violence in Schools.” Government of Quebec.

These Games Are Like Cousins

BY TOM DEARHOUSE, PREVENTION

ATENAHA, THE SEED GAME, COULD BE CONSIDERED a cousin to Kaintowa:nen, the bowl game, that is played at Sha'tekohehne (midwinter ceremony). The purpose of Atennaha is primarily to help settle agreements within families, and the concept is to leave the outcome and decision-making ultimately in the hands of Shonk'waiatishon: This game can also be played for fun, or to honor someone who has passed away and had enjoyed playing Atenaha.

How to play: One person is chosen to throw the eight dice first. Dice are passed in a counter-clockwise direction, unless the game is being played to honour someone who has passed on to the Spirit World. In that case, the dice are passed clockwise.

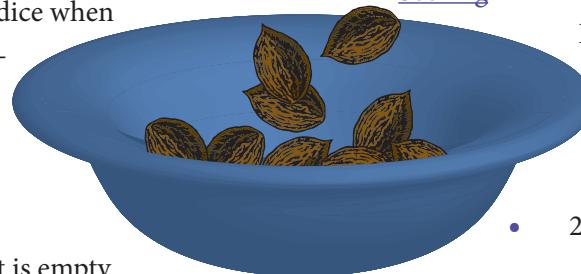
The player who is throwing the dice continues to throw as long as he/she is winning corn or unless he/she accidentally drops one or more of the dice when picking them up or when shaking them. The player uses one hand to hide his/her winnings and the other hand to pick up and throw the dice.

Play continues until the pot is empty.

At that point, any player who has not won any corn is out of the game. That is called getting “skunked.” The game continues, but now the dice thrower gets corn from the other players instead of from the pot.

A player without corn can continue to play as long as he/she doesn't owe any corn. If a player doesn't have enough corn to pay what is owed, then his/her corn is divided evenly among the remaining players and that player is out of the game.

Corn is not collected after each throw. Instead, the thrower tries to maintain luck by picking up and throwing the dice as quickly as possible. Corn is only picked up after the player's turn has ended. (If a player threw combinations which added up to 6, then the other 3 players give 2 corn



each. If 10 corn kernels are won and there are 3 players, then each player gives 4 corn because giving 3 wouldn't be enough.

Since, the thrower won 12 corn rather than 10, that is called a “windfall.” Players who are not throwing may shout “shaaaa” as the dice are being thrown to try to give bad luck to the thrower. Shouting “kahonta” (pronounced ga hoon dah) means “to make all one color” like a field and that gives good luck to the thrower. The game ends when one player wins all 40 corn kernels.

Items needed: 8 two-sided wooden dice (darkened on one side, natural color on the other side), 40 corn kernels which are placed in the center of the table (the pot) at the start of the game. **Players:** Six to twenty players can play. **Goal:** Whoever wins all 40 kernels of corn wins the game.

Scoring

Dice combinations:

- 1 white & 7 black - win 4 corn
- 7 white & 1 black - win 4 corn
- 2 white & 6 black - win 2 corn
- 6 white & 2 white - win 2 corn
- 3 white & 5 black - turn ends
- 5 white & 3 white - turn ends
- 4 white & 4 black - turn ends
- All 8 white - win 10 corn
- All 8 black - win 20 corn

Here's a resource about Atenaha.

Saadia, Zoe. “Atenaha, the Seed Game That Even the Deities Played - Pre-Columbian Americas.” Pre-Columbian Americas , 15 June 2014.

Bullying: How Can I Help My Child

BY CHAD DIABO, REPRINTED

Here are some tips to help raise the subject with a child that you know or you suspect is being bullied.

- Find a quiet place to speak to the child where you won't be interrupted.
- Tell them you are worried and that you want to help.
- Tell them that helping them to be safe and happy is the most important thing for you.
- Ask them if they are being bullied and if they want to discuss it.
- Remember that it's not easy to admit to, so praise them for managing to do this.
- Let them know that they have a right to get help and that you will help and support them in getting assistance. Assure them that you will not go behind their back or do anything to get help without talking to them and having their agreement. It is important that you make this commitment and honour it.
- Listen without judging. Be sensitive to the child's needs and fears. Sometimes, children who are bullied may fear your reaction as their parent or caregiver. They may feel that you will be ashamed or angry with them, they may feel that you will personally intervene with the bullies, or that you will tell them to stand up for themselves. Be aware of these fears and try to set them at ease. If you do feel exasperated or angry, remember that this is the effect that bullying has and that you will only make things worse for a child by expressing anger or frustration.

- Encourage and help the child to record and report any incident of bullying to you and a member of staff at their school, youth club, etc. Insist that the organization take action to stop the bullying.
- The child should never endanger themselves by standing up to bullies in a situation where he/she is outnumbered. If scared, they should run away and try to alert attention by shouting for help. Reassure him/her that it is far more shameful for a group of people to gang up on one person than for that person to get out of the situation.



If your child tells you who is bullying them, you may be tempted to go and talk to this person(s) directly or to speak to their parents/caregivers. This is a bad idea. Firstly, this usually make things worse for your child and gives the bullies more to humiliate them with e.g., "You can't stick up for yourself", or "You have to get your mom/dad to do it for you", etc.

Secondly, if you approach another child or young person and accuse them of bullying you may lay yourself open to accusations of threatening behaviour. If you confront his/her parent directly, you may both get very angry and end up in a situation that makes life more difficult for your child. Wherever possible, take action through the school or the Kahnawake Peacekeepers.

Some types of bullying behaviour are against the law. The Peacekeepers will take them seriously and offenders can be prosecuted. For example:

- Theft of, or damage to, valuables (e.g., jewellery, personal stereos, cell phones, designer clothing).

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The Importance of Sha'tekohséhne – Midwinter

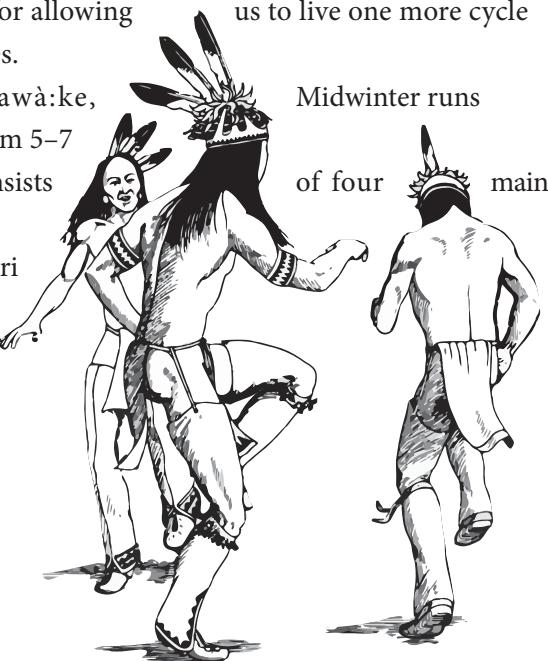
BY SKAWENNSETSI BEATRICE TAYLOR, PREVENTION

IN THE HAUDENOSAUNEE CONFEDERACY, EACH YEAR begins with Sha'tekohséhne, also known as the Midwinter Festival. The Big Heads (also known as our uncles) will go to houses (upon request) in the community to clean out the house and also to stir the ashes in your home. This is the time when the Bigheads (Bigheads or Big Heads?) would let you know that midwinter was coming and to prepare for it.

Sha'tekohséhne is determined by the moon cycles; Midwinter begins five days after the 13th new moon, making this the only ceremony that you can predict by the calendar. Midwinter consists of four main ceremonies that take place over the course of 4–14 days. The length of days depends on which Nation you live in.

Midwinter is a time for celebration and renewal. In the old days, we were celebrating the meat that the hunters were bringing back to the people and giving thanks to the animals who gave their lives to clothe and feed us. At this time, it is a chance for us to rekindle our spirits when we stir the ashes and we renew our medicines. It is also the time when babies born since the end of harvest will receive their Kanien'kéha names. It is a time for forgiveness and letting go of negative issues that may have happened to us during the past year and to give thanks to the Creator for allowing us to live one more cycle of ceremonies.

In Kahnawà:ke, anywhere from 5–7 days and consists of four main ceremonies: Kanonhwaro:ri (Stirring Ashes),



Ostowa'kó:wa (Great Feather Dance), Aton:wa (men's songs, naming ceremony and reinstatements) and Kaientowá:nen (Bowl Game). Depending on which Longhouse you attend, additional ceremonies may include medicine renewals and the White Dog ceremony. Some of our sister Nations offer dream interpretation, which is a ritual that helps people to interpret what medicines/ceremonies they may need to bring balance to their lives.

The Faith Keepers and the people who will be running the ceremonies determine which dances will be done on each day. The availability of singers is a factor in determining which dances are done as not everyone knows the songs for every dance. The dances that are done throughout Midwinter include Women's Dance, Drum Dance, Life Supporters Dance, Thunder Dance, Stomp Dance, Corn, Bean Squash Dance and Sun Disk rite. The birth of children to come is also asked for during Midwinter, to help renew the cycle of life.

Just remember this: it is a time for us to honour the Creator, by holding these ceremonies and playing the Bowl Game. Our lives have become so hectic these days, Midwinter gives us a chance to spend time together and appreciate what the Creator has given us.

Source of information: Darrell Shakowennnahwe Thompson and Mike Kanathohare MacDonald



Perspective

BY KARINA PETERSON, PREVENTION

THE OXFORD DICTIONARY DESCRIBES ‘PERSPECTIVE’ AS, “a particular attitude toward or way of regarding something; a point of view” (Oxford Dictionary). I’m going to describe it as, “the way a person chooses to view and experience their world.”

Perspective is personal. Everyone has a right to their own views on things – the news, social media, the weather, just life in general – and it is neither wrong nor right, it just is. Your view is yours, and you choose your lens. Your choice of lens depicts how you’re going to view and experience the world around you.

Having a negative mindset directly impacts your perspective. The rain is miserable. Mondays are the worst. Parking tickets you can’t afford are stressful. All of these statements have honesty in them and they are validated by our feelings. They are things that we don’t like, that make us feel stressed, that are hard, tiring, and uncomfortable, but it doesn’t necessarily make them the only truth.

The time and energy that we spend on complaining and whining about unfavorable situations leave us feeling even more stressed, more tired and it catches like wildfire. It’s also just as hard to extinguish. Negativity festers its way through every corner of our lives — through people, spaces, and community — where we choose to give our energy to it.

With a positive mindset, we validate our feelings about situations, by extending our truth to accommodate gratitude. Think about the above statements and let’s flip them. Rain can be miserable, but it’s also water. Water is our life-source — up to 60 per cent of human bodies are made of water (USGS, 2020), and we can be grateful for the rain for feeding our plant life, and replenishing our rivers. Mondays

can be hard, but we can flip it by changing our language from “I HAVE to work tomorrow” to “I GET to go to work tomorrow” — language can profoundly change perspective, and open the door to gratitude. You really can’t afford that parking ticket, but at least it’s just a ticket. Towing your car, and having it impounded would have cost a lot more and conditions would be even more unfavorable. Having a positive mindset changes your reality to a less-stressful experience, filled with gratitude — being thankful for what we have now. Positivity produces motivation, well-being, and good energies. Something worth setting a flame to.

Life is sometimes out of our control and things happen. Regardless, we still have a choice in the lens we see out of. Your perspective is yours, and it’s not wrong, but think about which mindset is going to help more than hinder. If something sucks, it really does suck, but things can always be worse, so what can we be thankful for now? We all deserve a life that is rich in experience, not poor in circumstance. Choose your mindset, choose positivity, choose gratitude — and everything changes.

Sources:

Lexico (2020). “Perspective”, Lexico Powered by Oxford.

USGS (2020). “The water in you: Water in the human body”, U.S. Geological Survey: Science for a changing world.

Building Better Mental Health

BY MELINDA SMITH, ROBERT SEGAL, LAWRENCE ROBINSON, & JEANNE SEGAL

USED WITH PERMISSION

LOOKING TO BOOST YOUR MOOD, HANDLE YOUR EMOTIONS better, or build resilience? These six life-changing strategies can show you how. Your mental health influences how you think, feel, and behave in daily life. It also affects your ability to cope with stress, overcome challenges, build relationships, and recover from life's setbacks and hardships.

Strong mental health isn't just the absence of mental health problems. Being mentally or emotionally healthy is much more than being free of depression, anxiety, or other psychological issues. Rather than the absence of mental illness, mental health refers to the presence of positive characteristics.

People who are mentally healthy have

- A sense of contentment.
- A zest for living and the ability to laugh and have fun.
- The ability to deal with stress and bounce back from adversity.
- A sense of meaning and purpose, in both their activities and their relationships.
- The flexibility to learn new skills and adapt to change.
- A balance between work and play, rest and activity, etc.
- The ability to build and maintain fulfilling relationships.
- Self-confidence and high self-esteem.

The relationship between resilience and mental health

Having solid mental health doesn't mean that you never go through bad times or experience emotional problems. We all go through disappointments, loss, and change. And while these are normal parts of life, they can still cause sadness, anxiety, and stress. But just as physically healthy people are better able to bounce back from illness or injury, people with strong mental health are better able to bounce back from adversity, trauma, and stress. This ability is called resilience.

People who are emotionally and mentally resilient have the tools for coping with difficult situations and maintaining

a positive outlook. They remain focused, flexible, and productive, in bad times as well as good. Their resilience also makes them less afraid of new experiences or an uncertain future. Even when they don't immediately know how a problem will get resolved, they are hopeful that a solution will eventually be found.

Whether you're looking to cope with a specific mental health problem, handle your emotions better, or simply to feel more positive and energetic, there are plenty of ways to take control of your mental health—starting today.

How to boost your mental health (yes, it's possible!)

Anyone can suffer from mental or emotional health problems—and over a lifetime most of us will. Yet, despite how common mental health problems are, many of us make no effort to improve our situation.

We ignore the emotional messages that tell us something is wrong and try toughing it out by distracting ourselves or self-medicating with alcohol, drugs, or self-destructive behaviors. We bottle up our problems in the hope that others won't notice. We hope that our situation will eventually improve on its own. Or we simply give up—telling ourselves this is "just the way we are."

The good news is: you don't have to feel bad. There are practices you can adopt to elevate your mood, become more resilient, and enjoy life more. But just as it requires effort to build and maintain physical health, so it is with mental health. Our inability to address our mental health needs stems from a variety of reasons:

In some societies, mental and emotional issues are seen as less legitimate than physical issues. They're seen as a sign of weakness or somehow as being our own fault.

Some people mistakenly see mental health problems as something we should know how to "snap out of." Men, especially, would often rather bottle up their feelings than seek help.

These days, we're obsessed with seeking simple answers to complex problems. We look for connection with others by compulsively checking social media instead of reaching out to people in the real world; to boost our mood and ease depression we take a pill, rather than address the underlying issues.

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Many people think that if they do seek help for mental and emotional problems, the only treatment options available are medication (which comes with unwanted side effects) or therapy (which can be lengthy and expensive). Whatever your issues, there are steps you can take to improve the way you feel and experience greater mental and emotional well-being. And you can start today!

Make face-to-face social connection a priority Humans are social creatures with emotional needs for relationships and positive connections to others. We're not meant to survive, let alone thrive, in isolation. Our social brains crave companionship—even when experience has made us shy and distrustful of others.

Why is face-to-face connection so important?

Phone calls and social networks have their place, but nothing can beat the stress-busting, mood-boosting power of quality face-to-face time with other people.

The key is to interact with someone who is a “good listener”—someone you can regularly talk to in person, who will listen to you without their own conceptions of how you should think or feel. A good listener will listen to the feelings behind your words, and won't interrupt, judge, or criticize you.

Reaching out is not a sign of weakness and it won't make you a burden to others. Most people are flattered if you trust them enough to confide in them. If you don't feel that you have anyone to turn to, there are good ways to build new friendships and improve your support network. In the meantime, there is still a great benefit to interacting face-to-face with acquaintances or people you encounter during the day, such as neighbors, people in the checkout line or on the bus, or the person serving you your morning coffee. Make eye contact and exchange a smile, a friendly greeting, or small talk.

Tips for connecting to others

Call a friend or loved one now and arrange to meet up. If you both lead busy lives, offer to run errands or exercise together. Try to make it a regular get-together.

If you don't feel that you have anyone to call, reach out to acquaintances. Lots of other people feel just as uncomfortable about making new friends as you do—so be the one to break

the ice. Reconnect with an old friend, invite a co-worker out for lunch, or ask a neighbor to join you for coffee.

Get out from behind your TV or computer screen. Communication is a largely nonverbal experience that requires you to have direct contact with other people, so don't neglect your real-world relationships in favor of virtual interaction.

Be a joiner. Join networking, social, or special interest groups that meet on a regular basis and offer wonderful opportunities for meeting people with common interests.

Don't be afraid to smile and say hello to strangers you cross paths with. Making a connection is beneficial to both of you—and you never know where it may lead!

Staying active is as good for the brain as it is for the body

The mind and the body are intrinsically linked. When you improve your physical health, you'll automatically experience greater mental and emotional well-being. Physical activity also releases endorphins, powerful chemicals that lift your mood and provide added energy. Regular exercise or activity can have a major impact on mental and emotional health problems, relieve stress, improve memory, and help you to sleep better.

But what if I hate to exercise?

Pounding weights in a gym or jogging on a treadmill isn't everyone's idea of a great time. You don't have to be a fitness fanatic to reap the benefits of being more active. Take a walk at lunchtime, walk laps in an air-conditioned mall, dance to your favorite music, play activity-based video games with your kids, cycle or walk to an appointment rather than drive.

You don't have to exercise until you're soaked in sweat or every muscle aches. Even modest amounts of physical activity can make a big difference to your mental and emotional health—and it's something you can engage in right now to boost your energy and outlook and help you regain a sense of control.

Tips for starting an exercise routine

Aim for 30 minutes of activity on most days. If it's easier, three 10-minute sessions can be just as effective

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Try rhythmic exercise that engages both your arms and legs, such as walking, running, swimming, weight training, martial arts, or dancing.

Add a mindfulness element to your workouts. Instead of focusing on your thoughts, focus on how your body feels as you move—how your feet hit the ground, for example, the rhythm of your breathing, or the feeling of wind on your skin.

Learn how to keep your stress levels in check

Stress takes a heavy toll on mental and emotional health. While not all stressors can be avoided, stress management strategies can help you bring things back into balance.

Talk to a friendly face. Interacting with someone who cares about you is the most effective way to calm your nervous system and relieve stress. Interacting with another person can quickly put the brakes on damaging stress responses like “fight-or-flight.” It also releases stress-busting hormones, so you’ll feel better even if you’re unable to alter the stressful situation itself.

Appeal to your senses. Does listening to an uplifting song make you feel calm? Or smelling ground coffee or a favorite scent? Or maybe squeezing a stress ball works to make you feel centered? Everyone responds to sensory input a little differently. Once you discover how your nervous system responds to sensory input, you’ll be able to calm yourself no matter where or when stress hits.

Make leisure time a priority. Go to a movie, take a walk on the beach, listen to music, read a book, or talk to a friend. Doing things just because they are fun is no indulgence. Play is an emotional and mental health necessity.

Make time for contemplation and appreciation. Think about the things you’re grateful for. Meditate, pray, or simply take a moment to pay attention to what is good, positive, and beautiful as you go about your day.

Take up a relaxation practice. While sensory input can relieve stress in the moment, relaxation techniques can help reduce your overall levels of stress—although they’re likely to take more time to learn effectively. Yoga, mindfulness meditation, deep breathing, or progressive muscle relaxation can put the brakes on stress and bring your mind and body back into a state of balance.

Manage emotions to relieve stress

Understanding and accepting your emotions—especially those unpleasant ones many of us try to ignore—can make a huge difference in your ability to manage stress and balance your moods.

Eat a brain-healthy diet to support strong mental health

Unless you’ve tried to change your diet in the past, you may not be aware how much of what you eat—and don’t eat—affects the way you think and feel. An unhealthy diet can take a toll on your brain and mood, disrupt your sleep, sap your energy, and weaken your immune system. Conversely, switching to a wholesome diet, low in sugar and rich in healthy fats, can give you more energy, improve your sleep and mood, and help you to look and feel your best.

Foods that adversely affect mood

- Caffeine
- Alcohol
- Trans fats or anything with “partially hydrogenated” oil
- Foods with high levels of chemical preservatives or hormones
- Sugary snacks
- Refined carbs (such as white rice or white flour)
- Fried food

Foods that boost mood

- Fatty fish rich in Omega-3s such as salmon, herring, mackerel, anchovies, sardines, tuna
- Nuts such as walnuts, almonds, cashews, peanuts
- Avocados
- Flaxseed
- Beans
- Leafy greens such as spinach, kale, Brussel’s sprouts
- Fresh fruit such as blueberries

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Don't skimp on sleep

Getting enough sleep is a necessity, not a luxury. Skipping even a few hours can take a toll on your mood, energy, mental sharpness, and ability to handle stress. Over the long-term, chronic sleep loss can wreak havoc on your health and outlook.

While adults should aim for seven to nine hours of quality sleep each night, it's unrealistic to expect sleep to come the moment you lay down. Your brain needs time to unwind at the end of the day. That means taking a break from the stimulation of screens—TV, phone, tablet, computer—in the two hours before bedtime, putting aside work, and postponing arguments, worrying, or brainstorming until the next day.

Tips for getting better sleep

To wind down, calm the mind, and prepare for sleep, try taking a warm bath, reading by a soft light, listening to soothing music, or practicing a relaxation technique before bed.

To help set your body's internal clock and optimize the quality of your sleep, stick to a regular sleep-wake schedule, even on weekends.

Make sure your bedroom is dark, cool, and quiet. Curtains, white noise machines, and fans can help.

Find purpose and meaning in life

Everyone derives meaning and purpose in different ways that involve benefitting others, as well as yourself. You may think of it as a way to feel needed, feel good about yourself, a purpose that drives you on, or simply a reason to get out of bed in the morning. In biological terms, finding meaning and purpose is essential to brain health as it can help generate new cells and create new neural pathways in the brain. It can also strengthen your immune system, alleviate pain, relieve stress, and keep you motivated to pursue the other steps to improve mental and emotional health. However you derive meaning and purpose in life, it's important to do it every day.

What gives you meaning and purpose?

Engaging work that provides meaning to yourself and others. Partake in activities that challenge your creativity and make you feel productive, whether or not you get paid for them. Some ideas are gardening, drawing, writing, playing an instrument, or building something in your workshop.

Relationships. Spending quality time with friends, grandkids, or elderly relatives, can support both your health and theirs, while also providing a sense of purpose.

Caring for a pet. Yes, pets are a responsibility, but caring for one makes you feel needed and loved. There's no love quite as unconditional as the love a pet can give. Animals can also get you out of the house for exercise and expose you to new people and places.

Volunteering. Just as we're hard-wired to be social, we're also hard-wired to give to others. The meaning and purpose derived from helping others or the community can enrich and expand your life—and make you happier. Schools, churches, non-profits, and charitable organizations of all sorts depend on volunteers for their survival.

Caregiving. Taking care of an aging parent, a handicapped spouse, or a child with a physical or mental illness is an act of kindness, love, and loyalty—and can be as rewarding and meaningful as it is challenging.

When to seek professional help

If you've made consistent efforts to improve your mental and emotional health and still aren't functioning optimally at home, work, or in your relationships, it may be time to seek professional help. Following these self-help steps will still benefit you, though. In fact, input from a caring professional can often help motivate us to take better care of ourselves.

Source:

Smith, Melinda, et al. "Building Better Mental Health." *HelpGuide.org*, 26 Nov. 2019. Edited for length. The article can be found here: <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-health/building-better-mental-health.htm>

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“Kids all over the world have to pay for mistakes we didn't even make. This is our future, we're the next elders, we're the next leaders. This is our future.”
 ↵ Autumn Peltier, 16-year-old Anishinaabe activist

Bullying: How Can I Help My Child

Continued from page 5

- Serious physical or sexual assault.
- Malicious or threatening phone calls, emails or text messages.
- Harassment and defamation online.

If a child in your care or one of their friends is experiencing bullying of this kind, you should help them to keep the evidence (e.g., photographs of damaged property and injuries; copies of malicious emails or text/phone messages, along with the date and time they were received and the email address or phone number that they were sent from); and you should encourage and support them in reporting the incident to the Peacekeepers.

“Listen without judging. Be sensitive to the child's needs and fears.

If a child or young person has been physically or sexually assaulted, contact the Peacekeepers immediately at 450-632-6505.

Again, you should try to get the child's agreement to do this. You want to support them, not work against them. If your child tells you that he/she is being abused during your conversation it's important to listen to them and believe them.

For help and guidance, or if you have concerns and are not sure how to act on them, contact the After-Hourse Response worker at 450-632-6880, after regular business hours and weekends and holidays.

If you suspect that your child may be abused but they don't actually admit that they are, ask them again what is upsetting them. Reassure them that you will help them no matter what the problem is and that nothing will change that. If you are caring for the child as a result of existing child protection concerns, report any worries that you have to the child's social worker.

Reprinted from Aionkwatakari:teke February 2010.

Enníska/February

- Psychology Month
- Recreation Therapy Month
- 3–14 Kahnawà:ke Winter Carnival
- 2 Groundhog Day
- 4 World Cancer Day
- 14 Valentine's Day
- 15 Intl. Childhood Cancer Day
- 27 Pink Shirt Day

Enniskó:wa/March

- Liver Health Month
- Music Therapy Awareness Month
- Nutrition Month
- 10–16 World Glaucoma Week
- 11–17 Brain Awareness Week
- 8 Intl. Women's Day
- 22 World Water Day
- 24 World Tuberculosis Day



Do you have questions or suggestions? Is there a topic you would like to see covered in a future issue of the newsletter? Contact us and let us know.

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