

OCTOBER 2021



ENGWellness Staff/Faculty Newsletter

Produced by: the ENGWellness Ambassador

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Take a look at our [mental health assessment tool](#)! Although it is not meant to replace professional assistance, it can give you an idea of what common mental illnesses are like.



Keep it going!

Already 1 month in! Well, time flies when you're having fun. At this point in the term, we're back in the swing of things, and have gotten used to our (partially) in-person schedules. The start of the term is new and exciting, especially now that many of the activities have been in-person, and perhaps that has allowed us to stay on top of our responsibilities. However, some of that excitement has worn off, and it's harder to stay focused on our personal goals/tasks/responsibilities. This doesn't mean that we will never catch back up; reminding yourself that the little setbacks and uncertainties of life don't have to define your success, and that you have much more time to bounce back, will allow to keep up with the pace you started out the term with.

[Work-life balance](#)

Between our personal goals for success and having all the new in-person tasks pile up, it may be hard to take a break from work to do other things. It is tempting to give in to the anxiety-driven ideas about staying on top of everything at work, but that will inevitably lead to burnout and less done in the long term. Finding a balance at work may not solve every problem immediately, and it may require you to put some important tasks on the backburner, but in the long run you'll end up being more efficient, less tired, and more happy. Remember; ideas like "finding a balance" are important for a reason, so it might be time you gave it a try.

[Put things into perspective](#)

Work is difficult. Working in a University has unique challenges and, you're not alone if you feel overwhelmed. But feeling overwhelmed is ok: there will always be several tasks that demand your attention, floating around in the back of your head slowing increasing your stress levels. You must put this into perspective. Being stressed means you find the tasks you are doing important. It means you've got responsibilities towards people that require something from you, and it means you're helping others.

Success is a marathon, not a sprint.

A blog post from [ENGWellness Blogs](#).

We all start the term running fast. We stay on top of classes, hang out with friends, go to the gym, and minimize our procrastination. We feel excited for a new period in our life; being able to get a fresh start at our goals can be very motivating to work hard towards them. The first 2, maybe 3 weeks of the term are often the best because we can stick with all the ambitious goals we've set out for ourselves. We sprint -- and moving fast never felt so good. But slowly we begin to get tired: In order to stay on top of all these goals, we've maybe lost some sleep here and there, maybe we've over-ambitiously reduced our free-time, or maybe we haven't seen our friends and family as much as we're used to. All these little things start to pile up in the background, and slow us down. Much like a running race, starting out too fast hurts us in the long run; the lactic acid of life begins to build up, making it impossible for us to continue at the pace we started at. As we slow down and catch our breath, classes start to pickup and eventually we spend the rest of the term playing catchup.



So, what's the solution? I mean, you gave it all you had – you worked as hard as possible and it still didn't work. Why even try if your very best isn't good enough? Well, here's the thing: you didn't actually do your best. Sure, you worked really hard, but you didn't do the best you could; *working your hardest is not the same as doing your best*. This, I think, is a very common misconception. We often think that if you are constantly working as hard as possible that you're also automatically doing the best you can, and that that's what is needed for you to be successful. But the truth is, working as hard as you possibly can is probably not going to be your best. For the same reasons pointed out above, you will burn out quickly and end up playing catch up. The successful among us treat work as a marathon, not sprinting as fast they can to burnout within a month. Sure, there are a select few that, for their entire lives, school or work has been the main focus of their life. They were used to this extreme schedule and continue to work that hard throughout the term. But for most of us, doing that amount of work is not only too difficult, but not even worth it.



Okay, so working hard is not the best one can do – so what is? Pacing yourself. Just like the runners in a marathon, you need to figure out a challenging but achievable work schedule, where you can consistently put effort forth, and not burnout after a few weeks. Pacing yourself is about looking ahead, predicting what your schedule is going to be like, taking breaks, catching up on sleep, and managing your energy (spoiler for future blogs), as well as your time, to build the most effective work schedule overall. Pacing yourself is about strategy, and its not as easy as you might think. For example, if you've got a new assignment that you're not sure if it could be finished if you don't stay up until midnight for, but you know it is still possible to finish in one day without staying up super late, what would you do? Chances are, you'd sprint until midnight, not catch up on sleep, and slowly lose motivation and energy that you needed to last longer than this specific assignment. Pacing yourself is very difficult, but I assure you it is worth it.



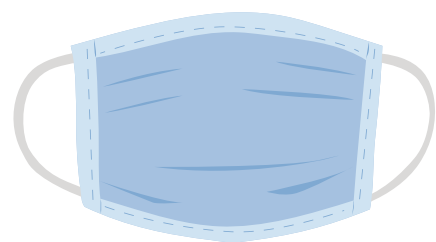
Why then would we want to over-work ourselves in pursuit of “success”, when there is a much better solution? I think for a lot of us, myself included, we liken success to a race; that there is one finish line that is the same for everyone, and it is an all out competition to see who gets there first. Although competition is good, work and life more broadly are not as simple as a running race. The point of my marathon versus sprint strategy was not for people to compare themselves to others trying to get to the finish line, it was so that people could *compare against alternate versions of themselves*. Namely, the version of oneself who wants to give everything they've got during 1/5th of the race, versus the version that paces themselves to get the best overall result over the entire race. We get too caught up in how much other people are working, and think that we need to do what they do in order to stay ahead. There will always be people who can work harder than you, and maybe that is working for them. But what works for them may be too much for you, and although you can keep up for some time, it will end up hurting you in the long run. Success is not about beating the other person, it's about beating yourself to find the best version of yourself. Afterall, isn't doing your best the best you can do?

What's happening around campus?

COVID-19

Testing Centre

The Health Services COVID-19 Testing Assessment Centre is open to University of Waterloo students, employees, postdocs and their family members who live in the same household. Testing is by appointment only. You can use [this form](#) to book an appointment.



Mental Health Research Conference

The University of Waterloo hosted the inaugural Virtual Conference on Student Mental Health Research on **Thursday, November 5, 2020** as part of [Thrive Week](#), showcasing new and in-progress research being conducted by our faculty, staff and student colleagues.

The aim of the conference was to bring together members of the UWaterloo community to share knowledge, connect researchers, and promote mental wellness through presentations, posters, and interactive Q&A sessions. Topics broadly pertaining to student mental health were explored with an emphasis on the following key themes:

- Prevention of mental health issues and promotion of mental health-care strategies
- Suicide prevention
- Equity and wellness
- Harm reduction approaches to substance use
- Mental health impact of COVID-19

Everyone who have any kind of academic research that could be relevant to student mental health are encouraged to apply! Some examples of last year's research include:

- "Principles and processes for suicide risk screening in student populations"
- "Social anxiety in university: Communication preferences and pedagogical strategies for educators"
- "Investigating how exercise prevents mood disorders: links to motivation, emotion regulation and negativity bias."

Keeping Well at Work

In partnership with the Healthy Workplace Committee, OHD brings you UWaterloo's annual Keeping Well at Work conference this October. Be inspired, renewed, and refreshed during two focused conference days on October 13 and 19 and throughout the month with daily wellness-inspired activities.

This year's virtual event will cover topics about nutrition, mental health, physical well-being, wellness through an equity lens, community and campus wellness, and overall personal health. We'll showcase speakers and learnings to inspire new ideas, build community and keep Waterloo employees well at work.



Sexual Violence Awareness and Response

The situation at The University of Western Ontario

During Western University's orientation week, 4 formal sexual assault allegations were made to the police, with several online complaints about mass drugging (around 30 young women) for the purposes of sexual assault in one of the residences. The students at Western planned a walkout to bring this massive issue to the school's attention. [A survey in 2018](#) with over 8000 Western University respondents found that 1 in 3 girls reported being sexually assaulted.

A Larger Issue

Between 15 and 25% of college- and university- aged women will experience some form of sexual assault during their academic careers. One in three women will experience one form of sexual assault in her lifetime. ([Source](#))

Sexual violence is not just a problem, it's a growing cultural infection on university and college campuses, and needs to be combatted immediately.

Western's situation is a terrifying one, but given the facts and statistics, it isn't surprising. realistically, what happened at Western could happen anywhere, including our own University of Waterloo. It's time more attention was brought to this subject around Canada, and on our campus here at UW.

The Facts

According to a [Federally administered survey](#) reaching over 13,000 undergraduate students across Canada...

- 8 percent of women who experienced unwanted sexual behaviors spoke about what happened to someone associated with their school
- 6 percent of men who experienced unwanted sexual behaviors spoke about what happened with their school
- less than one in ten women (8%) and men (6%) who experienced sexual assault, and less than one in ten women (9%) and men (4%) who had experienced unwanted sexualized behaviors spoke about what happened with someone associated with the school
- A majority (71%) of students at Canadian postsecondary schools witnessed or experienced unwanted sexualized behaviors in a postsecondary setting in 2019
- Most students chose not to intervene, seek help or take other action in at least one instance when they witnessed unwanted sexualized behaviours, including 91% of women and 92% of men who witnessed such behaviours.

Resources

Sexual Violence Prevention & Response Office

- The Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office (SVPRO) supports all members of the University of Waterloo campus community who have experienced, or been impacted, by sexual violence.

Sexual Assault Support Centre of Waterloo Region

- We listen, facilitate healing, and celebrate resiliency. Using an intersectional feminist approach, we work to transform systems which promote gender-based violence.

World Mental Health Day



World Mental Health Day: October 10th, 2021

World Mental Health Day occurs on October 10th to raise awareness around the globe about the existence of, as well as issues related to, mental health. For many of us, mental health is something we're already familiar with; being in a progressive Western society, mental health stigma has largely gone away and we can talk freely about such topics. However, many places around the world do not consider it to be a public health issue, or even recognize its existence. We often take for granted the wide variety of resources and social support provided to us for our mental health around our campus and communities, but many people worldwide who suffer from mental illness are not given nearly the same amount of opportunities. We as a culture and country have come a long way with regards to mental health stigma, but we still need to work hard to help our friends, family, coworkers, and fellow Canadians realize that awareness is only the start of solving the mental health crisis.

Alarming statistics have been showing that there is indeed a crisis on our hands: the World Health Organization reports that over 467 million people worldwide struggle with mental illness, an estimated 5% of adults suffer from depression, and suicide is the second leading cause of death between ages 15-29.

The world is suffering, and the University of Waterloo is no different. A 2019 comprehensive health survey given to UW students produced disheartening results: (all results have the caveat *within the 12 months prior to taking the survey*)

- 63.4% of respondents felt things were hopeless
- 73.8% felt very lonely
- 48.0% felt so depressed it was difficult to function
- 64.5% felt overwhelming anxiety
- 16.0% seriously considered suicide

Social Connectedness

Not only did COVID-19 bring with it dangers of physical health, the lockdowns also brought an epidemic of loneliness: being forced to stay home and meet with people virtually greatly affects people's mental health. As we begin to move out of the pandemic, it is important to make an effort to combat the mental health problems that go along with lockdowns. And although it may be distressing, a time commitment, and something you may not be used to, one of the most effective ways to combat loneliness is to get out and socialize (in a COVID safe way). Understanding the fact that just interacting with and getting to know people can make a huge difference in your mental well-being is an important first step to try and get better. Or maybe its not you specifically but you know of someone who you suspect may be struggling -- reach out to them. Just showing them that you care will make a big difference.

For most of us, the hardest part of getting involved is stepping out of our bubble and out into the world. Social anxiety is a massive problem, as it prevents us from breaking out of our comfort bubble and being socially connected, which only makes the problem worse. When we've been in our COVID bubble for so long, it is even more difficult to be social again. But getting out will improve our lives and help us move past the difficult times of the past year and a half.

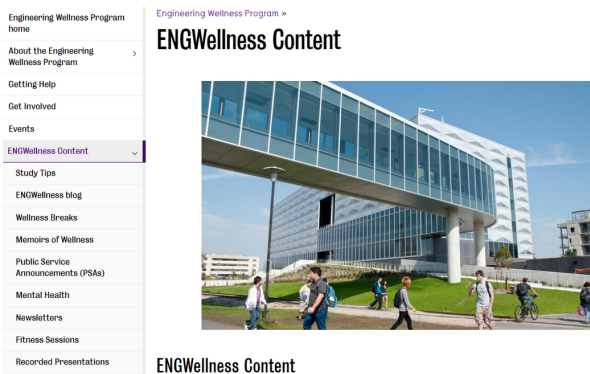
Mental Health Resources

The following mental health supports are available to you
Counselling Services - 519-888-4567 ext. 32655
Health Services - Student Medical Clinic - 519-888-4096
Empower Me – 1-833-628-5589

The following crisis supports are available to you as well
Crisis Services Canada: 1-833-531-2600 or text 45645
Good2Talk Helpline: 1-866-925-5454 or text GOOD2TALKON to 686868
Here 24/7 - 1-844-437-3247
UW Police - 519-888-4567 ext. 22222

ENGWellness Content

Check out our ENGWellness resources including mental health pages and PSAs. All resources as well as previous newsletters can be accessed under the ENGWellness Content section of our website.



Stay Connected

Be sure to follow us on social media to stay connected and updated.



[@uwengwell](#)



[@uwENGwellness](#)



[@UwengW](#)



[ENGwellness uwaterloo](#)

LEARN 'Course'

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

**WATERLOO
LEARN**

Calendar Pebble+ **Self Registration** UW Resources ▾ Course Request Help

Wellness Resources - for you to refer to 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 coaching session: (Limited in-person sessions available. Other sessions to be offered virtually.)

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