

CANADIAN MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

This is Canadian Mental health week. Yet anxiety, depression and other sorts of mental disorders are with us every day of the year. This is no less so, with this pandemic which continues to plague the working class, especially frontline workers.

Under normal circumstances, 1 in 5 adults and 1 in 5 children suffer from mental health issues at some point in their lives. That is a considerable proportion of the people in our union and in our communities. What can we do about it?

This mental health week is an ideal time to consider the following:

- Let's not look at mental health deterioration as a binary: healthy or ill;
- Let's acknowledge our fear and our anguish, living in these uncertain times;
- Let's reach out to others for a sympathetic ear and not judge;
- Let's practice self-care.

Ways that we can practice self-care include:

- Taking time to relax;
- Resisting the urge to numb our feelings;
- Eating well;
- Getting exercise and sufficient sleep;
- Reaching out, using the resources at the end of this bulletin.

There are unfair, untrue and hurtful characterizations of people who are suffering from mental anguish. These are outcomes of modern society, traumas, stress, uncertainty, shaming and many other factors. Challenges with mental health are not the result of individual character flaws. It places all responsibility on the suffering individual as if they alone have control over their health. It ignores social, cultural and medical factors that are at play. This is the tendency of our modern capitalist colonized society. Corporations place great value in making us "individual" consumers detached from our natural tendency toward cooperation and community.

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Buying more stuff and incessant shopping does not provide an increase in happiness but rather, a lack of fulfillment. This is not our nature as humans. Rather, it is the result of the development of systems that promote the individual as separate from others and one that merely seeks to gratify.

Far from being an individual issue, our collective and individual mental health has been ravaged by:

- the effects of widespread social and economic injustice on our psychic well-being;
- the obvious chasm between what we need as workers, and what employers are ready to supply;
- how neoliberal society blames the individual;
- homelessness and poverty, and how these produce shame and stigma;
- longer and harder unappreciated work which results in exhaustion.

It is important to know there is support and there is no shame in reaching out for it. We maintain a network of social stewards who, in full confidentiality, assist with referring you to options for support. CUPW is also developing a new online mental health course that will be available soon.

If you are suffering, please reach out to:

- **The social steward in your local**
- **The Canadian Mental Health Association: <https://cmha.ca>**

No one should suffer alone. Let's be patient with our differences and stand together for the wellbeing of all.

In solidarity,



Bev Collins
National Secretary-Treasurer



Dave Bleakney
2nd National Vice-President

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