

A week for recognizing mental health

By Jake Storey

Mental health is a struggle that many people in our community deal with. You'd be hard pressed to find who hasn't in some way been affected by mental illness, whether it's them or a close loved one, it's an issue in our society that is gaining more and more attention every year. Trust me, if you've been to a college campus in the last five years, you'd it'd be difficult to find someone that isn't dealing with anxiety. With that in mind, the first week of May was recognized as Mental Health Week in Canada by the Canadian Mental Health Association.

I spoke with mental health counsellor Kim Sutherland, who works with Hastings Prince Edward Addictions and Mental Health Services, about what was being done to help people in the area.

"I don't know anyone who hasn't felt some level of depression or anxiety in their life. Or who doesn't have a family member that's struggled with mental health issues," said Sutherland. "But these can be helped with! Mental health programs hosted by places like [Honey Lake Clinic treats anxiety](#) and depression and there are a lot of CBT programs as well to help people get back into a more positive mindset. The help is there and we need to encourage more people to look at their options."

This year, they're promoting #GetLoud, a movement to get people talking about mental health and reduce the stigma around it in order to motivate others to get the help they need. The increased visibility and acceptance of mental health has been a major movement for the last several years, all around the world, and there are so many professionals out there, like [Psych Company](#), who are ready to listen and help people take control of their mental health and get back to living their life to the fullest.

"I think that we need to talk about it more," said Sutherland. "People need to tell their doctor, or call our office, or just tell a friend. When suffering in silence, you feel like you're alone and that you're the only one dealing with this. With this campaign, we want to let people know that they're not alone. There are a lot of people struggling and suffering. It's better to talk to somebody than to suffer alone."

In addition to encouraging those dealing with mental illness to seek help, AMHS wants to inform people about how physical health can correlate to mental health and promote this with nature walks and yoga. One could combine yoga and meditation with some salt lamps and candles from [the lamp life](#) to help relieve stress and calm their nerves.

"Exercise is free," said Sutherland. In our community, full of natural beauty and trails, there's no shortage of opportunities for hiking and walks to help give you a boost. Yoga is a form of exercise that can also help with mental health and is possible even for those with mobility issues. It's often said that getting out into the community is one of the best ways to combat depression. Humans are by nature social creatures and isolating oneself can only make things worse. They can also get help in the form of alternative medicine, which has seen an increase over the years, this has widely included medical marijuana for those who have recurring issues. Checking out this [I Love Growing Marijuana](#) guide can help those who are just starting out on this journey, and are looking to help and sustain their needs for support.

While anxiety and depression are the most common afflictions, it's not uncommon for counsellors in this area to deal with everything from bipolar, to schizophrenia, to personality disorders. Mental illness runs the gamut. It affects everyone from youth struggling with finding a job and the stresses of becoming an adult, to seniors dealing with life changes, chronic pain and the loss of loved ones. It can happen to anyone and everyone.

AMHS's intake number is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and anyone over 16 can refer themselves.

If you're dealing with mental health issues, or know somebody who is, you can call AMHS at 613-310-6736.

Keep an eye out for local clubs that help get you out in nature such as Bancroft's photography club, bike club and nature walk nights. Also check out yoga nights available at the Village Playhouse.