

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 and Grad Minds

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

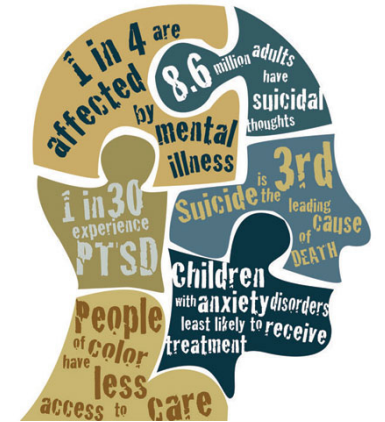
- Mental health education and awareness events
- Mental health speaker events
- Annual Mental Health Conference
- Mental Health Magazine "Elemental"
- Collaborate with other mental health groups and initiatives on campus





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.





Culture of Mental Health in Canada

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/>
 - Make time to phone home – put in your schedule



How to Deal with Stress?

Discussion Question

How do you to 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.

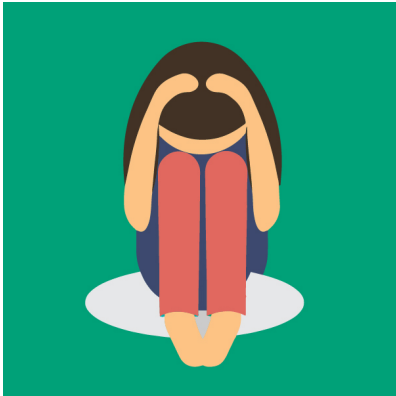
For some, anxiety and depression result from inherent differences in hormone levels in their brain, causing life-long struggles often categorized as anxiety disorders and clinical depression.





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

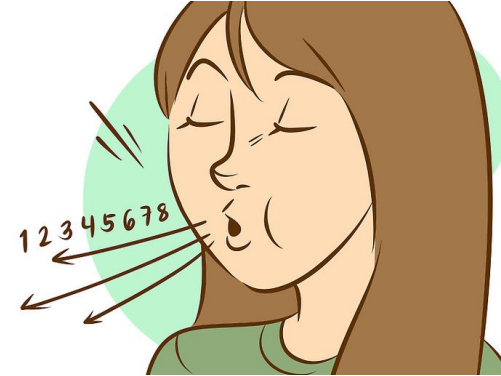
- Consistent sadness
- Hopelessness
- Loss of interest in things
- Lethargy and exhaustion
- Sleep problems
- Changes in appetite or weight
- Difficulty focusing
- Unexplained pains
- Irritability

***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.





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

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





Campus Resources and Services

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



UofT Sexual Education Centre

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

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

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)



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

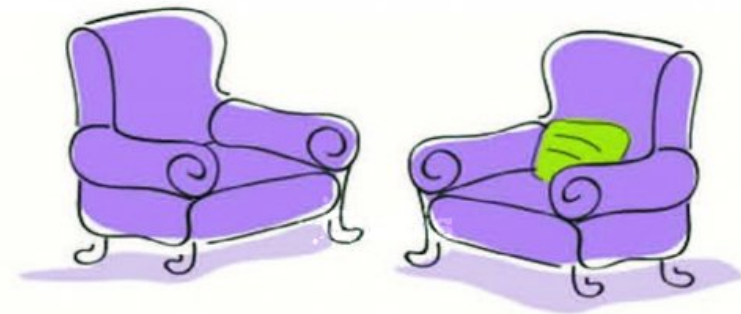
Ages served: All ages

Languages served: English

Fees: Yes

To be seen: Clients/families may self refer

Area Served: Toronto



TorontoPsychotherapists.ca



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>

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>

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

UMatter 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

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When thinking about suicide or self-harm

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- Call a mental health specialist.
- Seek help from your doctor or other health care provider.
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- 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/depth/suicide/art-20048230>

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Gerstein Center Crisis Line

416 929 5200

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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/>

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healthask@mail.studentlife.utoronto.ca

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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](tel:4169788060)
<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](tel:4169787970)
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mail.asc@utoronto.ca

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1900 Davenport Toronto, ON, M6N 1B7

416-652-4363

edgewest.ca

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- * 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.¹³ 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.¹⁴

Peer2Peer

p2puoft@gmail.com

<https://www.facebook.com/p2puoft/>

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.

Email: