

Children's Mental Health Ontario's *Youth Action Committee*



Mental Health Awareness Toolkit



THE NEW MENTALITY

The Youth Action Committee

The Youth Action Committee (YAC) is Children's Mental Health Ontario's (CMHO) New Mentality committee. The New Mentality is a program that engages youth to improve mental health services for children and youth.

CMHO represents the providers and supporters of community-based children's mental health services in Ontario. It *champions the right of every child and youth in Ontario to mental health and well-being.*

The YAC's mission is to develop and assist in implementing a plan of action each year that reflects the interests and priorities of youth as they relate to the mission and activities of CMHO. The YAC will also work on a stigma-reducing project to raise child and youth mental health awareness.

This year, the YAC has developed and produced the following toolkit to inspire students to start talking about mental health!

**For more information on the YAC, visit:
www.kidsmentalhealth.ca**

**If you would like to get involved with the YAC,
contact Bronwyn Loucks at
bronwynloucks@gmail.com**

Raising Awareness & Reducing Stigma



1 in 5 Ontario youth struggles with their mental health. But the good news is that help is available and treatment works! However, stigma still prevents young people with mental health difficulties from getting the help they need.

The purpose of this toolkit is to provide students across Ontario with ideas for engaging their friends, family and fellow students to speak up about mental health and raise child and youth mental health awareness. Mental illness can affect anyone at any time, regardless of age, race, or gender.

Take time out to use the ideas in this toolkit to educate friends and family members on the facts about mental illness; how stigma can hurt people struggling with a mental health difficulty and more importantly, how you can reduce the stigma surrounding mental health.

To learn more about child and youth mental health, see the Mental Health Resources page included at the back of the toolkit. It is important to be informed about mental health if we are to raise awareness.

This toolkit also contains great numbers and places to contact if you or someone you know needs mental health services.

What is “Stigma”?

(And why should I care?)

Stigma is:

- a complex idea that involves attitudes, feelings and behaviour.
- a word referring to the negative "mark" attached to people who possess any attribute, trait or disorder that marks that person as different from "normal" people. This "difference" is viewed as undesirable and shameful, and can result in people having negative attitudes and responses (prejudice and discrimination) toward another person.

Adapted from O’Grady, C. (2004). *Stigma as experienced by family members of people with severe mental illness: The impact of participation in self-help/mutual aid support groups*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto.



Glenn Close

Emmy, Golden Globe and Tony Award winning actress

Posted: October 21, 2009 12:03 PM

“The mentally ill frighten and embarrass us. And so we marginalize the people who most need our acceptance. What mental health needs is more sunlight, more candor, more unashamed conversation.” *

But why should I care?

Consequences of stigma: **

- Prejudice and discrimination (in medical care, housing, employment)
- Negative feelings about self, e.g., believing negative stereotypes
- Avoid seeking help, keep symptoms and substance use a secret
- Social isolation
- Poverty
- Depression
- Loss of hope of recovery
- Suicide

* Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/glenn-close/mental-illness-the-stigma_b_328591.html

** Adapted from Pompili, M., Mancinelli, I. & Tatarelli, R. (2003). Stigma as a cause of suicide. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 183(2), 173-174, and from Kittel Canale, M. (2001). *Stigma of Addiction: Final Report*. Toronto: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

Language to RAISE AWARENESS!

Have you ever said "That's so gay" or how about, "You're retarded"?! There has been plenty awareness raised over how words such as "gay" or "retarded" are not a synonym for "stupid".

Now have you ever considered the terms "crazy", "psycho", "manic"? These words are also being used as synonyms and are derogatory terms which were originally meant to be terms associated with mental health; here is an example of this problem:

When a pizza restaurant has a sale on a Monday they call it: "Manic Mondays". The word "manic" is derived from the Greek word "mania", meaning "madness" or "frenzy". When an individual is displaying manic behaviour they may have a mood disorder (energetic and excited), or be intoxicated by drugs.

Here we've provided samples of alternative words you can use. You can also add any other offensive terms you can think of and come up with an alternative term.

Offensive Word	Alternative Term
Gay	Foolish
Retarded	Foolish
Crazy	Wild
Psycho	Silly
Insane	Ridiculous
Manic	Frantic

Reality Check

Mental Illness Myths Debunked

Myth	Reality
<i>People with mental illness are violent and dangerous.</i>	As a group, mentally ill people are no more violent than any other group. In fact, they are far more likely to be the victims of violence than to be violent themselves.
<i>People with mental illness are poor and/or less intelligent.</i>	Many studies show that most mentally ill people have average or above-average intelligence. Mental illness can affect anyone, regardless of intelligence, social class, or income level.
<i>Mental illness is caused by a personal weakness.</i>	A mental illness is not a character flaw. It is an illness and it has nothing to do with being weak or lacking willpower. Although people with mental illness can play a big part in their own recovery, they did not choose to become ill, and they are not lazy because they cannot just "snap out of it".
<i>Mental illness is a single, rare disorder.</i>	Mental illness is not a single disease, but a broad classification for many disorders. Anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, personality disorders, mood disorders, eating disorders, and organic brain disorders can cause misery, tears, and missed opportunities for thousands of Canadians.

You Aren't Alone

Bronwyn Loucks, Chair of the Youth Action Committee, courageously agreed to describe some of her experiences in a personal battle with mental illness:

When I think back on the periods of my life when I felt the most lonely and dark, I feel gratitude for those who have guided me to health and happiness: Friends, family, yoga practitioners, medical doctors and therapists. I am so thankful to have a community around me that helped and continues to help me to heal and to feel confident and energized.

As a little girl, I experienced anxiety. Anxiety that made me feel as though I was moving through a tornado—thoughts whipping around me, confusing me, muddling me up. I never thought that I would heal and feel healthy and vibrant.

My community helped me to realize my potential and encouraged me to pursue my love of art, to become engaged in mental health awareness initiatives and to deepen my compassion and connection with those around me. Through art and volunteerism I began to fill my body with positive experiences and dreams; replacing fear and anxiety. Yoga helped me to experience my body in new ways, to get rid of anxiety energetically, and to realize transformation, and that healing is always possible. Healing really is possible...

Healing really is possible.



Me, Myself, and I

To love myself again,
Know again who I, in truth am
Look at myself, and see my own smile
Being able to perceive that I am beautiful too
To discharge myself from all this guilt
And unleash myself from my exceedingly
consuming hate for myself
Now to identify myself, and why I made the
wrong decisions
Recognize that I am superior to what I've
become
Take the time to acquire all the attributes
needed to enhance my life
Feel the pain, but know it won't last forever
Converse with myself about what I need
What I am
Who I can be
Touch my own skin, feel my own heartbeat
Know that this is mine, no one else's
I am of no one's property
Live with the fact that I am human, therefore I
error
Appreciate the gifts I've been given
Be thankful that I am alive and well
Although my heart is broken I'm a wonderful
machine
Cry to myself about my sorrows
Comfort myself in my time of doubt
Confront myself with my misjudgments and
mistakes in thinking
Confess my darkest secrets, my inner most
fears to my heart
Then laugh like a child playing in the sun
To be free from life's stresses
Careless at heart
Cautious in mind
Contradicting in spirit
You've given me the reasons to be
I've given me the power to change
Life's given me the meaning of beauty
All this to love myself again

*Artwork by YAC members
Bronwyn Loucks and Caitlin Robb;
Poem by Brittany Peddle*

Doodle Page!

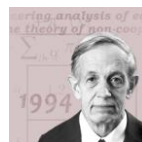
To fend off boredom and embrace your creative side

Activity to RAISE AWARENESS! Who Has a Mental Illness?

Historically, there have been many well known individuals (writers, actors, politicians, world leaders, artists, poets, film makers, athletes, literary characters, etc.) who struggled with their mental health - providing supporting evidence of mental illness for fictional characters such as Sherlock Holmes, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Hamlet, Macbeth, Dr. House, etc.

The goal of this activity is for students to create a project (essay, presentation, creative piece) that researches an individual (past or present) who has/had known mental health issues and to outline any stigma or difficulties this individual faced as well as their accomplishments. Students are to explore how this individual was/would be viewed in the past and how they are/could be viewed now pertaining to their mental health.

This activity highlights the many individuals who suffer from mental illness, the impact it has on their lives, and the successes they experience. By completing this activity, it is hoped that students will become enlightened about the barriers and successes faced by those with a mental illness in order to reduce stigma.



In Photos *

Kurt Cobain (Musician)

- Attention Deficit Disorder, Bipolar

Sheryl Crow (Musician)

- Depression

Jim Carrey (Actor)

- Depression

DMX (Musician)

- Bipolar

Winston Churchill (Politician)

- Depression

Sylvia Plath (Author, Poet)

- Depression, Bipolar

Tim Burton (Director, Artist)

- Bipolar

Robert Downey Jr. (Actor)

- Bipolar

Marilyn Monroe (Actress)

- Depression

Jessica Alba (Actress)

- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

Cameron Diaz (Actress)

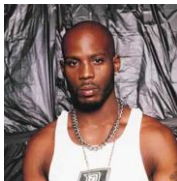
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

John Nash (Mathematician, Nobel Prize Winner)

- Schizophrenia

Lionel Aldridge (Green Bay Packers NFL)

- Schizophrenia



* Retrieved from <http://hubpages.com/hub/A-List-of-Famous-People-Today-With-Mental-Illnesses> and http://www.disabled-world.com/artman/publish/article_0060.shtml

Activity to RAISE AWARENESS! Wear a Mask Day



The purpose of “Wear a Mask Day” is to promote awareness and reduce stigma around mental illness. As a one day event, children and youth could be invited to create a mask or purchase a mask of their choice to wear to school during the school day. This event could be a student council-promoted charitable event in middle schools and/or high schools.

Wearing a mask helps students understand how mental illness can overtake one’s personal identity so that all others see is the mental illness - not the person. In this case, mental illness is represented by a mask.

At the end of the school day, the mask is to be removed to represent the removal of stigma towards mental illness and the ability for one to overcome mental illness.

The creation of a mask could be used as an activity in itself and could include masks made out of paper, paper mâché, cardboard, etc. Students can decorate their masks as they wish, using artwork, paint, sparkles, feathers, etc.

Activity to RAISE AWARENESS! Information Packages and School Seminars

Information Packages

The purpose of “Information Packages” is to disseminate mental health information to parents, students, teachers, and other school staff to help identify mental health concerns, promote positive mental health, and reduce stigma.

Information could be given in a booklet, pamphlet, DVD, or any medium available.

Information in the packages could include mental health facts, common issues, symptoms, treatment, community and other resources as well as positive ideas.



School Seminars

The purpose of hosting “School Seminars” is to promote mental health awareness and reduce stigma - encouraging prevention and positive mental health. Seminars could be organized in 2 parts:

1. Teachers and other staff
2. Students

The seminar for teachers and staff could include speakers from the child and youth mental health profession, individuals with their own mental health challenges and community speakers. Topics discussed could be those related to the age of the children/youth attending the school.

The information presented could include mental health facts and symptoms, common treatments, resources for help, as well as ways to promote positive mental health.

The seminar for students could be used as a discussion forum to engage each other about mental health. Students could be broken up into groups and a group leader could be assigned to start and keep the conversation on track. Participants could discuss their own experiences with and how they feel about mental health; what they would like to see changed, and what they can do to inspire positive mental health.

Activity to RAISE AWARENESS! What I Like About You

Sometimes, a smile can make someone's day. Someone with a mental health difficulty may not have any physical signs. When someone receives positive feedback, it can help them to look past the negative thoughts that they have about themselves. Something so simple can make people feel so good!

Supplies needed: Pens/pencils for each participant, blank paper (recycled, if possible) for each participant

1. Seat a group of 10 or more students in a circle.
2. Distribute 1 pen or pencil and 1 sheet of blank paper to each participant.
3. Each person writes their name on the sheet of paper - wherever they want on the page.
4. Each person must then pass their paper to the person sitting to their right.
5. Now, each person must anonymously write one positive thing about the person whose name is on the piece of paper.
6. Repeat steps 4 and 5 until everyone has had the opportunity to write something nice about each person.
7. Once every person's paper has been sent around the circle and returned to them, they may read their comments.

Optional: Each person is to say one thing they really enjoyed reading about themselves.

Mental Health Resources

CMHO — www.kidsmentalhealth.ca

Children's Mental Health Ontario (CMHO) represents and supports the providers of community-based child and youth mental health treatment services throughout Ontario. CMHO champions the right of every child and youth in Ontario to mental health and well-being

CAMH — www.camh.net

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) is Canada's largest mental health and addiction teaching hospital. CAMH combines clinical care, research, education, policy development and health promotion to help transform the lives of people affected by mental health and addiction issues.

CAMH McLaughlin Information Centre — www.camh.net/About_Addiction_Mental_Health/Information_Centre/Ontario_Toll-Free_Information_and_Support_Line: 1-800-463-6273

The CAMH Information Centre (CAMH-IC) increases CAMH's ability to reach and support Ontarians in need of assistance. It better enables people to play an informed and active role in their own health care, prevent conditions from becoming serious, and seek the best care possible.

Parents for Children's Mental Health — www.pcmh.ca

Parents for Children's Mental Health is a non-profit, parent-led organization that provides a voice for families who face challenges of child and youth mental health issues.

The New Mentality — www.thenewmentality.ca

The New Mentality engages youth, ages 13 to 25, as partners in breaking the stigma of mental health difficulties and improving mental health services in Ontario.

www.mindyourmind.ca

A for youth by youth website providing information and resources regarding youth mental health difficulties. Celebrity interviews, games, free music downloads, and personal stories make this website both diverse in content and youth friendly.

www.youthnet.ca

An Ottawa-based organization (with sites in other cities as well) offering community resources and programming for youth.

Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868/www.kidshelpphone.ca

On the phone, Kids Help Phone provides immediate, bilingual, professional counselling to kids 24-hours a day. On the web, Kids Help Phone provides counselling to young people in the "Ask a Counsellor" section. Kids can also get help through Kids Help Phone's online "Help Yourself" services; reading questions from other kids in the "Ask a Counsellor" section and can benefit from the counsellors' responses.

www.teenmentalhealth.org

A website helping to improve adolescent mental health by providing knowledge and guides for teens, their families, and professionals.

Meet the Youth Action Committee



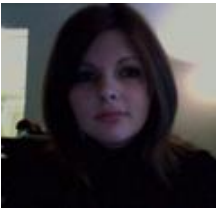
Bronwyn, Chair

Bronwyn believes that young people are our strongest advocates for de-stigmatizing mental health. She is a member of The New Mentality and sits on the board of directors at CMHO.



Erin, Adult Ally

As the YAC's adult ally, Erin provides support for Committee projects. She is the manager of communications at CMHO and a mental health advocate.



**Brittany,
Co-Facilitator**

Brittany is currently a YAC co-facilitator, she also works at the Geneva Centre for Autism and is hoping to begin her Masters in clinical psychology this year. She joined the YAC because she has both a personal and professional interest in the mental health system, specifically pertaining to children and youth. She hopes one day to be a clinical child psychologist and to also be involved in mental health at the political level.



**Paige,
Co-Facilitator**

Paige joined the YAC in 2009 out of personal interest. From her experience she has gained plenty of knowledge and found her passion. Paige is now a student at King's University College with plans to complete the social work program. "Stay golden".



Caitlin

Caitlin became a mental health activist amid her own struggles. She has become involved with the YAC and a local organization to help bring about change in the community and mental health system.



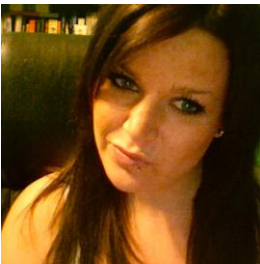
**Carrington,
Timekeeper**

Carrington is the youngest member of our group, being only a grade 9 student in high school. She became a youth mental health activist because of many people close to her suffering from mental illness. She wants to learn more about how to help her friends but also wants to educate her peers on not only helping themselves, but those around them as well.



Mohini

Mohini is a grade 10 student in high school. Mental health has affected her in many ways, both directly and indirectly. She hopes to pose potential solutions to the fractures in the mental health system that are present today and in the future.



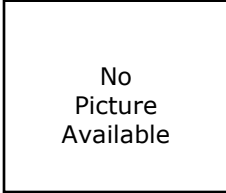
Olivia

Olivia became interested in the issues concerning mental health in youth for personal reasons. She is passionate about helping to make positive changes in the mental health system, particularly in making it more accessible for all those asking for help.



Danielle

Danielle became interested in child and youth mental wellness through working for Chatham-Kent Children's Services' Mental Health Department. Being a part of the YAC has educated her to help educate others. There are very important people in her life who have been affected by a mental illness including herself. Reducing the stigma of mental health has made her a very passionate advocate.



Jessica

Jessica is a youth dedicated to eradicating mental health stigma. She became involved with the Youth Action Committee for both personal and professional reasons. After coping with mental illness herself, she wants to inspire others to speak up and get help.