Grad Minds Presents:

Prioritizing Your Wellness as a Grad Student

Presentation by Jacalyn Kelly
Grad Minds Co-Chair

The University of Toronto Graduate Students’ Union
The University of Toronto Graduate Students’ Union (UTGSU)

The UTGSU represents graduate students and lobbies national and provincial issues on your behalf. The UTGSU Committees and Caucuses engage students through community building events and campaigns. The UTGSU also offers services such as bursaries and gym access.

https://www.utgsu.ca/
16 Bancroft Avenue, Toronto, ON., M5S 1C1
Telephone: (416) 978-2391
Email: info@utgsu.ca

Grad Minds: The Official Mental Health Committee of the UTGSU

- Mental health education and awareness events
- Mental health speaker events
- Annual Mental Health Conference
- Mental Health Magazine “Elemental”
- Collaborate with other mental health groups and initiatives on campus
Why is Mental Health Important?

- Everyone has mental health – it is your state of psychological and emotional well-being.

- Everyone can experience mental health challenges including stress, anxiety and feelings of depression. This can affect the enjoyment you get out of life and may affect the ease of performing your every day activities.

- 1 in 4 individuals, including in the university community, have a mental illness including anxiety disorders, clinical depression, eating disorders, addiction, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia among others.

- In a recently conducted study of 3,000 international graduate students, 44% said they had mental health issues that “significantly affected their well-being or academic performance”.

- Mental illnesses and mental health challenges can be dealt with through many different methods, which can help anyone improve how they feel and function on a day-to-day basis.
In Canada, mental health and mental illness are widely discussed topics that are consistently becoming more and more openly discussed.

While stigma still exists, there are a lot of organizations, universities and groups dedicated to eliminating stigma and educating the community about mental illness and taking care of mental health, as well as providing resources.

Some mental health awareness dates in Canada:

- **January 31st** – Bell Let’s Talk Day
- **September 10th** – World Suicide Prevention Day
- **October 1-7th** – Mental Health Awareness Week

You are encouraged to open up about mental health challenges, at the least with doctors and counsellors, to obtain the help and treatment you may need to feel better.
Let’s Talk about Stress

Discussion Question

What are you worried, stressed or anxious about right now as you begin graduate school in Canada?
Mental Health of Graduate Students

Factors affecting the mental well-being of graduate students:

- Internal pressure to get results in research and publish, compete with peers in your field
- Imposter Syndrome
- Pressure from supervisors to produce results/Poor supervisor relationship
- Less formally structured environment
- Financial stress from limited stipend support
- Challenges in balancing adult life with grad school
- Not having a clear path of what to do after graduate school
Mental Health of Graduate Students

- **Internal pressure to get results in research and publish, compete with peers in your field**
  - Focus on one thing at a time, rather than everything you must do, during the day
  - Remember that everyone’s project is different and achieves results at a different pace

- **Imposter Syndrome**
  - Identify your negative thoughts and talk about them
  - Think like a non-imposter (reframe thoughts)
  - Know you can’t be good at everything, and be fine with that
  - Mentoring

- **Pressure from supervisors to produce results/Poor supervisor relationship**
  - Speak to your supervisor about your concerns/roadblocks/their expectations
  - Speak to trusted members of your lab about managing supervisor relationship
  - Graduate Conflict Resolution Center. Make an appointment at 416-978-8920 or gradcrc@utoronto.ca
  - It is possible to change supervisors. Remember that abuse is never acceptable

- **Less formally structured environment**
  - Set short-term and long-term goals with deadlines, print out calendars and plan
  - Ask for help - talk to experienced graduate students, post-docs and mentors
Mental Health of Graduate Students

- **Financial stress from limited stipend support**
  - Create a log of what you purchase to control your spending
  - Look for opportunities to reduce spending – making food and coffee at home
  - Apply for all scholarships you can – and put your best foot forward
  - Get a part-time job that works with your schedule – *i.e.* on campus
  - Sell items online – UofT Free and For Sale Group, Ebay

- **Challenges in balancing adult life with grad school**
  - Remember personal time and social interaction are crucial to mental well-being, which strongly affects academic success
  - Be realistic with your expectations of what you can achieve in a given time given your responsibilities
  - Find opportunities to multi-task – *i.e.* getting readings done while on the subway

- **Not having a clear path of what to do after graduate school**
  - Recognize that most people are in the same situation
  - Talk to Academic Success Center
  - Talk to supervisors, post-docs, mentors
  - Attend career events
Unique Challenges of International Graduate Students

- General living adjustment, such as becoming accustomed to life in Canada and its food, housing, environment, and transportation
- Academic adjustment to the Canadian university system and the skills needed for success
- Sociocultural adjustment, such as cultural norms and behaviors
- Personal psychological adjustment, such as homesickness, loneliness, or feelings of isolation and lost identity
Unique Challenges of International Graduate Students

- **General living adjustment, such as becoming accustomed to life in Canada and its food, housing, environment, and transportation**
  - Remember you will become adjusted with time, be realistic with your expectations
  - Ask!

- **Academic adjustment to the Canadian university system**
  - Academic Success Center
  - Discuss with supervisor and peers, UofT website

- **Sociocultural adjustment, such as cultural norms and behaviors**
  - Torontonians tend to be adjusted to multiculturalism and open to helping and befriending those from other cultures and helping them adjust
  - Multifaith Center on Campus to connect to personal culture and/or religion

- **Personal psychological adjustment (homesickness, loneliness, isolation and lost identity)**
  - Connect with a spiritual or cultural group at UofT or in Toronto
  - Join a club at UofT to develop social connections: [https://www.ulife.utoronto.ca/](https://www.ulife.utoronto.ca/)
  - Make time to phone home – put in your schedule
How to Deal with Stress?

Discussion Question

How do you deal with stress? What works for you?
Anxiety and Depression

**Anxiety**: feelings of apprehensive worry, doubt and fear, combined with physical symptoms such as elevated heart rate.

**Depression**: persistently low mood and a feeling of sadness, tiredness and loss of interest.

Recent studies have found that depression and anxiety are 6x more common among graduate students than in the general population.

Anxiety and depression can be acute – a few very challenging days, weeks, months or years and be the result of life circumstances.

For some, anxiety and depression result from inherent differences in hormone levels in their brain, causing life-long struggles often categorized as anxiety disorders and clinical depression.
Symptoms of Anxiety and Depression

### Symptoms of Anxiety
- Nervousness, restlessness
- Panic
- Rapid heart rate or breathing
- Increased sweating
- Trembling
- Weakness and lethargy
- Difficulty focusing
- Insomnia
- Digestive problems

### Symptoms of Depression
- Consistent sadness
- Hopelessness
- Loss of interest in things
- Lethargy and exhaustion
- Sleep problems
- Changes in appetite or weight
- Difficulty focusing
- Unexplained pains
- Irritability

***It is typical to be anxious or have strong feelings of sadness once in a while and in reaction to a specific event. If symptoms of anxiety and depression occur with a frequency and/or severity that impact your daily quality of life, this may be an indication of severe anxiety, an anxiety disorder or clinical depression***
Coping Strategies for Dealing with Anxiety

- Deep breaths and breathing exercises
- Meditation – Multifaith Center
- Yoga – Grad Minds Yoga! Mondays 12-1
- Exercise
- Confiding or socializing with friends and family
- Lavender essential oil
- Counseling and therapy

Counselors, Therapists and Psychiatrists can help you with obtaining:

- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
- Anti-anxiety medication for severe cases and anxiety disorders
Coping Strategies for Dealing with Depression

- Meditation
- Exercise
- Confiding or socializing with friends and family
- Counseling and Therapy
- Avoiding alcohol and recreational drugs
- Track your mood to notice your depression symptoms
- Challenge yourself to keep doing your routine daily activities
- Positive self-talk
- Improve your sleep habits
- Herbal treatment - St. John’s Wort
- Find an activity you enjoy

Psychiatrists can help you with obtaining:

- Anti-depressant medication for severe cases
Thinking of Suicide or Know Someone Who Is?

Get help right away by taking one of these actions:

- Call the Distress Center Hotline at 416-408-4357
- Call a mental health specialist.
- Seek help from your doctor or other health care provider.
- Reach out to a close friend or loved one.
- Contact a minister, spiritual leader or someone else in your faith community.
- Call 911 or your local emergency number.

Coping strategies

Don't try to manage suicidal thoughts or behavior on your own. Professional help and support are often required to overcome the problems linked to suicidal thinking.

Your doctor or mental health provider can help you identify coping strategies tailored to your specific situation.
Other Prevalent Mental Illnesses

**Eating disorders**
- **Anorexia** - fear of gaining weight, and a strong desire to be thin or gain control, resulting in severe food restriction.
- **Bulimia** - binge eating followed by purging due to the strong desire to be thin or obtain control.

**Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)** - chronic disorder causing uncontrollable, reoccurring thoughts (obsessions) and behaviors (compulsions) that one has the urge to repeat over and over.

**Bipolar Disorder** – disorder causing unprecedented altering periods of depression and abnormally elevated mood.

**Schizophrenia** – disorder causing challenges in perceiving reality, including hallucinations, delusions, feelings of numbness, and a hard time concentrating.

**Post Traumatic Stress Disorder** - disorder that can develop after exposure to a traumatic event causing disturbing thoughts, feelings, or dreams related to the events and mental or physical distress.

**Addiction** - compulsive engagement in stimuli despite adverse consequences, often to mask fear or pain.
Health and Wellness Center
https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hwc
healthask@mail.studentlife.utoronto.ca

214 College Street, 2nd Floor
Koffler Student Services Centre
University of Toronto
Toronto, ON M5T 2Z9

Regular hours (See Summer Hours online):
Monday, Thursday and Friday: 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Tuesday and Wednesday: 9:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.

OISE Psychology Clinic
$25/session
416-978-0620
oiseclinic@utoronto.ca

252 Bloor Street West, Suite 7-296
Toronto, ON M5S 1V2
UofT Sexual Education and Peer Counselling Centre
Room 101-102
91 St. George Street
Counselling Line: 416-978-8732
Administrative Line: 416-978-3100
E-mail: sex.ed@utoronto.ca

Accessibility Services
455 Spadina Avenue, 4th Floor, Suite 400
416-978-8060
https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as
accessibility.services@utoronto.ca

Sexual and Gender Diversity Office
21 Sussex Avenue, Suites 416-417
416-946-5624
http://sgdo.utoronto.ca/

Academic Success Center
214 College Street
416-978-970
https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as
mail.asc@utoronto.ca
Free Counselling Services in Toronto

**EdgeWest**
1900 Davenport, Toronto, ON, M6N 1B7
416-652-4363
edgewest.ca

Translation services available
Must live in Toronto's West Side

**Family Services Toronto**
128A Sterling Rd, Toronto, ON
416-595-9618
www.familyservicetoronto.org/

Services are available to everyone who lives or works in Toronto.

Mental Health Programs and services include:
* Walk-In Counselling
* Counselling
* Lesbian & Gay Community Counselling
* Violence Against Women (VAW)

**Woodgreen**
815 Danforth Avenue, Suite 100, Toronto, ON, M4J 1L2
416-645-6000 x1100
www.woodgreen.org

Various services and programs including:
* Walk-In Counselling
* Health and wellness
* Immigrant settlement
Other Counselling Services in Toronto (with Fee)

TorontoPsychotherapists.ca

An online directory for finding quality, well-trained psychotherapists in the Toronto area

416-580-0771
www.torontopsychotherapists.ca

Ages served: All ages
Languages served: English
Fees: Yes
To be seen: Clients/families may self refer
Area Served: Toronto
Community Helplines

Good 2 Talk
1-866-925-5454

Suicide Prevention Hotline
1-800-273-8255

Distress Center Helpline
416-408-4357
https://torontodistresscentre.com/408-help-line

Gerstein Center Crisis Line
416-929-5200

Assaulted Women’s Helpline
416-863-0511
http://www.awhl.org

Drug and Alcohol Helpline
1-800-565-8603
http://www.drugandalcoholhelpline.ca

Ontario Gambling Helpline
1-888-230-3505
http://www.problemgamblinghelpline.ca/
Online Resources

**UofT Graduate Wellness Portal**
[http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/currentstudents/Pages/wellness-portal.aspx](http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/currentstudents/Pages/wellness-portal.aspx)

**eMentalHealth.ca**

**Inkblot** – video-based counselling and therapy
[https://inkblottherapy.com](https://inkblottherapy.com)

**TranQool** – video-based counselling and therapy
[https://tranqool.com](https://tranqool.com)

**Be Safe** – app for helping making decisions in crisis
[https://besafeapp.ca/](https://besafeapp.ca/)

**E-Couch** – self-help resource

**Headspace** – app for mindfulness and meditation
[https://www.headspace.com/](https://www.headspace.com/)

**7 Cups - Anxiety and Stress Chat**
[https://www.7cups.com](https://www.7cups.com)

**Breathe2Relax** – stress management tool
Apple Store
Get Involved in Mental Health Advocacy on Campus!

Become a member of the Grad Minds team!
Email us at mentalhealth@utgsu.ca
Message us on the Grad Minds Facebook page

UMatter
ÜMatter is a student led initiative focused on increasing well-being and mental health on campus.

Jack.org UofT Chapter
Aims to help students recognize that they all have mental health while erasing the stigma surrounding mental illness.
Email: jackchapterutsg@gmail.com

University of Toronto Mental Health Association (MHA)
Promotes and educates staff and students on the significance of mental health around campus.
Email: angelika.kuzma@mail.utoronto.ca

Your Mind Matters (LTUT)
Engages conversation about mental health and provides support and resources for students with mental health issues.
Email: vanessa.bancheri@mail.utoronto.ca

De-Stress UofT (DST)
A trusted group where students can verbalize fears and stress in a judgement-free zone that constantly seeks a remedy to it.
Email: destress@utoronto.ca

heART - Mental Health and Art
Creates an accepting and open environment where students can support each other through relaxing art projects.
Email: heartintoronto@gmail.com

UTSC Eating Disorders Association (UTSC EDA)
Supports those with eating disorders through donations, year-round events, advocacy and awareness campaigns.
Email: utsc.eda@gmail.com

Healthy Minds UofT
Helps students build a strong, supportive community, reduces stigmatization of mental health, provides strategies for self-care
https://www.facebook.com/pg/HealthyMindsUT/
healthymindsut@gmail.com
Keep Updated on Mental Health and Other Events on Campus!

UTGSU Weekly Digest
Upcoming Mental Health Events on Campus

“I’m Okay” Mental Health Movie Screening and Panel Discussion
September 7th, 7-10 pm, 608 College Street
(https://www.facebook.com/events/210730946189417/)

Supporting Students in Distress Workshop
Department of Medical Biophysics
September 19th, 4-5 pm, Toronto Medical Discovery Tower - MaRS 101
College Street Room 4-204

Grad Minds Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Workshop with Speaker from the Center for Addiction and Mental Health
September 27th, 5:30-7 pm, On Campus (Specific location TBD)
Speaker: Dr. Tanaya Chatterjee
Prioritize your mental wellness!

The University of Toronto Graduate Students’ Union
Online Resources

UofT Graduate Wellness Portal
http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/currentstudents/Pages/wellness-portal.aspx

eMentalHealth.ca

Inkblot – video-based counselling and therapy
https://inkblottherapy.com

TranQool – video-based counselling and therapy
https://tranqool.com

Be Safe – app for helping making decisions in crisis
https://besafeapp.ca/

E-Couch – self-help resource
https://ecouch.anu.edu.au/welcome

Headspace – app for mindfulness and meditation
https://www.headspace.com/

7 Cups: Anxiety and Stress Chat
https://www.7cups.com
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When thinking about suicide or self-harm

Get help right away by taking one of these actions:

• Call the Distress Center Hotline at 416-408-4357
• Call a mental health specialist.
• Seek help from your doctor or other health care provider.
• Reach out to a close friend or loved one.
• Contact a minister, spiritual leader or someone else in your faith community.
• Call 911 or your local emergency number.

Learn coping strategies

Don't try to manage suicidal thoughts or behavior on your own. You need professional help and support to overcome the problems linked to suicidal thinking. Your doctor or mental health provider can help you identify coping strategies tailored to your specific situation.

https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-depth/suicide/art-20048230
Community Helplines

Good 2 Talk
1 866 925 5454

Distress Center Helpline
416 408 4357
https://torontodistresscentre.com/408-help-line

Gerstein Center Crisis Line
416 929 5200

Assaulted Women’s Helpline
416 863 0511
http://www.awhl.org

Drug and Alcohol Helpline
1 800 565 8603
http://www.drugandalcoholhelpline.ca

Ontario Gambling Helpline
1 888 230 3505
http://www.problemgamblinghelpline.ca/
Campus Resources and Services

**Health and Wellness Center**
https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hwc
healthask@mail.studentlife.utoronto.ca

214 College Street, 2nd Floor
Koffler Student Services Centre
University of Toronto
Toronto, ON M5T 2Z9

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Tuesday and Wednesday: 9:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.

**OISE Psychology Clinic**
$25/session
416-978-0620
oiseclinic@utoronto.ca

252 Bloor Street West, Suite 7-296
Toronto, ON M5S 1V2

**Accessibility Services**
416 978 8060
https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as
Accessibility.services@utoronto.ca

**Sexual and Gender Diversity Office**
416 946 5624
http://sgdo.utoronto.ca/

**Academic Success Center**
416 978 7970
https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as
mail.asc@utoronto.ca
FREE Community Counselling Services

**EdgeWest**

1900 Davenport
Toronto, ON, M6N 1B7
416-652-4363
edgewest.ca

Translation services available
Must live in Toronto's West Side

**Family Services Toronto**

128A Sterling Rd.
Toronto, ON
416-595-9618
www.familyservicetoronto.org/

Services are available to everyone who lives or works in Toronto.

**Woodgreen**

815 Danforth Avenue, Suite 100
Toronto, ON, M4J 1L2
416-645-6000 x1100
www.woodgreen.org

Various services and programs including:
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* Health and wellness
* Immigrant settlement

Mental Health Programs and services include:
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* Counselling
* Lesbian & Gay Community Counselling
* Violence Against Women (VAW)
(Often, international students build social support quickly with other international students on campus. International students may rely heavily on their peers, rather than professionals, for both social support and for information on resources and opportunities.

Because international students often rely on their academic advisors as their primary institutional tie, advisors may be important factors in both emotional well-being during graduate school and in directing international students to appropriate resources on campus when necessary. However, research on advisors shows that, although they are often aware of crisis situations, advisors are often unaware of more subtle manifestations of emotional problems that may reflect both cultural differences and the sensitivities of both expressing and detecting emotional problems.)
UTSC Good2Talk
This club aims to raise awareness about Good2Talk which is an organization that provides free, professional and anonymous support to Ontario post-secondary students. They provide support with a variety of issues including mental health, relationships, sexuality, financial stresses, legal concerns and more. This club aims to enhance the understanding of students at UTSC about these issues, which are very much relevant across the entire student body.