



September 2020
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Early Years Muskoka Professional Development Newsletter



HELLO!

Here is your September EYMPD newsletter that I hope finds you healthy, happy, and looking forward to the coziness of the fall season.

As my hope for the above remains strong, I am also aware that there is a number of you that are currently experiencing emotional discomfort caused by ways the pandemic continues to shape our reality.

While, fortunately, anxiety does not affect all of us. I think that we can all benefit from gaining more insight into the condition as it seems to be on a rise.

On a personal note, having recently discovered benefits of matcha, I got into a habit of enjoying a cup of matcha on regular basis. It is surprisingly easy to make and apparently gentler on one's system than coffee which can leave some with a jittery feeling. [Here](#) is a recipe that I use when making it. Let me know if you tried it, please!



Keep in touch!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "K. Oxley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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Please note that the information contained in this newsletter is intended to encourage conversation and self-reflection and is not to be considered as advice.

OMSSA Anxiety - Practical Interventions Webinar

Learning format: webinar

OMSSA Anxiety - Overview and Awareness Webinar

Learning format: webinar

Time commitment: 1 hour, 5 minutes
Areas of interest: mental health, self-help, psychology
Certificate of completion: yes

While every person experiences anxiety, it is estimated that over a quarter of the population will experience anxiety at levels that cause distress in their lives. When high levels of distress are experienced, it is important for people to be able to access strategies for reducing anxiety. This webinar presents practical and accessible strategies which can be applied to all ages, and help address the physical, emotional, cognitive, and social aspects of anxiety.

[Click here for the Webinar!](#)
Password: omssa237d3

Time commitment: 56 minutes
Areas of interest: mental health, psychology
Certificate of completion: yes

Anxiety represents our body's natural alarm system, signaling the possibility of danger. When this response arises too frequently or intensely and doesn't match actual situations of danger, it can interfere with life and cause great distress. While every person experiences anxiety, it is estimated that over a quarter of the population will experience anxiety at levels that cause distress in their lives. This webinar will explore when anxiety is adaptive and in order, compared to when it becomes disordered.

[Click here for the Webinar!](#)
Password: omssa456e2

In the most recent edition of CECE newsletter Connexions, "Council President, Stacey Lepine RECE, sat down with Dr. Jean Clinton — a psychiatrist and advocate for children's mental health — for a special talk inspired by the unfolding pandemic. Dr. Jean, as she likes to be called, shares her expertise in dealing with children's emotions in this extraordinary time. Dr. Jean also has ideas and tips to help you make the challenging transition back to on-site work smooth and with confidence."

Learning format: video
Time commitment: 1 hour, 3 minutes
Areas of interest: children's mental health, stress, coping techniques, self-care

[Have a listen!](#)

Please write to [Kasia](#) to let her know your thoughts on anxiety for a chance to win a resource of your choice (value of up to \$50.00)

Here is a reflection on anxiety in children submitted by **Christine Fishman**, a local RECE. **Thank you Christine!** To learn more about Christine, [click here to visit her website.](#)

"Resiliency, the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness."-Oxford Dictionary. Resilience or being resilient wasn't a word I actively referenced until adulthood and numerous therapy sessions later. In fact, mental health, specifically children's mental health, wasn't something openly discussed when I was growing up. Through my own diagnosis of generalized anxiety disorder well into my adulthood I began my journey into mental health and really honed my interest in children's mental health after having children of my own, one of which also has anxiety, and working with children of varying backgrounds, cultures, ages and abilities and the one thing that I have learned thus far is that mental health doesn't discriminate, but it doesn't have to define you. Teaching resiliency skills to our early learners will help to create a strong and firm foundation for our children to build their emotional well-being upon.

Our job as parents, caregivers and educators is to teach, model, mentor and foster growth and development for our youngest members of society. Arguably the most important job, it is also (arguably) the toughest. Finding a balance between managing our own stressors and triggers while impressionable eyes are upon us is a juggling act of precision. It is also the most wonderful gift we could ever give our children. When our children see us in our lowest moments mentally and emotionally, those times are the perfect opportunities to lead by example to prove to them and us that even though a situation is tough, we are tougher. It is important to show our children effective problem solving and discuss the hard work that goes into working through the low times so we can appreciate the positive. One of the most effective tools I have to use and to teach about is empathy while building a secure attachment. What glorious words and a pleasant, hopeful concept; building a community that surrounds our children with love. Brene Brown (one of my favourites) discusses this ideology so perfectly. "Empathy fuels connection, sympathy drives disconnection". For us to really help our children switch their thinking from a negative mentality to positive thinking, we must first connect. Empathy is the concrete footing for society, lack of empathy are the potholes. Making a solid connection with our children in infancy, being in tune with their emotional and physical needs will create the framework for trust, emotional regulation and support later in life, which will

help us to better understand our children's big emotions even when they can't articulate it themselves. This dire need to connect was demonstrated during the Still Face experiment by Dr. Edward Tronnick back in the 1970's and has been replicated on different occasions since. When a child feels connected and supported through a secure attachment with an adult, they are more apt to want to share their vulnerability in a safe space in which we can then discuss positive resilience strategies in a calm reassuring manner. Connection can be done through various ways and it's up to us to know our children/the children we work with and the best way to make that connection.

"Play is the work of the child"-Maria Montessori. Let's play together! Play allows a child to work through trauma, lowers anxiety in a safe space, allows for practice of new skills, develops social skills and fine tunes motor skills and brain development. When we play with a child, it helps them to develop resilience skills through such things as role play, turn taking, developing patience, gaining confidence, empathy/perspective taking and developing emotional vocabulary that over time can be effectively used to discuss thoughts and feelings and put emotional regulation into perspective. It's important for us adults to remember that when we are playing with our children, we need to follow their lead and do so with little to no distraction. By giving our children undivided time and attention, smiling and laughing, rough housing and allowing (some) risky play-we are building a stronger attachment with them while securing solid life skills that only can be learned through play-both independently and socially.

Growth mindset, grit and gratitude. I like to think of these as the 3 G's of mental health; all intertwined and connected with grace. Growth mindset and grit are incredibly important skills for our children to have in their metaphorical tool belts for resiliency. When we praise the effort and persistence it reminds our children that the process is more important than the project or end goal. Grit teaches our children that it's ok to fail, it's ok to dust yourself off, it's ok to take a break to re-group and try again and learn something along the way. Both of those important "G's" develop character, shift brain patterns and foster problem solving skills which will be referenced all through life and take an "I can't" attitude to a "I can't YET" perspective. Gratitude and mindfulness is also so important for mental health and lowering anxiety. A therapist once told me, "Anxiety can't be present if we are in the present". This is a statement that I try to model everyday with my own children. Whether it's through a short breathing exercise to focus our thoughts and breath onto things we are grateful for, or through being "kindness ninjas" and doing random acts of kindness valuing the importance of giving over receiving or just by being present in the moment to really focus and listen to what my children are saying to me. All of this directly affects my ability to effectively be in tune with my child's needs and is a gift that I can pass on to them. Gratitude-being grateful and doing kind things helps to shift our thinking from a negative mental health perspective to a positive more resilient mind frame. Doing something kind for someone else shows empathy which then loops back around to what I feel is the most important tool we have, to teach our children how to be strong, brave and resilient beings. Practicing gratitude to help manage anxiety is something that is dear to my heart. In May, I created this [free downloadable/printable](#) to help my children hone in on what they are grateful for and provide another outlet for them to discuss any thoughts or worries they had given the circumstances of the Covid shut down. Feel free to use it with your children, or the children you teach and support, I hope it helps.

Children's mental health is on the forefront more than ever. Rates of anxiety are at an all time high. Our children are being diagnosed with mental illnesses earlier and earlier and while the diagnosis may be daunting, I think we are making tremendous strides in understanding mental illness starting at such a young age (even in infancy) which will only benefit our future generations. Our children will be more equipped with knowledge and tools to help them cope, build resiliency skills and (with high hopes) have a highly in tune, strong and empathetic society that teaches kindness and compassion. Over time, with tremendous hard work and advocacy, we may just see a reduced amount of mental illness for anxiety and depression and the negative stigma that surrounds mental health as it's replaced with knowledge and empowerment, love and support for our future generations. As Lao Tzu said, "Watch your thoughts, they become your words; watch your words, they become your actions; watch your actions, they become your habits; watch your habits, they become your character; watch your character, it becomes your destiny." The ebb and flow of life is constantly changing and evolving, so must our thoughts. It's our job to equip our children with the tools they'll need to ride the emotional waves in the sea of life.

For additional blog posts like [this one](#) written last year for back-to-school and to stay in touch, check out [christinefishman.com](#) and/or Christine Fishman-Author on Facebook.

EARLY YEARS PROFESSIONALS IN MUSKOKA

Stephanie Turner

What book/resource could you recommend to our readers?

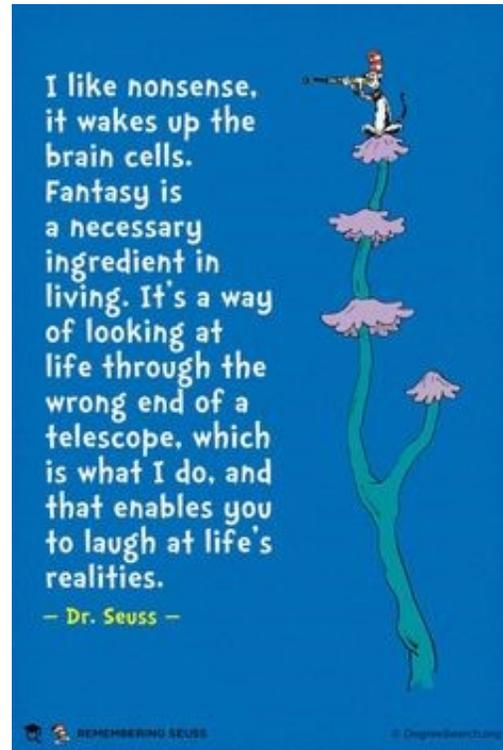
This is hard because to be honest I barely read for personal use! I chase 3 kids around all day and



when 9:00pm comes I am pretty much out to lunch. But, I have been beginning to read a book for my role in quality and I would suggest it. It is called Beyond Quality In Early Childhood Education And Care, the book questions the search to define and measure quality.

What's your favorite quote?

This changes daily sometimes, but here my current favourite:



What is your current job, and how did you arrive at it, in other words why do you do what you do?

I am currently a Case Manager for the District of Muskoka's Quality Improvement Program. Before I came to this job I was a Home Visitor for the Muskoka Home Child Care Agency for 5 years. Over the last four years I also assisted my colleague Linda in the Quality Improvement Program. I found this role very intriguing, it allowed me to see and experience child care in a different form. When an opening came up I applied for the Case Manager position and here I am. I have been in this role permanently for about 6 months. I have been an REECE for over 18 years so I have the experience of working on the floor but this role is even more different, you get to interact with educators and children on a different level which I really enjoy.

Without disclosing confidential information, please tell me about how your involvement within the early years profession created a better outcome for a child/family?

In my new role I feel we are there to support educators and help centres to create a meaningful, fun learning environment for children based on their interests and following their lead.

What's most challenging about the work you do?

The most challenging thing I would say is trying to complete my assessment in totality and engage in play and conversations with the children and educators. Don't get me wrong talking and playing is definitely ok but sometimes I just want to stay all day and talk and play. There are so many amazing things happening in programs in Muskoka, I never want to leave once I arrive.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

In my spare time I spend time with my family and friends. With my family we do all sorts of things like walking, camping, hiking, going to the movies, etc. I have family that lives 6 hours south of Muskoka near Windsor so I also enjoy going to see them whenever I have a chance.

Which famous person would you like to have lunch with and why?

Can I choose 2 or more? Haha. I would like to have lunch with Amy Schumer and Chris Farley (if he were alive). For the sole reason of laughter, I think laughter is the best medicine and what's life without it! These two just kill me sometimes.

In the last couple of years, what new belief, behavior, or habit has most improved your life?

To live life to the fullest, you are here today and you are not promised tomorrow so don't sweat the small stuff and just enjoy life and have fun.

Anything else that you would like to share?

Thank you to all of the educators who are going to read this. We are essential and extremely important in our community and you all deserve thanks beyond this. Your work you are doing out there with children does not go unnoticed. Children are coming to care everyday some waiting for their favourite toy and others their favourite educator. Some children have tough times entering care or leaving care and some have bumps along the way. Educators are there for children and their families in Muskoka. You make families feel comfortable dropping off their precious gems for the day and knowing they are safe, learning and having fun until they return. For this and so much more THANK YOU!!!!

INSPIRATION CORNER

"If you trade your authenticity for safety, you may experience the following: anxiety, depression, eating disorders, addiction, rage, blame, resentment, and inexplicable grief."

— **Brené Brown**

"I get so (...) lonely and sad and filled with regrets some days. It overwhelms me as I'm sitting on the bus; watching the golden leaves from a window; a sudden burst of realisation in the middle of the night. I can't help it and I can't stop it. I'm alone as I've always been and sometimes it hurts.... but I'm learning to breathe deep through it and keep walking. I'm learning to make things nice for myself. To comfort my own heart when I wake up sad. To find small bits of friendship in a crowd full of strangers. To find a small moment of joy in a blue sky, in a trip somewhere not so far away, a long walk an early morning in December, or a handwritten letter to an old friend simply saying "I thought of you. I hope you're well."

No one will come and save you. No one will come riding on a white horse and take all your worries away. You have to save yourself, little by little, day by day. Build yourself a home. Take care of your body. Find something to work on. Something that makes you excited, something you want to learn. Get yourself some books and learn them by heart. Get to know the author, where he grew up, what books he read himself. Take yourself out for dinner. Dress up for no one but you and simply feel nice. it's a lovely feeling, to feel pretty. You don't need anyone to confirm it.

I get so (...) lonely and sad and filled with regrets some days, but I'm learning to breathe deep through it and keep walking. I'm learning to make things nice for myself. Slowly building myself a home with things I like. Colors that calm me down, a plan to follow when things get dark, a few people I try to treat right. I don't sometimes, but it's my intent to do so. I'm learning. I'm learning to make things nice for myself. I'm learning to save myself. I'm trying, as I always will."

— **Charlotte Eriksson, Everything Changed When I Forgave Myself: growing up is a wonderful thing to do.**

For a chance to win a resource of your choice (value of up to \$50.00), please submit a reflection of yours to [Kasia](#) on a topic of your choice that you would like to be considered for publication in one of the upcoming newsletter editions.

Your submission does not have to be in a form of an essay, other forms of expression are welcome, such as: poetry, video footage, note, opinion piece, interview, photos accompanied by a short text, review, etc.

Was the content in this newsletter helpful to you?

Yes

Select

No

Select

Somewhat

Select

