

JULY 2021



# ENGWellness Graduate Newsletter

*Produced by: ENGWellness Ambassador*

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## Isolation and Loneliness

For the past year, people have been isolated more than ever. Even with things gradually opening up, feelings of physical and social isolation are still prevalent. It is important to understand and be aware of feelings of isolation and the effects they can have on your mental health and well-being.

**Interpersonal isolation** is isolation from other people. Interpersonal isolation is caused by lack of interaction with others and is similar to feelings like loneliness. Interpersonal isolation also relates to one's group identity, including whether one belongs to a group marginalized by society.

**Intrapersonal isolation** is isolation from oneself. It relates to feelings of being internally fragmented and can arise from traumatic experiences. This is the splitting of oneself off from themselves which can make it difficult for a person to be fully present in their relationships or with themselves.

**Existential isolation** refers to the gap that exists between people, no matter how close they are. The way you experience the world is unique to you, and there is an inherent gap between your experiences and understanding of the world and everyone else's.

Interpersonal isolation is the most obvious type of isolation we encounter, but it can be helpful to think about feelings of intrapersonal and existential isolation as well. Oftentimes our feelings of isolation are not solely due to lack of interaction with others, but also due to intrapersonal and existential causes. Feelings of isolation have increased significantly over the past year, and while things gradually reopening can help that, these feelings of isolation are not going to completely go away. There are many ways of dealing with feelings of isolation which can help, especially right now.

### Accepting your situation and embracing your feelings

Acknowledging the reality of an unpleasant situation can help to reduce stress and allow you to make more clear decisions about how to move forward. Your feelings can tell you a lot, and you should try to embrace them. Embracing uncomfortable emotions can start to give you power over them and accepting unpleasant feelings can help you to work through them. Feelings and emotions are not inherently positive or negative, they represent the ways in which you are connecting to your environment. Uncomfortable feelings can signal what you need to do to make yourself more comfortable and understanding your emotions can allow you to better understand and improve your situation.

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## Keeping Busy

Creating a schedule can help to keep you occupied with things to do which can help with feelings of isolation. Planning out your work, leisure, and social events can keep you focused on what you're doing and help relieve feelings of isolation. Planning times to connect online with other people can be beneficial in combatting interpersonal isolation and loneliness as well.

## Practicing Self-Care

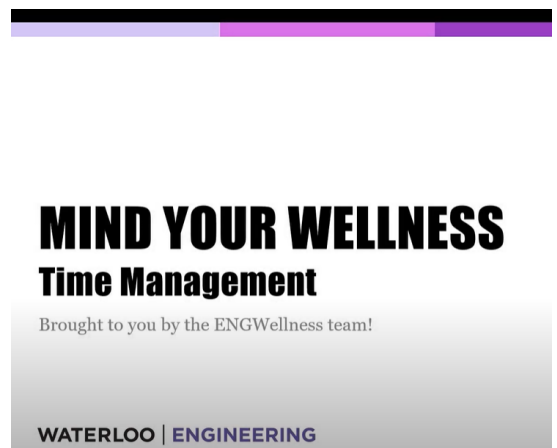
Actively taking care of yourself and your mental health can help you deal with feelings of isolation. Self care can take many forms (which are discussed in more detail later in the Newsletter!) but in general, it consists of taking time to do things which make you feel good. Whether that's taking a bath, reading a book, organizing your workspace, or countless other activities, what's important is taking time for yourself. Self-care is not selfish! Taking breaks and doing things which make you relaxed and happy is important for your mental health. Making time for self-care is important for your mental health, especially in times of isolation where mental health tends to worsen overall.

Feelings of isolation are often difficult to handle, but they are normal and there are methods that can help you deal with them. For more resources on isolation and loneliness, you can visit the following sources.

- [Strategies for Coping with Isolation and Loneliness During the Coronavirus Pandemic](#)
- [CMHA: Coping with Loneliness](#)
- [CAMH: Quarantine & Isolation](#)

## Mind Your Wellness - Time Management

The ENGWellness team has partnered with the Student Success Office to bring you a Mind Your Wellness Session on the topic of time management. The session focuses on STEM-specific strategies for making schedules, establishing routines, studying, and sleep, and gives some tips specifically for studying for midterms. The study tips are widely applicable and will be especially useful once we arrive at final exams. If you're interested in learning some strategies for managing your time, the session is available on [YouTube](#).



## ENGWellness Foursomes Trivia

The ENGWellness team is excited to announce that our Foursomes Trivia game is running again this term! This trivia contest is running for four weeks, and started on July 5th. You can play in teams of 1-4 people and any students, staff, and faculty from ECE, MME, SE, or Nano are welcome to play. Check your email inbox for more details including the rules of the game.

[This is the link to sign your team up](#) (only one sign-up required per team)

And this is the link to the [current round](#) of trivia!



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# National Self-Care Day

## National Self-Care Day – July 24th

Self-care activities can help you achieve balance in your life and relieve stress. Making time to be mindful of your wellbeing and take care of your mental health is important. Engaging in self-care practices can set you up better to deal with stress in the future. Self-care can take many forms, and it looks different for different people.

**Self-soothing** activities help you relieve stress and relax. Examples of such activities include:

- Watching a good TV show
- Eating a meal that you love (more on nutrition later in the Newsletter!)
- Listening to music
- Taking a shower or bath
- Applying a face mask
- Meditation
- Deep breathing
- Reading a good book
- Anything else that lets you be calm and relieve stress

**Engaging your mind** with a non-school activity can help take your mind off of things and relieve stress by redirecting your focus to something you enjoy. Being creative can engage your mind and help you let out emotions. Examples of activities which engage your mind or tap into your creativity include:

- Doing a crossword or sudoku
- Drawing
- Colouring
- Writing
- Singing or playing a musical instrument
- Knitting
- Playing trivia games online
- Any other activity which redirects your focus or lets you be creative

**Connecting with other people** is another part of self-care. These days, we have to be a lot more intentional about having social interactions. Getting together with friends online to play video games together or just to chat is a great way of having some social connections when you can't see people in-person. Going for distanced walks or getting together with friends at a park or in a backyard are great options for seeing people safely during COVID. Social interactions are important for mental health and intentionally devoting time to social interactions is an important part of self-care and staying connected to the world around you.

**Physical activity** can also help to relieve stress and improve your mental health. Taking time to be active and getting outside are great self-care activities and can be really beneficial! In case you missed it, you can read more about how physical activity and getting outside can affect your mental health in last month's newsletter.

**Self-care is not a selfish thing to do.** It's an important part of taking care of your wellbeing and it goes a long way toward relieving stress and improving mental health. Even when things get busy, it's a good idea to make some time in your schedule for self-care and looking after your mental health

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# Making Balanced Snacks and Meals a Priority

By Sandra Ace, MPH, RD  
Health Services Dietitian

The COVID-19 pandemic has had interesting outcomes on eating. I have seen some positive pandemic-related food outcomes which are likely to improve people's health. With more time to cook and minimal opportunities to eat outside the home, cooking has become a newly-explored, surprisingly enjoyable pastime for some students. Many with whom I have worked have started cooking more and ordering less takeout food, trying simple recipes or using easy meal kits that deliver both ingredients and recipes to the front door. Not everything has been positive, however. For some, the pandemic and related isolation has increased feelings of anxiety, sadness, loneliness and/or boredom. I've heard from many students I counsel that the pandemic has increased stress-related or emotional eating.

It's not uncommon for appetite or eating habits to change when someone feels stressed. The University of Guelph, in a survey about COVID-related health outcomes, found that about 60% of adults and children were snacking more on foods like chips and cookies. Everybody reacts differently to stress, but there are many strategies that can help you cope. Be sure to get enough sleep (7 to 9 hours per night) and find ways to be active, even if it's a 15 minute walk in the fresh air or doing a short yoga or stretching class online. Keep up your connections with others, especially at mealtimes; sharing a meal virtually can help eating to be a more positive and enjoyable experience.



Make it a priority to eat at regular intervals during the day, ideally starting with breakfast. Skipping or not eating balanced meals can leave you hungry, low on energy and prone to less-healthy snacking. It's absolutely ok to plan for moderate portions of your favourite treats, enjoyed without guilt, but try not to overstock your kitchen with these. Shop mainly for nutritious snacks. Whether you are in an academic or a co-op term, choosing the right snacks can keep you energized, may help to decrease food cravings and can prevent extreme hunger that sometimes leads to overeating later on. Combining foods that contain some protein with fibre-rich carbohydrates is a smart snacking plan. Some ideas: replace a mid-morning donut or pastry with fresh fruit or raw veggies and a hard boiled egg, an afternoon snack of chips with mini carrots, some whole grain crackers and hummus or an apple with peanut butter, and cookies or ice cream in the evening with a serving of Greek or Icelandic (Skyr) yogurt topped with fresh or frozen berries.

Lastly, if you are struggling with stress-related eating concerns, be compassionate with yourself and know that you aren't alone. Campus Wellness can help you find supports. Make an appointment with one of our physicians or nurse practitioners, and ask about a referral to a registered dietitian, who can help you devise a nutrition action plan. Also, many resources available at Counselling Services can help you identify other, non-food related coping strategies. Setting small, achievable goals can help you make sustainable changes to your self-care routine.

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## Creative Outlets

The following is a blog post from the [ENGWellness Blog](#). Check it out for more reflections like this one!

One thing that has helped me a lot with my mental health, especially throughout the pandemic, is having creative outlets where I can create things and express myself outside of any school responsibilities or deadlines.

For me, the experience of sitting down at a piano and playing whatever's on my mind is cathartic. It allows me to express myself and release stress. Playing music lets my mind off of school and helps me stay calm. Music has been my main creative outlet, but it's certainly not the only one, and many people find similar value in creating visual art, writing, dancing, building things with their hands, and countless other activities. The simple act of being creative can help to relieve stress and take your mind off of other things.



I think part of the value in these activities comes in creating something for the sake of creating. So often our main motivation is external, coming from due dates for coursework or co-op application deadlines. I think it's important to engage in activities where your motivation is internal. When I make music, I'm not doing it for anyone else or because I have a deadline to meet, I'm doing it because it's something I love doing. Exercising the creative side of your brain isn't always a focus in STEM programs, and I think it's really valuable to spend time being creative outside of class. I know school is busy, and it's not easy to find time to dedicate to creative outlets, but it's a valuable experience, and it doesn't have to be a huge time commitment. Even spending 10 minutes making a quick drawing or singing a song or having a little dance party in your room can be a wonderful break from work and allow you to relax. I think over time, the benefits you get from letting your mind have a break from school to focus on being creative for creativity's sake will far outweigh the 10 minutes of study time you sacrifice.

I find the act of being creative to be incredibly motivating. It gives me something to care about and work on outside of school, and it's really rewarding to spend time doing it. In general, I find that I'm happier on days where I spend time doing something creative than days that I don't, and being creative has been particularly helpful in the past year. Being able to get lost in a creative space has helped me to take my mind off of what's going on in the world around me for a few minutes. I've found being creative to be a great way to fill my time in a fun, rewarding way, to keep me busy, which has often helped me to cope with feelings of isolation.

*Joel Woods, 3A Math*  
Spring 2021 ENGWellness Ambassador

## **TED** Talk Tuesdays

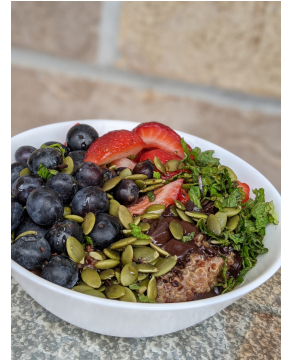
Over on the ENGWellness [Instagram](#), we're running a weekly series called TED Talk Tuesdays! Every week, we add a TED Talk we think is worth watching to this YouTube [playlist](#). These talks are a great way to take a short break from work and they give some really valuable information and insight. Check out the talks currently on the playlist and stay tuned for a new recommendation every Tuesday!



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# Engineers Without Borders: Alt Protein Cook-Along

Sign up to participate in our first ever Alt. Protein Project cook-along on Tuesday July 13th 7-8 pm EDT, brought to you by [Engineers Without Borders UW](#)! Join us in making a delicious Chocolate Mint Quinoa Berry Bowl together 😊. As we enjoy the food we made, we will be joined by representatives from UW Food Services and the UW Sustainability Office to discuss the environmental and health benefits of alternative protein foods! For more details, sign up for free using [this link](#). Hope to see you there 😊!



## MMEGA

Hello graduate students of the MME department! We know it has been a tough year and some during the pandemic times, but you all keep persevering through with all your hard work to show for it. Some of you were able to present your amazing work during our 2021 MMEGA Research Symposium that saw over 100 attendees. And some have also participated in our new Lunch and Learn series (another one coming soon this month, watch out for updates). These events will not be possible without you all. We at MMEGA just ensure that we provide a platform for you to showcase your work. During these times, we have also provided opportunities for us to connect through our occasional Skribbl events.



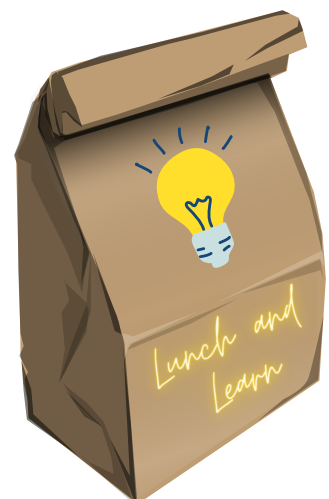
Now the term for the current MMEGA reps will be coming to an end by the end of this term as per [our constitution](#). That means positions are open for those who want to serve the MME graduate students. There will be an election procedure during an AGM that will be held on the 28th of July where interested individuals will be able to express their willingness and capabilities for the vacant positions. There will also be an opportunity to upload your speech to our website. The vacant positions will be sent in following the AGM. Voting will be open for a number of days following the AGM. More information to follow! Looking forward to hearing from our interested graduate students.

## MMEGA: Lunch and Learn

*Friday, July 22, 12:00-1:00pm EDT, on Microsoft Teams*

All members of our MME community are invited to join us for an online lunch and learn event. Students can register to deliver a short presentation on their research or other academic/engineering projects that are of interest to them for their fellow students, staff, and faculty.

There will be a maximum of 5 presenters, decided on a first-come, first-serve basis. Presentations are 10 minutes with a short Q&A afterwards. Awards will be given to the top-3 presenters based on voting by the attendees. Sign up to present using [this form](#)



## Content Archive

Check out our ENGWellness resources including mental health pages and PSAs. All resources as well as previous newsletters can be accessed under the [Content Archive](#) tab on the ENGWellness website.

## Stay Connected

Be sure to also follow our other social media to stay connected and updated.



@uwengwell



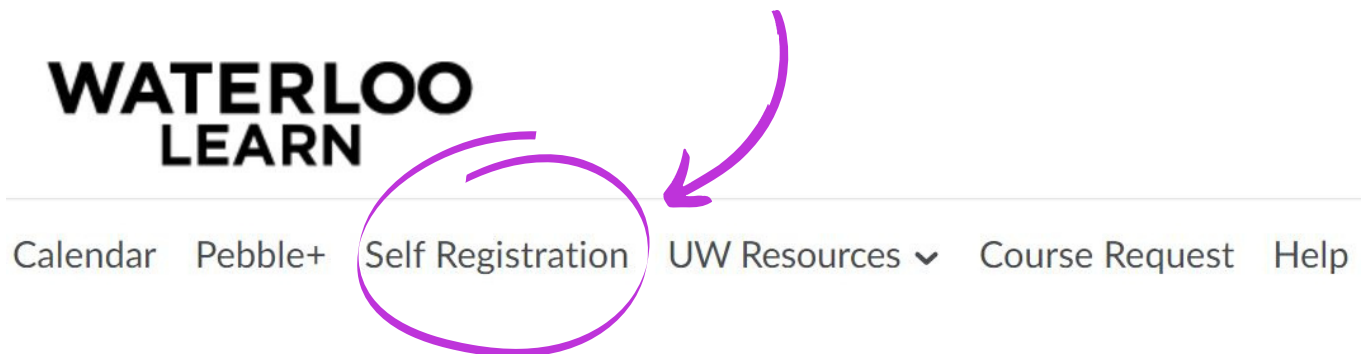
@uwENGwellness



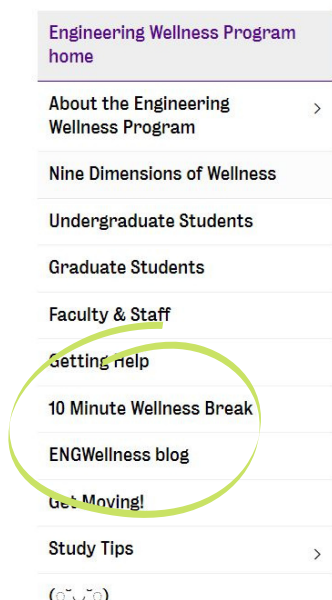
@UwengW

## LEARN Group & ENGWellness Site

Get news and access to our content modules through our ENGWellness Learn 'course'! Students can enroll using the Self-Registration function within Learn.



Stay connected with our [ENGWellness Blog](#) and check out our [Wellness Breaks](#) page for ideas on how you can spend your study breaks and rejuvenate!



## Welcome to the Engineering Wellness Program (ENGWellness)

The wellbeing of our students (graduate and undergraduate), staff, and faculty matters! The ENGWellness Program was created to support and promote the wellbeing of our community throughout the year.

STUDENT WELLNESS COORDINATORS <b>CONTACT US</b>	CHECK OUT THE <b>ENGWELLNESS BLOG</b>	10 MINUTE <b>WELLNESS BREAK</b>
CAMPUS WIDE <b>CURRENT STUDENT RESOURCES</b>	UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO <b>COVID-19 INFORMATION</b>	<b>NEED IMMEDIATE HELP?</b>

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# Wellness Resources - For All Students

## Crisis Support

- [Here 24/7](#) - Offers addiction, mental health, and crisis services
- [Good2Talk](#) - Free, confidential support service which can connect you anonymously with a professional counsellor.
- [Empower Me](#) - This student-focused service provides you with "one-stop" access to counselling and campus wellness services. Integrates off-campus resources with already existing on-campus resources and can be accessed 24/7 (within N.A.) in a variety of languages. Gender and faith inclusive services are available.

## Mental Health Resources

- [EngSoc's Guide on Accessing Mental Health Resources at UW](#) - A no-nonsense guide to the services and resources available at UW to ENG students.
- [Centre for Addiction and Mental Health \(CAMH\)](#) - Provides information on addiction and ways to identify if help is needed and how to access it.
- [Campus Wellness Online Workshops and Seminars](#) - Everything from managing emotions, to reducing stress, to improving sleep.
- [Mental Health Commission Resource Hub](#) - Information about mental health and wellness during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- [Campus Wellness Group Therapy and Workshops](#) - Group therapy can be beneficial by helping you find new perspectives on shared challenges, feel inclusion and relief knowing that others experience similar challenges, and allowing you to practice new skills in a supportive environment.
- [Canadian Mental Health Association \(CMHA\)](#) - Tips about managing your mental health during COVID-19.
- [Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction \(CCSA\)](#) - Offers free online resources, tools, apps, and information to support substance use issues by connecting with peers, support workers, social workers, and professionals for confidential chat services.

## Academic Support

- [Student Success Office](#) - Compilation of learning and life skills resources.
- [OUSA COVID-19 Resources for Students](#) - Financial aid, learning tips, and other mental health initiatives.
- [Waterloo Assignment Planner](#) - Customizable planner for reports, essays, presentations, math assignments, and you name it!
- [Tutor Connect](#) - Connects people with student tutors

## Contacts to book a one-on-one session:

Sam Vandekerckhove (MME) - [srvandek@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:srvandek@uwaterloo.ca) / [ENGWellness@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:ENGWellness@uwaterloo.ca)  
Leah Foster (ECE) - [ljsims@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:ljsims@uwaterloo.ca) / [ENGWellness@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:ENGWellness@uwaterloo.ca)