

MAY 2021



# ENGWellness Graduate Newsletter

*Produced by: ENGWellness Ambassadors*

**Content warning - This newsletter contains sensitive material on domestic violence, sexual violence and more. If you feel triggered, please know there are resources to support you.**

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## National Mental Health Week

**CMHA Mental Health Week – May 3 - 9th, 2021**

Set in the first full week of May, CMHA Mental Health Week is a tradition hosted by the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) in order to protect and promote mental health. This year marks its 70th anniversary with the focus on naming, expressing, and dealing with our emotions. Heavy feelings lighten when you put them into words. When you voice your emotions, the pain gives way.

Feeling sad, angry, and anxious at times is part of being human. Focusing on intense emotions doesn't make them worse; in fact, it's better to do so! 1 in 5 Canadians experience mental illness or a mental health issue in any given year, but everyone has mental health. Emotional well-being includes recognizing what influences your emotions and learning to accept them. Emotional self-regulation or the ability to label and shape your emotions is a protective factor for good mental health. This goes along with emotional literacy, which is the ability to recognize how you feel, understand your feelings, label them, and express them.

When you are emotionally literate, you are better able to manage and “regulate” your emotions. Sometimes you “feel” your emotions and may recognize that they are there but may find it hard to put them into words. Putting feelings into words is called affect labelling. Affect labelling allows you to construct meanings to your emotions and express them. A good way to release your emotions in a healthy way is to write them out. Writing out your feelings can reduce cortisol (stress) levels and positively influence your immune function. Letting out your feelings instead of ignoring or pushing them down can also help to ease anxiety and decrease obsessive thinking. Mental health is something we can protect, not just something we can lose. So, this Mental Health Week, don't be uncomfortably numb. Join the CMHA and #GetReal about how you feel. **Name it, don't numb it.**

For more information, check out the following resources provided by the CMHA:

- [Key Messages](#)
- Fact Sheet from the General Information section of [2021 Toolkit](#)

Short informative articles by the CMHA:

- [7 steps to calm your inner world with words](#)
- [Why saying “I feel bad” can actually make you feel better](#)
- [Understand your emotions, understand yourself](#)
- [Name it to tame it](#)



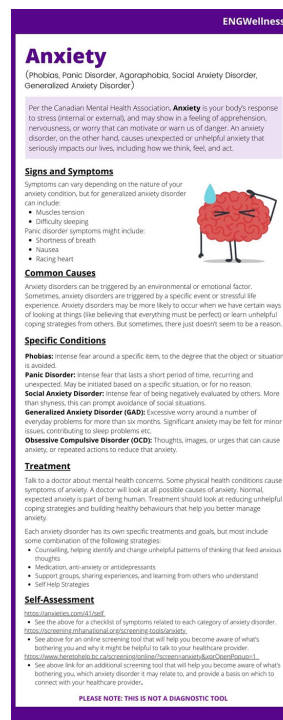
 **CMHA Mental Health Week May 3-9, 2021**

Visit [mentalhealthweek.ca](http://mentalhealthweek.ca) for info and tools!

## Mental Health Pages

In honor of National Mental Health Week, ENGWellness has created concise information sheets to help you better learn about common mental illnesses. This tool can help you recognize certain symptoms and allow you to self-assess, however it should not be used as a diagnostic tool. Some of the topics covered include anxiety, eating disorders, schizophrenia, and many more.

To access this resource, visit the [content archive page](#) on the ENGWellness website.



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### Anxiety

(Phobias, Panic Disorder, Agoraphobia, Social Anxiety Disorder, Generalized Anxiety Disorder)

Per the Canadian Mental Health Association, **Anxiety** is your body's response to stress (internal or external), and may show in a feeling of apprehension, nervousness, or worry that can motivate or warn us of danger. An anxiety disorder, on the other hand, causes unexpected or unhelpful anxiety that seriously impacts our lives, including how we think, feel, and act.

**Signs and Symptoms**

Symptoms can vary depending on the nature of your anxiety condition, but for generalized anxiety disorder can include:

- Moodier tension
- Difficulty sleeping

Panic disorder symptoms might include:

- Shortness of breath
- Nausea
- Racing heart

**Common Causes**

Anxiety disorders can be triggered by an environmental or emotional factor. Sometimes, anxiety disorders are triggered by a specific event or stressful life experience. Anxiety disorders may be more likely to occur when we learn certain ways of looking at things (like believing that everything must be perfect or learn unhelpful coping strategies from others). But sometimes, there just doesn't seem to be a reason.

**Specific Conditions**

**Phobias:** Intense fear around a specific item, to the degree that the object or situation is avoided.

**Panic Disorder:** Intense fear that lasts a short period of time, recurring and unexpected. May be initiated based on a specific situation, or for no reason.

**Social Anxiety Disorder:** Intense fear of being negatively evaluated by others. More than shyness, this can prompt avoidance of social situations.

**Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD):** Excessive worry around a number of everyday problems for more than six months. Significant anxiety may be felt for minor issues, contributing to sleep problems etc.

**Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD):** Thoughts, images, or urges that can cause anxiety, or repeated actions to reduce that anxiety.

**Treatment**

Talk to a doctor about mental health concerns. Some physical health conditions cause symptoms of anxiety. A doctor will look at all possible causes of anxiety. Normal, expected anxiety is part of being human. Treatment should look at reducing unhelpful coping strategies and building healthy behaviours that help you better manage anxiety.

Each anxiety disorder has its own specific treatments and goals, but most include some combination of the following strategies:

- Counseling, helping identify and change unhelpful patterns of thinking that feed anxious thoughts
- Medication, anti-anxiety or antidepressants
- Support groups, sharing experiences, and learning from others who understand
- Self-help strategies

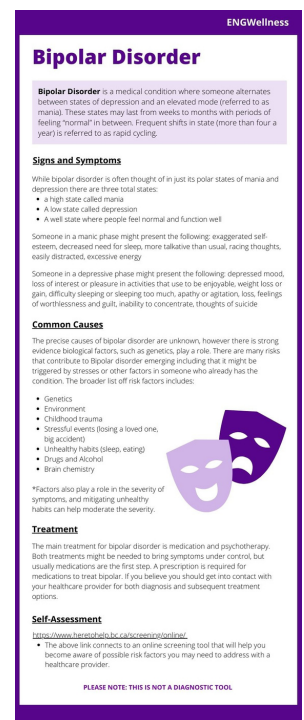
**Self-Assessment**

<https://anxiety.com/13126/>

- See the above for a checklist of symptoms related to each category of anxiety disorder. <https://www.mentalhealth.ca/engwellness/engwellness/>
- See above for an online screening tool that will help you become aware of what's bothering you and why it might be helpful to talk your healthcare provider.
- See above link for an additional screening tool that will help you become aware of what's bothering you, which anxiety disorder it may relate to, and provide a basis on which to connect with your healthcare provider.

PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS NOT A DIAGNOSTIC TOOL.

Click image to access



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### Bipolar Disorder

**Bipolar Disorder** is a medical condition where someone alternates between states of depression and an elevated mood (referred to as mania). These states may last from weeks to months with periods of feeling "normal" in between. Frequent shifts in state (more than four a year) is referred to as rapid-cycling.

**Signs and Symptoms**

While bipolar disorder is often thought of in just its polar states of mania and depression there are three total states:

- A high state called mania
- A low state called depression
- A well state where people feel normal and function well

Someone in a manic phase might present the following: exaggerated self-esteem, decreased need for sleep, more talkative than usual, racing thoughts, easily distracted, excessive energy

Someone in a depressive phase might present the following: depressed mood, loss of interest or pleasure in activities that use to be enjoyable, weight loss or gain, difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much, apathy or agitation, loss, feelings of worthlessness and guilt, inability to concentrate, thoughts of suicide

**Common Causes**

The precise causes of bipolar disorder are unknown, however there is strong evidence biological factors, such as genetics, play a role. There are many risks that contribute to bipolar disorder emerging including that it might be triggered by stresses or other factors in someone who already has the condition. The broader list of risk factors includes:

- Genetics
- Environment
- Childhood trauma
- Stressful events (losing a loved one, big accident)
- Unhealthy habits (sleep, eating)
- Drugs and Alcohol
- Brain chemistry

\*Factors also play a role in the severity of symptoms, and mitigating unhealthy habits can help moderate the severity.

**Treatment**

The main treatment for bipolar disorder is medication and psychotherapy. Both treatments might be needed to bring symptoms under control, but usually medications are the first step. A prescription is required for medications to treat bipolar. If you believe you should get into contact with your healthcare provider for both diagnosis and subsequent treatment options.

**Self-Assessment**

<https://www.mentalhealth.ca/engwellness/engwellness/>

- The above link connects to an online screening tool that will help you become aware of possible risk factors you may need to address with a healthcare provider.

PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS NOT A DIAGNOSTIC TOOL.

Click image to access

## The Benefits of One-On-One Support

Often times people bottle up their emotions, but humans are naturally social creatures and communicating our feelings is crucial for managing our thoughts. Expressing your emotions to a friend or family member may seem uncomfortable to some people, which is why one-on-one counselling exists to allow you to speak to someone openly. One-on-one counselling offers a broad array of benefits for all of us. It encourages open and honest conversations about stressful issues and may help you find strategies to better cope with your symptoms. Overtime, discussing your issues and getting feedback can help with the development of your self-awareness.

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# Individual ENGWellness Support: Wellness Coaching Sessions

ENGWellness offers one-on-one support through individual wellness coaching sessions with our Wellness Coordinators. They are available to all graduate and undergraduate students in ECE and MME and are currently offered through remote options. Each session is 50 minutes long and can focus on topics such as decision making, accountability, skill building, or strategizing. There is also the option to simply talk about how you feel or what you are going through. Our Wellness Coordinators are here to provide individual support in ways that best suit each student.

**Please note:** New this term, you will be required to fill out a Consent to Share Information form. If you have any additional questions, or are ready to book your session, please check out our instructions on [how to book a wellness coaching session!](#)

## Here 24/7

There's a common misconception around services like Here 24/7, where students feel like they need to be in a dire situation before reaching out for help. One of the many goals of these services is to prevent anything from escalating. You don't have to be breaking down, feeling suicidal, or anything extreme before you reach out for help. The smallest stressors are worth having a conversation about, and that's what services like Here 24/7 are meant to provide! Just a place for you to have a quick one-on-one conversation about pretty much anything, before it gets worse.



## Here 24/7 - Here for You

By Rebecca Kern, Paula Jacobs, Service Coordinators, HERE 24/7

Everyone's talking about how the Pandemic has impacted our lives for over a year now. Our overall wellness has been seriously affected. One positive piece of this past year, is that the pandemic has been the instigator of many integral conversations about Mental Health. Some of you reading this may already know about our local mental health crisis line, Here 24/7. I'll share with you a little bit of information about the service as a whole and what to expect when you call. We are called Here 24/7, because we are ALWAYS available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

We are a department within the Canadian Mental Health Association. Our main goal is to provide crisis response and/ or connection to services within the Waterloo Wellington geographic area. Calls to Here 24/7 are often from individuals having difficulty coping or who may be feeling like their mental health situation is out of their control. An individual may be experiencing emotional distress, anxiety, and or this may escalate to thoughts of harm to self or others.

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Our service coordinators are trained to assess risk openly, safety plan collaboratively and in some cases, support individuals in going to the nearest hospital. Navigating the complex connections to support is how we flourish. Each Hospital/Therapies/Self Help services vary from City to City making it difficult to navigate on the best of days, let alone when someone is feeling hopeless. When you feel isolated or concerned about your mental health, we are the team on the other end of the call that want you to know that you are never alone.

Invite us in to help you in your time of need. 1-844-437-3247.

## Domestic Violence

Now, more than ever, persons living in violent situations are reluctant to reach out for help as they have been forced to constantly be confined with their abusers due to pandemic restrictions. It's hard to reach out for help if the threat of violence is constant, real, and your ability to reach out to your usual support systems (friends, family, outreach services) is stifled by stay-at-home restrictions.

Power dynamics play a key role in domestic violence, the "umbrella" term that describes, Intimate Partner Violence, child abuse, elder abuse, sibling to sibling violence, adolescent to parent violence, and Gender-based violence. We know that women, marginalized women, children, and LGBTQ+ folks are disproportionately impacted by domestic violence.

Forms of domestic violence include physical, reproductive and sexual, financial, emotional, spiritual, and verbal. These relationships are controlling, hurtful, and unhealthy.

Know the signs of domestic violence-how to respond and be supportive, particularly while isolated. Supports are available on line and in the UW community. If you feel that you are in immediate danger, call 911.

[Counselling Services-UW](#)

[Sexual Violence, Prevention and Response Office-UW](#)

[Links to supports \(including shelters\) across Canada](#)

[How to help someone living with violence](#)

[Support for Abused Women](#)

[Shelter Safe](#) (find the closest shelter to you)

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## Graduate Student Association

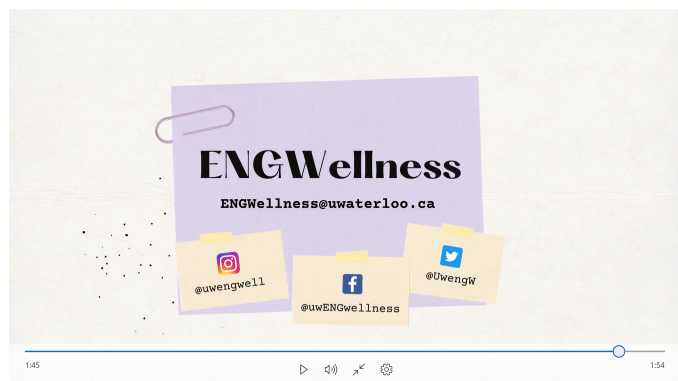
The UW Graduate Student Association (GSA) is here to support you! The GSA is a peer support service for graduate students to assist with navigating university policies, mental health and physical wellness supports, advocacy and legal support as well as organizing social activities.

Click [here](#) for more information.

## ENGWellness Mental Health PSA's

Our fantastic Winter 2021 Co-op students developed a series of three Public Service Announcements to normalized and de-stigmatize mental health among the ECE and MME communities. You can find them in the [content archive](#) of our webpage. Topics include: Stigma, Emotional Literacy and Help-Seeking. Look for these PSA's popping up and welcome back sessions and other support sessions hosted by ENGWellness moving forwards.

If you have a PSA topic you would like us to address, please feel free to reach out to us.



## Music Playlist

Our Winter 2021 Co-op students compiled a playlist of music that you may want to check out to up your motivation! Don't worry, Leah and Sam didn't choose any of the music:). Check it out by subscribing to the ENGWellness Youtube channel!

## Mind Your Wellness

Our last Mind Your Wellness session for the term was provided asynchronously on the topic of exam strategies! It has been posted in the [Content Archive](#) section on the ENGWellness website! It's never too early or too late to learn effective note-taking and exam prep strategies so watch for more asynchronous sessions as they're uploaded throughout the Spring term!



## Content Archive

Check out our new 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



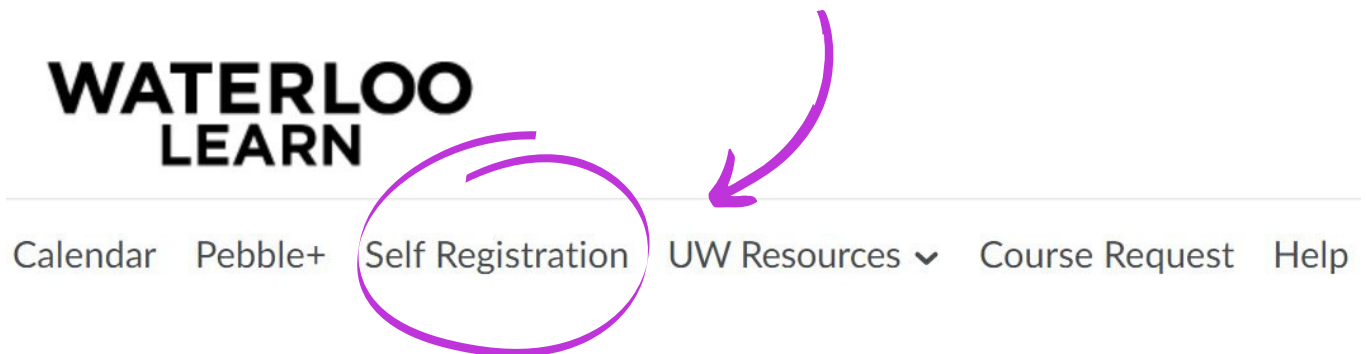
@uwENGwellness



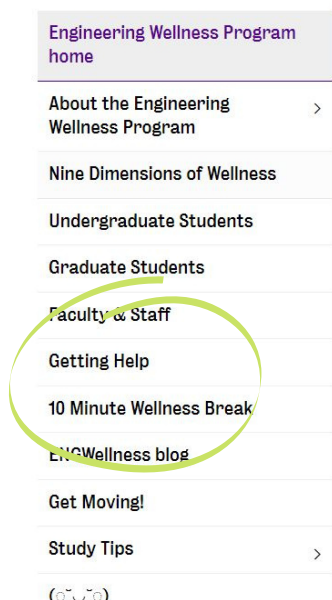
@UwengW

## 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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## Helpful Wellness Resources - For All Students

- [Student Success Office](#) - Super useful compilation of learning and life skills resources.
- [EngSoc's Guide on Accessing Mental Health Resources at UW](#) - A no nonsense guide of the services and resources available at UW to ENG students.
- [OUSA COVID-19 Resources for Students](#) - Financial aid, learning tips, and other mental health initiatives.
- [Mental Health Commission Resource Hub](#) - 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.
- [Campus Wellness Online Workshops and Seminars](#) - Everything from managing emotions, reducing stress, and improving sleep.
- [Chaplains Services](#) - Spiritual mentors to promote the integration of academic knowledge and meaningful personal faith.
- [Canadian Mental Health Association \(CMHA\)](#) - Tips to manage your mental health during COVID-19.
- [Empower Me](#) - This student-focused service provides you with "one-stop" access to counseling and campus wellness services in a variety of areas including mental health, addictions, nutrition, financial, and others. It 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.
- [Here 24/7](#) - Offers addictions services and support groups
- [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 works, and professionals for confidential chat services.
- [Centre for Addiction and Mental Health \(CAMH\)](#) - Provides valuable information on addiction and ways to identify if help is needed and how to access it.
- [Waterloo Assignment Planner](#) - Customizable planner for reports, essays, presentations, math assignments, and you name it!

### Contacts to book a 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)