Tragedy in Moncton New Brunswick - In memory

Stetsons rest on the caskets of the three slain RCMP officers, Const Dave Ross, Const Douglas Larche and Const Fabrice Gevaudan at a regimental funeral in Moncton N.B.

“As we struggle to understand how and why this could have happened in our community, we must nevertheless find calm, peace and security in our lives, we must be resilient as a community and, in doing this we honour the memories of Doug, Dave and Fabrice,” wrote Moncton Mayor George LeBlanc

“If this tragedy has temporarily shaken our spirit and our sense of security, it has shown the strength of our community, of caring and compassion. The actions of one individual will not define us as a community.” Moncton Mayor George LeBlanc

"Our thoughts and prayers are with the residence of Moncton N.B, members of the Codiac RCMP and the Province of New Brunswick, as they continue to re-build their sense of community, safety and peace." The Canadian Critical Incident Stress Foundation

EXCITING NEWS FOR CANADIAN INSTRUCTORS

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Presidents Message

Welcome to the 5th edition of the Canadian Connection.... I would like to start off this edition by thanking all of our dedicated volunteers for all of their assistance in making the 2014 Canadian Critical Incident Stress Conference a huge success. There was plenty of hard work and commitment by all involved and I cannot thank them enough.....without their support, the 2014 Canadian Conference could not have occurred.

I also want to thank those that were able to attend and to those that travelled across Canada and abroad to join us here in Ontario. Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge the many that had hoped to attend but due to budgetary restraints were unable. I recognize that funding is one of the biggest challenges when it comes to peer programs. Very few programs have endless resources when it comes to funding and training opportunities. It's unfortunate as training, networking and team building are all critical in the development and sustainability of peer programs. My hope is that as we move forward in the development of the CCISF, that recognition, support and funding for Crisis Management programs across Canada will be a result of our success.

Although we are now enjoying a bit of down time following the 2014 conference, it won't be long before we get back to work putting together the 2016 Canadian Critical Incident Stress Conference. If there is anything that the CCISF can offer to assist your team and/or organization to ensure your participation in the 2016 conference please let us know.

Wishing all of you a very safe and happy summer and I look forward chatting in our next edition.

Renee Jarvis,
President, CEO
Canadian Critical Incident Stress Foundation
Potential Help for PTSD

Since evidence suggests that yoga can tone down maladaptive nervous system arousal, researchers are exploring whether or not yoga can be a helpful practice for patients with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

One randomized controlled study examined the effects of yoga and a breathing program in disabled Australian Vietnam veterans diagnosed with severe PTSD. The veterans were heavy daily drinkers, and all were taking at least one antidepressant. The five-day course included breathing techniques (see above), yoga asanas, education about stress reduction, and guided meditation. Participants were evaluated at the beginning of the study using the Clinician Administered PTSD Scale (CAPS), which ranks symptom severity on an 80-point scale.

Six weeks after the study began, the yoga and breathing group had dropped their CAPS scores from averages of 57 (moderate to severe symptoms) to 42 (mild to moderate). These improvements persisted at a six-month follow-up. The control group, consisting of veterans on a waiting list, showed no improvement.

About 20% of war veterans who served in Afghanistan or Iraq suffer from PTSD, according to one estimate. Experts treating this population suggest that yoga can be a useful addition to the treatment program.

Researchers at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., are offering a yogic method of deep relaxation to veterans returning from combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. Dr. Kristie Gore, a psychologist at Walter Reed, says the military hopes that yoga-based treatments will be more acceptable to the soldiers and less stigmatizing than traditional psychotherapy. The center now uses yoga and yogic relaxation in post-deployment PTSD awareness courses, and plans to conduct a controlled trial of their effectiveness in the future.

For more references, please see www.health.harvard.edu/mentalextra

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ATTENTION!!

Experience a whole new World Congress with more opportunities to Engage, Learn, Share. This theme doesn't just summarize the 13th World Congress on Stress, Trauma and Coping mission and purpose - It also describes the atmosphere we're striving to create: an environment where solutions are evolving to deal with the ongoing challenges facing crisis interventionist.
I would like to take a bit of time today and speak to you about Ubuntu and Mental Illness. Ubuntu – an idea from Southern Africa - literally translated means “human-ness” or “human-kindness” the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity. For today’s article I use the word in the philosophical sense of the meaning. In the past few months we have witnessed the outpouring of articles, information, human tours all in the wake of trying to create awareness on mental illness and the impact it has on “humanity”.

Through the “community sharing and participating in” media campaigns like Bell’s “Let’s Talk” and Clara’s Big Ride and the hundreds of commercial ads by various agencies and many Peer Support Teams, and Mental Health Professionals, I believe we are now more aware of how mental illness affects our community as a whole and as an individual than we have been decades before. Through this “bond of information sharing” by various groups we have come together in the spirit of UBUNTU and the message is the same – Society not only needs to grasp what mental illness is and all that it encompasses; we truly need to have and show empathy and understanding for those who are affected by it and their families who are dealing with it.

I have spent many years promoting Peer Support and yet I still am amazed when I am faced with the stark reality that not everyone has this understanding or compassion to know that mental illness can consume a person and literally take over their life. For example: how people perceive “someone” who has a physical injury (one you can see or ones you can’t ie cancer) vs mental illness. A small part of our society still views mental illness as people who don’t want to get better or have no will power, or who are selfish and not thinking of others or the worst don’t want to live anymore. The words spoken by others such as “get over it, stop it, you’re not sick, it’s in your head” have more impact on a person suffering from mental illness than the illness itself.

Our community must remember words have power to hurt or console, to honour or insult, to inform or misinform. Words we utter as a whole reflect and shape worldly views, morals, beliefs we hold as a society and can shape our social behaviour. It is here we truly need to “listen and understand and pay attention” to what is being said or not said by a person suffering from mental illness.

So what can we do as a community to improve? We can stop promoting the negative attitudes surrounding mental illness. We can continue to educate ourselves and others whether is through courses, research material, lectures or just listening to someone who is or has recovered from mental illness.

We can approach mental illness positively knowing it doesn’t have to be a death sentence for people and there are a variety of treatments available for all types of illness. Be aware of the resources within your communities to assist people looking for information or assistance.

Last but not least, we can collectively or singularly change the fabric of society by changing our thoughts and perceptions on how we approach mental illness.

Anita Koczkan

Congratulations to Kelsey, who starts her maternity leave this week. Kelsey and Wesley will be welcoming a baby girl at the end of July. There will definitely be a huge void in our office while Kelsey is on maternity leave. Looking forward to her return already!!

Wishing them a lifetime of happiness.
**Water and Stress Reduction: Sipping Stress Away**

If you’re looking for a simple way to unwind from your stress-filled life, try this: drink a glass of water. Sound too easy? The link between water and stress reduction is well documented. All of our organs, including our brains, need water to function properly. If you’re dehydrated, your body isn’t running well -- and that can lead to stress.

“Studies have shown that being just half a liter dehydrated can increase your cortisol levels,” says Amanda Carlson, RD, director of performance nutrition at Athletes’ Performance, a trainer of world-class athletes.

“Cortisol is one of those stress hormones. Staying in a good hydrated status can keep your stress levels down. When you don’t give your body the fluids it needs, you’re putting stress on it, and it’s going to respond to that,” Carlson tells WebMD.

That doesn’t mean that drinking plenty of water throughout the day will magically cause your money problems, your kids’ troubles at school, and your deadlines at work to disappear. But if you’re already stressed by coping with all of these things, you don’t need the additional stress of dehydration to add to your burden.

“You’re actually likely to get more dehydrated when you’re under stress, because your heart rate is up and you’re breathing more heavily, so you’re losing fluid,” says Renee Melton, MS, RD, LD, director of nutrition for Sensei, a developer of online and mobile weight loss and nutrition programs. “And during times of stress, you’re more likely to forget to drink and eat well. Just getting enough fluids helps to keep you at your best during times like these.”

**Stress and Dehydration: Breaking the Cycle**

Stress can cause dehydration, and dehydration can cause stress. It’s a vicious cycle. You can break it by building more water consumption into your day.

“Stress can result in many of the same responses as dehydration -- increased heart rate, nausea, fatigue, headache -- so if you can remain hydrated you can reduce the magnitude of the physiological responses we have to stress,” says Trent Nessler, PT, DPT, MPT, managing director of Baptist Sports Medicine in Nashville.

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**Happiness**

- Refers to a number of positive states in which individuals actively embrace the world around them
- Researchers have examined the characteristics of happy people and found that emotion has a profound impact on the body
- Specifically, happiness or related mood states like hopefulness, optimism, and contentment reduced the risk or limited the severity of cardiovascular disease, pulmonary disease, diabetes, hypertension, colds and other infections.

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**We need your help...**

We here at the CCISF are asking for your help in spreading the word. If you are an instructor or know of Instructors, please give them our information so that we can include them in our network. We get requests for training frequently and do not always have trainers identified in specific areas.

If you know of peer teams or programs that would benefit from becoming a member of this organization, let them know about us. The more people we can connect the better we develop the networking, structure and standardize approach to Crisis Management in Canada.

If you know of any organization that may be looking at developing a program or needs resources or information on where to start, feel free to share our information.

Together we can make the difference!
How can I get the greatest stress reduction from my walks?

We looked at the physiological reasons behind walking’s effect on stress. Here, in part 2, you’ll find out all the proven tricks that you can tie into your walks to increase its impact on reducing your stress levels.

- **Find a walking buddy** Chatting to a friend whilst walking gives you the opportunity to let off steam, ask for advice and receive emotional support. It’s also a good time to share some jokes and add ‘laughter therapy’ to your walking workout. A study at the University of Maryland School of Medicine on the therapeutic benefits of laughter on 20 men and women found that 95% of the volunteers experienced increased blood flow while watching a funny movie, such as “There’s Something About Mary,” while 74% had decreased blood flow during a heavier picture, such as “Saving Private Ryan.” The benefits lasted about 12 to 24 hours – so laughter might just be the best medicine.

- **Get back to nature** Choose a quiet outdoor walking spot. Walking outside for emotional benefit is known as ‘ecotherapy’ or ‘green exercise’. Findings from two studies on ecotherapy published in The Green Agenda for Mental Health found it improved a person’s poor mental health dramatically. Researchers from the University of Essex compared the benefits of a 30-minute walk in a country park with a walk in an indoor shopping centre on 20 people affected by depression. After the country walk, 71% said they felt less depressed and tense, while 90% reported increased self-esteem. After the walk in the shopping centre only 45% felt less depressed and 22% actually felt more depressed. About 50% felt more tense and 44% said that their self-esteem had dropped. So, give retail therapy a miss and head for the hills.

- **Think on your feet** Many people carry stress by tensing their muscles, usually in their neck and shoulders. By focusing on maintaining your correct walking posture, you unknot these muscles. Also concentrating on your thoughts and feelings gives you time to contemplate the aspects of life that are causing you stress and worry. Prominent Doctor James Rippe explains, “Exercise alone provides psychological benefits. However, if you also adopt a strategy that engages your mind while you exercise, you can get a whole host of psychological benefits fairly quickly.”

- **Go back to school** Walk your children to school in the morning and it will be doing all of you a world of good. A study released in the August 2010 issue of Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise reports that children who took a simulated walk to school later experienced smaller elevations in blood pressure, heart rate and perceived stress while taking a short exam than children who had a simulated ride to school. Professor James Roemmich of the New University of Buffalo said, “This puts them in a protective state against stressors that they’re incurring during the school day, whether that be taking an exam, trying to fit in with peers or speaking in front of classmates.”

- **Do a block – not your block** The workplace can be one of the most stressful environments you will ever contend with. So when it’s all getting a bit too much, step outside and take a walk around the block. Simply by stepping out of the office you’re able to take a step back and get a fresh perspective on lingering problems. The sudden increase in oxygen to the brain can stimulate solutions that weren’t coming to you 10 minutes ago when you were banging your head against the computer screen…

- **Don’t get carried away** Walk to reduce your stress levels rather than to win gold at the Olympics. You don’t need to push yourself too hard to reduce stress. Recent studies show that moderate exercise is almost as beneficial as intense workouts. To obtain maximum benefits, you should exercise for at least 20 minutes, three to five times a week.

The good news is that maintaining an active lifestyle is an investment in both a healthy body and mind. Make a commitment to walk everyday and you’ll be ticking all the boxes. A little bit of walking will go a long way!

*Note: if you exercise regularly but depression or anxiety still impairs your daily functioning, seek professional help. Exercise isn’t meant to replace medical treatment of depression or anxiety.*
Meet the two men fighting to get coverage for firefighters with PTSD

By Alan Carter Queen's Park Bureau Chief

TORONTO – At the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) in downtown Toronto, firefighter Paul Atkinson has just finished his weekly meeting with officials.

“We’re not treating this with the respect it deserves,” he says about first responder workplace stress.

Atkinson advocates on the behalf of other firefighters who are suffering from workplace illness, and finds it an uphill battle to convince adjudicators to fund things like post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). His colleague, Colin Grieve, a Hamilton firefighter explains it can sometimes take years for the WSIB to recognize and fund mental illness.

“People need help right away, not to be dragged through bureaucracy” Grieve said.

With a shocking number of first responders taking their own lives in recent weeks, there is now more interest in the mental health of those who often put their lives on the line to help others.

Politicians and chiefs all speak about the need for awareness and change, but on the front line there is frustration. Especially in the Toronto Fire Service which lost two members to suicide in a week in July 2013.

Toronto’s Fire Chief Jim Sales has now brought in an outside agency to review the resources available to firefighters on the force. He says everything must be looked at, from collective agreements to the employee assistance programs.

Outside the WSIB, Paul Atkinson points out the disparity between physical and mental injuries on the job. If you hurt your back or knee you have unlimited physiotherapy he says, but if you have serious mental injuries, a psychologist will go through that amount in two to three sessions says Atkinson.

Cheri Di Novo of the NDP put forward a private members bill earlier this year that would entitle first responders to financial aid immediately, instead of having to wait for a ruling from the WSIB.

Front line responders say they will be watching closely to see if the Ontario government will put some weight behind its words of support.

**Affirmations**

1.) I am the architect of my life; I build its foundation and choose its contents.

2.) Today, I am brimming with energy and overflowing with joy.

3.) My body is healthy; my mind is brilliant; my soul is tranquil.

4.) I am superior to negative thoughts and low actions.

5.) I have been given endless talents which I begin to utilize today.
Suicide amongst first responders...A National Epidemic

Over the past several weeks there have been a rash of suicides amongst first responders across Canada. The National Post reports that there have been 13 suicides among first responders in the past 10 weeks.

Tragically, one of the Mounties who responded to the 2008 Manitoba bus beheading committed suicide on the weekend after years of suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

"There is “an immediate need to educate, train, have a peer support program in place and bring awareness to RCMP members on their mental health,” said spokeswoman Lori Wilson of the RCMP.

After the tragic loss of three of their members, the Codiac Regional RCMP in Moncton NB suffered yet another loss of one of their members, Michel Pagé. Michael Pagé, a long serving member of the Codiac Regional RCMP in Moncton NB, ended his life after a long battle with mental illness.

Through all of their grief, the Pagé family named the Canadian Critical Incident Stress Foundation as the charitable organization in their father’s honour. They want to make a difference and they wanted to be sure that their father’s death would not be in vein.

S/Sgt Maurice Comeau, a member of the Codiac Regional RCMP, wrote a final tribute to a well respected and loved friend.

A Tribute to Michel

In the fall of 2004, I had the good fortune to get promoted to a nearby detachment as the new Sgt for the district. What I did not know was that this promotion and transfer would eventually led to me writing this letter to the CCISF in 2014.

When I got to my new posting I was greeted by my new boss S/Sgt. Michel Pagé. Right away I knew that this man was no slouch and was a seasoned police officer. Michel was a very dedicated and hard worker and we shared a lot of the same values and work ethics. I thought that we would make a very effective team. The one thing that hit me soon after I began to work with Michel was that he was a perfectionist and very intelligent. He wanted everything to be perfect and every angle needed to be covered. I have yet to see another person who could write a more detailed report than Michel Pagé. Even his internal e-mails to the employees were written as to cover absolutely every detail and possible angle. This to me was a sign that something was definitely wrong.

Michel could not accept work that was substandard and this would lead to his demise. To ensure that things were done properly by everyone he would take it upon himself to pick up the slack and bring things up to his standards. This obsession to have everything done to his high standards would lead him to work day and night. A few weeks after my arrival at my new post Michel finally burnt out and was forced to go off on sick leave. Michel was not well and had finally run his battery dry. He had made himself sick trying to provide the best possible service to the people of New Brunswick.

Michel Page had had a distinguished career up until this point. He had worked his way up the ranks through hard work and perseverance. He spent several years on the major crime unit and was involved in over 25 murder investigations during his time in that unit. Michel was a solid investigator who left no stone unturned in his investigations. He saw many brutal and gruesome crime scenes during his career.
Michel began to see psychologists and doctors and eventually psychiatrists. Michel was soon diagnosed as suffering from depression. His pride was also taking a beating as he felt that his being off-sick was a sign of weakness! (This must sound very familiar to those of you who are police officers...) We are looked upon as infallible and people who can deal with any situation. Stress is not supposed to affect us!! Well unfortunately many police officers fall into the trap and start believing this also. When they finally fall victim to the stress of the job, they feel embarrassed and ashamed because this is not supposed to happen to them. (What will their peers and others think of them?) Michel had always shown signs of obsessive compulsive behavior even when he was a child. This would play a role in his illness later in life.

Michel would later be diagnosed with PTSD. His many years of police work and repeatedly being exposed to the stresses of his job which he endured during his remarkable career had an effect on him which he would not realize until it was too late.

After he went off on sick leave I took it upon myself to go visit Michel and try and help him. I wanted to see him get better and tried to do what I could to encourage him and help him through this difficult time in his life. This is when I got to know Michel Pagé and the man that he was. Michel was a very caring individual who would always go above and beyond to help his fellow man. This could be seen whenever he would talk to people and anyone who really knew Michel loved him!! He was one of the finest people I have ever met. We soon became best of friends and I spent many hours with Michel through his highs and lows while he tried to deal with his illness. His health took another blow when his relationship to his longtime common law wife ended. Michel took this hard and it sent him even in a deeper state of depression.

After a couple of years Michel realized that he would never be able to return to work as a Police officer and ended up retiring from the Force after 28 years of giving his heart and soul to serve and protect the people of New Brunswick. Michel did not lie down and give up. He wanted to get better and have a normal life. He opened up a small business in his home and eventually went back to university to obtain the credentials required to begin teaching police sciences at the CCNB.

Michel fought his mental illness for the next several years until one day it just got the best of him. He was in a very dark place mentally. Then on one fateful day in June 2014, when he could no longer cope with his illness and the shame that he felt, he committed suicide. Only two weeks before, Michel had attended the funeral of our three fallen members that been shot and killed in Moncton. That tragic incident had also deeply affected Michel. In the past I had always tried to be there to help Michel through his difficult times but nobody could help him this time. Seeing my good friend and such a good person laying there after having taken his own life was surreal to me!! How could someone with so much love for life do this to himself and his loved ones? That is the question I still ask myself.... Unfortunately too many police officers end up in the same place as my friend Michel.

Michel Pagé did not get a regimental funeral because he was retired and did not officially get killed on the job. But if you ask me he did! His dedication to his job is what ultimately and indirectly killed him in the long run. Michel felt abandoned by the Force and by management after his illness. I know that nobody intentionally wanted Michel to feel abandoned. But the stigma of mental illness is always there.

Our lack of knowledge on how to react to depression and mental illness and how to best help our colleges and friends often leaves them feeling abandoned.

Our police force has made great strides in taking the proper steps to identify mental illness and help members in need. I hope we continue in this direction.
Michel Pagé, 55, of Dieppe, NB, passed away on Thursday, June 26th, 2014. Born in Lachute, QC, he was the son of Gaston Pagé and the late Clothilde Larivière. Mr. Pagé had retired from the RCMP after 28 years of service, afterward began a second career as an instructor at the NBCC-Dieppe for the Police Foundations Program. In his leisure, he took great pleasure in driving his motorbike and also enjoyed playing golf. Besides his father, Gaston of Lachute, QC, he is survived by two sons: Jonathan (Lindsay) of Edmonton, AB and Jérémie of Moncton; one sister, Joanne Pagé of Lachute, QC; and also by his girlfriend, Sylvie Morin.
Open Forum

Mental Health

Why is your mental health so important?
from CMHA -Canadian Mental Health Association

Mental health is key to our well-being. We can’t be truly healthy without it. It involves how we feel, think, act, and interact with the world around us. Mental health is about realizing our potential, coping with the normal stresses of life, and making a contribution to our community.

Good mental health isn’t about avoiding problems or trying to achieve a ‘perfect’ life. It’s about living well and feeling capable despite challenges. Mental well-being is bigger than the presence or absence of a mental illness. People who live with a mental illness can and do thrive, just as people without a mental illness may experience poor mental health.

Each of our paths to mental well-being will be unique. We all have our own goals, our own challenges, our own talents, and our own supports. But good mental health is within everyone’s reach. Below, find tips and activities to help you take a look at your own well-being, discover your strengths, and take action.

Maintaining your mental health is a lot like staying physically fit: it requires a little effort every day

But the rewards are great! Mostly, it’s about finding balance in your life. Everyone has to face stresses and demands, but we all need and deserve a break sometimes. Devote a little of each day to improving your mental health. You’ll reap the benefits in the same way that daily physical exercise makes you stronger and fitter.

Everyday tips for keeping mentally healthy

Here are a few healthy practices that can be easily integrated into your daily life. The idea is that a lot of small, concerted actions can add up to a significant overall effect. Apply some of these ideas on a regular basis and you’ll find yourself feeling rejuvenated and more confident:

Build a healthy self-esteem

Self-esteem is more than just seeing your good qualities. It is being able to see all your abilities and weaknesses together, accepting them, and doing your best with what you have. Self-esteem means recognizing your unique talents and abilities, and using that confidence to follow your goals and interests without comparing yourself to others.

Activity: Build confidence
Take a look at your good points. What do you do best? What are your skills and interest areas? How would a friend describe you? Next, look at your weak points. What do you have difficulty doing? What things make you feel frustrated? Now, which list was easier to write? Remember that all of us have our positive and negative sides. We build confidence by developing our weaker areas and regularly reminding ourselves of the things we’re comfortable with and proud of.
Build positive support networks

Good relationships take effort, whether it’s relationships with family members, friends, or other important supporters. It takes courage to reach out and time to build trust. But social support is a very important part of mental health. People in our networks can offer many different kinds of support, like emotional support, practical help, and other points of view. Support can come from family and friends, neighbours, co-workers or classmates, faith communities, clubs or support groups for specific problems.

Activity: Make time
Make time just to be with important people in your life. Make time for just having fun and enjoying each other’s company, and time for serious conversations.

Get involved

Being involved in things that really matter to us provides a great feeling of purpose and satisfaction. You make a difference, no matter how big or small your efforts. Getting involved connects you with others in your community who share similar interests or values, and connects you to groups of people you might not normally meet. It can help you learn new skills, build confidence, and see your own experiences in a different way.

Activity: Volunteer
Be a volunteer. Read to children at your local library, visit people in a hospital or care facility, serve on a committee or board of your favourite charity, clean up your favourite park or beach, or simply help a neighbour.

Build resiliency

Resiliency means coping well with problems, stress, and other difficult situations. Problems and stress are a normal part of life. Situations like accidents or illness, unexpected life changes, and conflict happen to everyone. Resiliency is what helps you look at the situation realistically, take action when you can make changes, let go of things you can’t change, and recognize the helpful supports in your life. Your resiliency toolkit might include skills like problem solving, assertiveness, balancing obligations and expectations, and developing support networks. While some people learn these skills during treatment for mental health problems, we should really think of them as skills for everyone. You can learn more about these skills online, in books, through community organizations, or through your health care provider.

Activity: Build your own toolkit
Set aside time to think about the resiliency tools you already have. This might include skills like structured problem solving or people who can help you in difficult situations. Remember to include strategies that have worked for you before. Keep your list on hand and use it as a reminder when you need help. It’s also a good way to see where you might want to build new skills or supports.

Recognize your emotions

Emotional well-being is not about being happy all the time. Feeling sad, angry, and anxious at times is part of being human. Emotional well-being involves expressing our emotions in a way that respects everyone. Bottling up our feelings doesn’t respect our own experiences, just as lashing out because we feel angry may not respect others. Emotional well-being also includes recognizing what influences our emotions, discovering how our emotions affect the way we think or act, taking action when our
emotional response isn’t helpful, and learning to accept our emotions—even the difficult ones.

**Activity: Identify and deal with your moods** Find out what makes you happy, sad, joyful or angry. What calms you down? Learn ways to deal with your moods. Share joyful news with a friend, and find support when you feel sad. Physical exercise can help you deal with your anger or anxiety. Keep a stack of your favourite funny cartoons, stories, or videos for times when you need to laugh. And don’t forget the power of music to lift you up or calm you down.

**Take care of your spiritual well-being**

Spiritual well-being means getting to know ourselves, discovering our values, and learning to be at peace with who we are. It also involves finding and connecting to something bigger than ourselves and living with purpose. Spirituality can give us meaning and solace, help us overcome challenges, and strengthen our connections with others. This may mean religion for some, but it doesn’t have to—it’s really about how we feel on the inside.

**Activity: Connect with yourself** Set aside quiet, quality time to be totally alone. Try a breathing exercise: count your breaths from one to four, and then start at one again. Or do something you love to do, like dancing, going to a baseball game, building a bird house, going for a hike, or whatever works for you!

Maintaining your mental health sometimes means seeking the help of a professional.

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**Submitting an article**

If you or anyone you know would like to submit an article for an upcoming Canadian Connection newsletter please email ccisf@live.ca

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**MEET THE CCISF TEAM.....**

Renee Jarvis  
Kelsey Pitt  
Gabrielle Myra  
Anita Koczekan