

# MY student newsletter

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## Mental Health Awareness Month: Overcome Fear of Stigma to Seek Counseling

**P**ersonal challenges can impact well-being, and mental distractions that often accompany them can keep you from feeling like your best self. Your student assistance program (SAP) is an easy path to help with challenges, but does stigma or embarrassment hold you back? You are sure of confidentiality, but you believe handling problems on your own better demonstrates you are not incompetent or weak. Here's the big reveal: Nothing could be further from the truth. Seeking counseling is a courageous and proactive decision that demonstrates strength, self-awareness, and a commitment to personal growth. Just as you would seek medical care for a physical ailment, seeking counseling for challenges or emotional pain is a vital aspect of self-care. Today, organizations are committed to fostering a culture of support where seeking counseling is encouraged. So, go for it. Make the call. Your future self will thank you for it.

## Check Your Blood Pressure

**E**leven million people in the U.S. have hypertension (high blood pressure) and don't know it. Are you one of them? Monitor your blood pressure if you haven't done so before or if it's been a while since your last check. High blood pressure is often called the "silent killer" because it has virtually no noticeable symptoms until its effects suddenly create a hypertensive crisis, which could be a heart attack or stroke. Contrary to popular belief, experiencing a headache does not necessarily indicate high blood pressure! Scary fact: One-third of stroke victims experience vision loss—some permanently and in both eyes. Source: [millionhearts.hhs.gov](http://millionhearts.hhs.gov) [search "hypertension"]

## Overcome Springtime Stressors

**S**pringtime can include a surprising amount of stress. A menu of stressors typically includes final exam preparation, graduation planning and festivities, dating and relationship issues, loss of focus on school as it comes to an end, recreational pursuits, sport schedules, social events, college planning, and tough financial decisions. The big overlay is parenting challenges. If you're unfortunate enough to check all the stress boxes above this month, watch out for physical and psychological effects. Pick up some tips from your SAP or other professional counseling resources. Anxiety or depression can affect you at any time of year, and some say May is one of the most challenging times.

## Stay Safe on a Bicycle

**E**ach year, about 1,000 deaths occur from bike accidents, and most happen because traffic rules weren't followed. Accidental deaths in Canada involving bicycles is proportionately similar. Spring begins a surge in bicycle riding, so it's smart to consider tips you may not have heard of before to help you stay safe. Here's one regarding lighting: Safety is maximized during night riding when lights can be seen from both ends of your bicycle. Have one blinking to attract attention and a separate one that is steady on. This allows other road users to gauge your distance. In addition to proper lighting, wearing reflective clothing and using hand signals are also crucial for safe biking. Remember, staying visible and predictable on the road can significantly reduce the risk of accidents, ensuring a pleasant and secure ride for everyone. Source: [www.nhtsa.gov](http://www.nhtsa.gov) [search "bicycle safety rules"]

## Harvest Some Wellness with Indoor Gardening

**T**he therapeutic and mental health benefits of gardening have been shown in numerous studies, but you don't need a garden plot, backyard, or even a patio to reap the benefits of this activity. You can get all the advantages of gardening by using just a pot or two on a windowsill. Benefits include improving your mood, reducing stress and anxiety, and gaining self-satisfaction, mindfulness, and a feeling of accomplishment from growing your own food and nurturing a plant and watching it flourish. This gardening-centered activity can boost self-esteem and help you feel more capable and in control. The easiest things to grow in a small pot include leafy greens and herbs, microgreens, and even beans. Varieties of leafy greens such as lettuce, spinach, arugula, and kale all can be grown in small pots. Herbs and peppers are other options. They require a moderate amount of sunlight and can be harvested continuously by picking the outer leaves as they grow. Vegetables grown indoors may not yield as much as those grown outdoors in a garden, but you will still get the fun and rewards that accompany gardening. Gardening requires a certain level of focus and attention, which can promote a sense of well-being. And focusing on the present moment and the task at hand may help alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression. Experiment to see what your green thumb can do.

Source: Horticultural Therapy Association  
([www.ahta.org](http://www.ahta.org))

## Osteoporosis: Out of Sight, Out of Mind

**O**steoporosis is a disease that weakens bones and contributes to fractures. It's a myth that only the elderly are affected, although they do experience increased risk. Young people are affected by conditions that impede bone health. For example, a young person suffering from bulimia may sustain a bone fracture due to adverse effects of the condition interfering with the absorption of calcium and essential nutrients. Hormonal disorders, diabetes, celiac disease, inflammatory bowel disease, and conditions like rheumatoid arthritis can play a role in weakening bones. Certain medications also weaken bones, especially if they affect calcium or vitamin D absorption. Brittle bones in osteoporosis are comparable to dried twigs that snap easily when bent or stepped on. This fragility has implications for everyday activities, as even minor stresses could fracture a bone. Work closely with your medical doctor, know your risk for osteoporosis, and follow their guidance. Learn more: [www.columbiapsychiatry.org](http://www.columbiapsychiatry.org) [search "sri osteoporosis"]

## How to Fix Your Day

**E**xperiencing a negative event can disrupt your day, causing your previously uplifted mood to seemingly vanish. Take these actions to restore your positive mindset: 1) Admit things have been thrown out of whack and your feelings are normal. 2) Attempt a short "geographic" change (like a walk outside to change visuals away from the scene of the event). 3) Identify negative thoughts reverberating from the event. 4) Challenge the negative thoughts to disrupt their effects. 5) Identify positive thoughts to make #4 a speedier step. 6) Focus on what you can control—reaction, perspective, prevention, improvements, boundaries, self-care, etc. This gives you a constructive outlet to match your need to respond. 7) Plan a good thing or two—events, experiences, and treats—to rebalance the day. 8) Need support? Reach out to that friend to vent. 9) Find the lesson. Discover or consider what positive outcome exists indirectly or directly because of the event?) 10) Celebrate that you fixed your day!

## Mental Decluttering— a Different Kind of Spring Cleaning

**M**ental clutter is overwhelming stress created by the daily demands of modern life, our multiple roles, to-do lists, thoughts, emotions, responsibilities, and the constant influx of information. Enter the self-help concept of decluttering to reduce stress, improve concentration, enhance creativity, and cultivate a greater sense of well-being. Mental decluttering is about creating space for what truly matters and letting go of what no longer serves us mentally and emotionally. Signs indicating the need for mental decluttering include difficulty concentrating, experiencing a lack of creativity, and feeling disconnected from a positive sense of well-being. The practice of mental decluttering may involve various techniques, such as mindfulness meditation, journaling, prioritizing tasks, setting boundaries, and letting go of negative thoughts or emotions. New resource: "Declutter Your Mind and Stop Overthinking: 87 Tools & Techniques to Calm Your Mind & Improve Your Wellbeing (2023)"