



CHS NEWSLETTER

COMMUNITY HELP SERVICE

VOLUME 1. ISSUE 01 - September 2021

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CHS Celebrates 50 Years of Service

Community Help Service is a very special organisation providing mental health services for and by the English speaking community. This year, we celebrate 50 years of volunteer service and clinical expertise. Despite the challenges of the past years, the latest in particular,

CHS has built up an expertise, second to none, in providing therapeutic support to the people who turn to it in times of need. Celebrate with us by taking a few minutes of your day to learn more about mental health matters.



MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

Welcome to the first edition of our Newsletter. This is a particularly noteworthy time to publish for a number of reasons. Even before the pandemic, there was a pressing need to raise awareness about mental health issues. But now, in the aftermath of a global pandemic, a focus on mental health

has never been more relevant, more important. CHS is proud to be a community leader shedding light on these issues, encouraging community care and offering vital services. With this newsletter, we invite you to learn, share and find comfort in seeking the support you need.



Jeremy Jennings
Chairman of CHS Board

Health & WELLNESS

A Brief Introduction to Intuitive Eating

Becoming an intuitive eater can be a lengthy process. Intuitive eating means allowing your body and mind to come back to innate feelings of hunger and fullness. Sadly, it is often no longer natural for many people to be in tune with what their bodies are telling them when it comes to food intake. We are constantly surrounded by messages to eat well, lose weight, avoid excesses, keep in shape, watch how much sugar we eat, etc. We often follow rules dictating what foods we can and cannot eat. Today's society inundates us with healthy living messages. The goal of intuitive eating is to move away from these external messages and to listen to our internal cues.

There are ten principles to intuitive eating, the first being to **reject the diet mentality**. The idea behind this principle involves understanding that diets simply do not work.

The second principle of intuitive eating is to **honour your hunger**. Diets cannot decide how much an individual should eat or when somebody is hungry. Everyone has their own needs in terms of timing of meals, quantities, and variety of foods necessary to be satisfied. Following a diet forces us to use external indicators of how much and when to eat. People who have dieted for long periods of time are no longer able to listen to their internal sensations of hunger and fullness. This principle helps people to learn to eat when they are hungry and to stop when they are full.

The ten principles of intuitive eating do not need to be applied in order. Depending on where a person is in their process, the principles can be approached in any order. Self-care and self-compassion both play a big role in manoeuvring through the ten principles of intuitive eating. They help to work on being less judgemental and more in tune with our individual needs.



Photo credit: Pablo Merchán Montes on Unsplash

FAST FACTS - Principles of Intuitive Eating

1. Reject the diet mentality
2. Honour your hunger
3. Make peace with food
4. Challenge the food police
5. Discover the satisfaction factor
6. Feel your fullness
7. Cope with emotions
8. Respect your body
9. Movement
10. Gentle nutrition

Make an appointment with Kirsten Nagle-Canton, RD to learn more!

Author: Kirsten Nagle-Canton

SUICIDE

Author: Simon Dwyer

MYTHS vs FACTS

Suicide is a scary topic that is tough to talk about, but the stakes can be life or death. Thoughts of suicide are terrifying for the person experiencing them, and for those who may want to help. People can feel caught between wanting to help, and not wanting to make matters worse. Therefore, it is important to discuss a couple of myths about suicide.

Myth 1: Speaking with someone about their thoughts of suicide will encourage them to kill themselves.
FACT. Speaking about our problems is a key step in healing. Our best tools are clear questions. Ask, *'have you been having thoughts of suicide'* or

'do you think about killing yourself.'

Myth 2: People thinking about suicide are committed to dying.

FACT. Suicide is an act of severe desperation, facilitated by the heavy weight of depression, shame and hopelessness. A ray of hope can be powerful, and often needs to come from someone else.

Myth 3: Someone talking about suicide is attention seeking.

FACT. Most suicides have warning signs and talking about it is a clear one.

Have you noticed someone behaving differently? Reach out and speak with them. If they are not OK, ask them directly about suicide. The next step? Work with the person to connect them to their GP, a psychologist, or simply call CHS. The important thing is that you asked.



Photo credit: Pexels

FAREWELL

Author: Lise Skinnebach

From Lise Skinnebach, CHS Clinical and Helpline Team



Photo credit: cottonbro from Pexels

In 2010, I became a member of the CHS adult clinical team. Every Wednesday the whole team would get together in a big meeting room with no windows to discuss administrative matters and support each other professionally. I enjoyed it: the work was interesting and meaningful, the colleagues, kind and skilled. The office constituted a special place: you would drop by to say hello and good-bye but it was also a place to chat, to laugh and feel part of a team!

A year later I joined Chana Schneps on the Helpline and became part of a big group of dedicated and empathetic volunteers. During my eight years with the Helpline, many people were members. I hope and think that for most of them, it has been memorable

and meaningful. Listening is the key word in this group; Chana has patiently and wisely demonstrated, again and again, how listening is the most powerful form of acknowledgment – that listening is an act of love.

It is with a grateful heart that I now say good-bye. Thank you dear CHS members, thank you for your support and kindness. I sincerely hope to be back one day.



If one were to design a social experiment the purpose of which was to make healthy and happy people depressed, what might it entail? Keeping the participants locked up for many months? Making sure they are unable to see friends and family? Terrifying them with the idea of contracting an unpredictable new virus? The Covid-19 pandemic has felt like it has been designed to achieve exactly this. It is therefore, no wonder that we are facing a tidal wave of mental health difficulties because of this global trauma.

Covid-19 has provided new and unknown threats for which we were totally unprepared. Stress and increased anxiety are in fact natural reactions to the unpredictable times in which our health and financial security are threatened but, it is helpful to understand the reasoning behind this experience.

How does COVID-19 affect people at various life stages?

Infants have fewer opportunities to socialise and may not get to bond with extended family. They also have had fewer chances to explore the environment, to develop social communication and play skills.

Children have fewer opportunities to form and maintain friendships and must rely on technology to stay connected with others. Not being able to practice their hobbies or to try new activities, may not only have a negative impact on children's physical health, but also on their sense of mastery, self-confidence and psychological wellbeing. At an emotional level, children may experience anxiety associated with the information and experiences they have been exposed to.

Mental Health During Covid-19



Photo by Ekrulila from Pexels

Adolescents are at risk of developing anxiety and/or depression as they are at a developmental stage associated with intense, often overwhelming emotions. It is a formative stage which adolescents have had to navigate almost entirely online.

Adults may worry about the possibility of catching the virus, and the potential impact that the illness could have physically, emotionally and financially. Many adults have also faced additional care responsibilities for older relatives or children staying home from school.

The elderly are the most physically vulnerable age group and may be worried about catching the virus. Additionally, having to restrict their contact with family members and other sources of social support, they could feel lonelier and more isolated than ever.

People of all ages are greatly affected by the current pandemic. We are all currently at risk in terms of our mental wellbeing. We may need to consider reaching out for professional help if things get tough.

When should one consider reaching out for professional help?

If you feel you are unable to cope with everyday demands or keep up at work; you are unable to regulate your emotions; your sleep pattern and appetite have changed dramatically; you are using alcohol or drugs to cope; feel like old trauma is resurfacing or that you are a burden to others; you are unable to leave home; have suicidal thoughts or your friends and family are worried about you, then it is a good idea to have an appointment with a mental health professional.

Authors:

Nicole Josephson & Malena Digiuni

Discover How Art Psychotherapy Is Good for Wellbeing

Author: Angela Haren

Art psychotherapy is a form of therapy that uses art media like painting, drawing, collage, and sculpturing with clay, as its primary mode of expression. It can help us to address difficult emotions that are not easily understood or expressed in words. It uses the nonverbal language of art for personal growth, giving us unique insights and connecting us to our thoughts and feelings in new ways. It is based on the belief that images can help us

to understand who we are and that by participating in its production, we can enhance our lives through self-expression. Although art psychotherapy is considered to be relatively new, it is actually one of the more ancient forms of healing.

Often when we are troubled and confused by a situation or a feeling, and we allow ourselves to express it through art therapy in the company of a trained art psychotherapist, we

can begin to feel relief, healing and even empowerment.

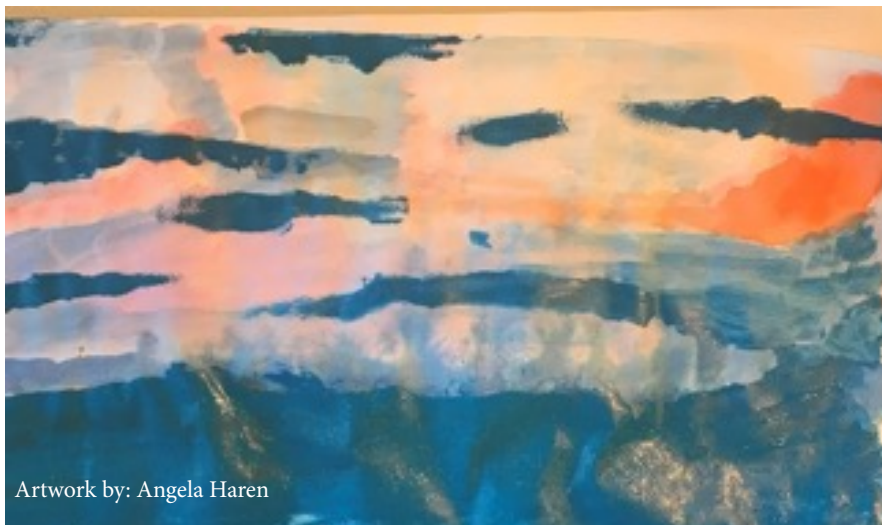
Clients may worry that they need to have previous art experience to participate but this is simply not the case. The work is more symbolic compared to the aesthetic artwork that we find in galleries. The only requirement is a willingness to try.

Life experience or circumstances can cause us to feel anxious, depressed, confused, whether we struggle with grief or loss, mental health issues, physical disabilities, neurological conditions or physical ill health. However, I believe we all have the right to feel well. My personal experience of art making as a therapy have shown me its transformative and reparative qualities and I hope to share it with others.

Should you wish to find out more about it please feel free to contact me. I work with all ages including children, adolescents and adults, and on an individual basis or in groups, depending on the needs of each client.

Angela Haren MA HCPC (UK trained and registered):

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Artwork by: Angela Haren

Art making may be an exploration of texture of feelings



Artwork by: Angela Haren

Art making can be a sequence of lines that allows us to connect to our feelings

To understand more about Art Psychotherapy or to hear how clients feel after using it, please check this website:

<https://www.baat.org/About-Art-Therapy/Art-Therapy-service-users-share-their-experiences>

If you'd like to learn even more, feel free to check out the following book: **Art Heals: How Creativity Cures the Soul** by Shaun McNiff.

We are getting 'Back to Normal' but how does that feel?

Author: Dr. Alessia Ciani

After a year of anxiety, anger, and burnout, many are struggling with returning to pre-pandemic behaviors. Lockdown restrictions in Belgium have been lifted and at the end of summer some will return to work and schools, businesses will reopen. Many are ecstatic having already gone back to travelling, socialising and partying.

However, there is another reality. A lot of people have spent the summer at home, anxious about socialising and fearful of a world without restrictions and distancing.

18 months of lockdown, ongoing limitations and restrictions, loneliness, monotony, distance from our children or parents, financial insecurity and job losses are some of the many factors which have caused an extraordinary rise in anxiety, depression, burn out, substance misuse and suicide.

This is not unique only to patients with pre-existing mental health conditions. We cannot deny the lingering psychological effects of the pandemic even as we get 'back to normal.' And if you are struggling, it may help to understand the why.

In situations of prolonged fear or stress, the prefrontal cortex of the brain, which allows us to think, plan and focus, literally switches off to divert energy to respond to a perceived threat. As a result, we may become very sensitive, emotional, angry, or even dull and disconnected. If we conceptualise the pandemic as a chronic exposure to fear, anxiety, and uncertainty, we start to get a sense of why so many people are struggling.

Similarly, our capacity to adapt and adjust to the environment is driven primarily by our brain. A smaller region known as the amygdala modulates the fear response in humans. When you feel threatened and afraid, the amygdala reacts by producing stress hormones which allow us to fight or flee our environment. However, when we are subjected to long periods of fear, our brain and body become constantly stressed. If it goes on for too long, we may become unable to cope.

Our body is doing its best to respond to the many threats presented by the pandemic, but this may still leave us feeling anxious and depressed. For some, that means feeling sad,

unmotivated, and unable to feel connected. Others feel tired and exhausted. The experience may be confusing as folks lose their focus, their ability to concentrate and plan and their natural capacity to adapt.

However, there is a bright side!

We can support our brains and our mental health by getting outside, exercising regularly, connecting with family and friends, venturing out into everyday life, and breaking unhealthy coping behaviours. With time, these activities can help our brain to cope with the anxiety of getting back out there, by building a sense of normalcy that will help this precious organ to adapt to ongoing and future stress.

Most importantly, we must remind ourselves humans are a social species that relies on connection and cooperation to survive and thrive. Connecting with others may be a fear but it may also be a resource in this new normal.



Calendar Cover Artist: Calder Goldman

ATTENTION!

CHS CALENDAR 2022 IS NOW AVAILABLE

The Calendar is available free of charge. Donations are welcome!

<https://www.chsbelgium.org/en/index.php/how-you-can-help/sponsor>

If you would like a copy, please email us at office@chsbelgium.org, or collect from one of our stockists listed below.

Calendar Stockists:

- Directly from the CHS office.
- Gourmet International, Rue Archimède 59, 1000 Brussels, 02 735 11 38.
- Gourmet International, Allée du Petit Paris 5b, 1410 Waterloo, 02 353 04 30.
- Stonemanor, Steenhofstraat 28, 3078 Everberg, 02 759 49 79.
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- Waterstones, Boulevard Adolphe Max 71-75, 1000 Brussels, 02 219 27 08.
- Treasure Trove, Hoornzeelstraat 35, 3080 Tervuren, 02 688 08 20



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