

youth mind

the unfiltered issue



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for the youth by the youth

Youth Mind is an online magazine made for the youth, by the youth. Our editors and contributors aim to cover content that we belive young people care about.

Whether it’s school, the job market, the environment or social justice, we know that these areas affect and will continue to affect our demographic the most.

For this reason we wanted to cover such content with the utmost respect and attention that it deserves.

We hope that **Youth Mind** will inform, motivate and empower the young people of today.



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Letter from the Editor

Hey YM readers!

Let’s be honest. Actually honest. No filters, edits or pretending. Because that’s what this issue is all about — dropping the mask and giving voice to the topics that are often brushed under the rug, especially in a chaotic world. Being a teen is hard, and it’s even harder when you have to navigate issues that are underdiscussed or never discussed at all.

In this issue we’re getting real about everything, from school, friendships to even mental health. You’ll read about the pros and cons of the rise of mental health language on TikTok on page 16 and grieving a friendship breakup on page 10. On page 15, you can even check out how cringe culture is causing major FOMO for teens.

Being unfiltered doesn’t mean being awkward or sharing too much. It means embracing the topics and issues that are important; the topics that make us human.

As you flip through this issue, we hope these articles inspire you to keep showing up for yourself so that you have the courage to continue talking about difficult topics. Remember, the unfiltered you is enough.

Stay unfiltered!

Julia Tramontin, Lan Nguyen & the YM Team



Land Acknowledgement

Youth Mind Magazine acknowledges the Indigenous land on which we work that has been inhabited by Indigenous peoples since the beginning.

As settlers, we’re grateful for the opportunity to meet here and we thank all the generations of people who have taken care of this land — for thousands of years.

Long before today, there have been Indigenous peoples who have been the stewards of this place.

We wish to acknowledge the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit. We recognize and deeply appreciate their historic connection to this place.

We also recognize the contributions of Métis, Inuit, and other Indigenous peoples have made, both in shaping and strengthening this community in particular, and our province and country as a whole.

As settlers, this recognition of the contributions and historic importance of Indigenous peoples must also be clearly and overtly connected to our collective commitment to make the promise and the challenge of Truth and Reconciliation real in our communities, and in particular to bring justice for murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls across our country.

The

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Grieving the End of a Friendship as a Young Person

Written by AUTUMN BRAMBELL

As a young adult, you don't expect to grieve people who are still alive.

But that's exactly what happened to me. I realized someone I once shared everything with—inside jokes, long nature walks, voice notes at 2 a.m.—was no longer part of my life in the same way. Not completely gone. We still followed each other on social media. We still watched each other's Instagram stories. But something had shifted. They stopped reaching out. Eventually, so did I.

It wasn't explosive or dramatic. It was quiet. And somehow, that made it worse.

There was no breakup. No "I can't do this anymore" text. Just distance, and the ache that followed. I didn't know how to explain it to anyone. It wasn't a death. It wasn't romantic. But it felt like something had died. And I didn't feel like I was allowed to mourn it.

I know I'm not the only one.

Why Friendship Grief Hurts

Psychologists have a name for losses like this: [ambiguous loss](#). Coined by family therapist and researcher [Dr. Pauline Boss](#), the term refers to losses that are unclear, undefined and lack closure. The friend you no longer speak to still exists in the world, but not in your life. That absence of finality can make the grief harder to process. There's no official "end," but everything feels different.

According to Boss, ambiguous loss is one of the most stressful types of grief. It can disrupt the natural grieving process, leaving people emotionally stuck. And it's a kind of loss many of us experience in our 20s, when life shifts rapidly and friendships often drift or dissolve without warning.

What makes it harder is the lack of recognition. There are no sympathy cards, no casseroles dropped off by neighbours. If you open up about it, people might respond with, "You'll make new friends," or "That's just life, people come and go."

But neuroscience tells a different story. Studies have found that social pain activates the same areas of the brain as physical pain. [Research](#) published in Science shows that emotional rejection and loss trigger the [anterior cingulate cortex](#), the same region that processes physical injury. In other words, it hurts. And yes, your body is keeping score.

The Way It Ends Matters

One thing I've learned: **how** a friendship ends shapes how we grieve it.

Sometimes, the ending is mutual. You both grow and drift apart. It still stings, but it's gentler.

Other times, it's sudden. A betrayal. A ghosting. An unexpected blow-up. These often come with confusion, shock, and self-blame.



Photo courtesy: Pexels (@Cottonbrostudio)

Then there's the slow drift, the one no one talks about enough. No argument. No turning point. Just a gradual erosion. You tell yourself, "I'll reach out next week," until weeks stretch into silence.

The hardest losses to process are the ones without a clear goodbye. These unresolved disconnections can trap us in cycles of doubt, rumination, and longing.

Why It Hits So Deep

Friendships aren't just about fun or companionship; they help shape our identity. Psychologist [Dr. Niobe Way](#) has written extensively about [adolescent and early adult friendships](#), calling them emotional "lifelines." In early adulthood, friends aren't just people we spend time with, they're mirrors we use to understand ourselves.

Through shared playlists, late-night conversations and mutual growth, we figure out who we are. So, when a friendship ends, it doesn't just take the other person with it, it can take a part of us, too.

How to Heal From a Friendship Ending

So... how do you grieve someone who didn't die? It's not easy. But here's what helped me, and what research supports:

1. **Name what you're feeling.** Acknowledging the experience as grief helps validate it. [Ambiguous loss theory](#) shows that naming our emotions can ease internalized shame and promote healing.
2. **Create your own closure.**

If there was no goodbye, make your own. Write a letter (even if you never send it), journal, delete old messages, or create a [personal ritual](#). These acts can help set emotional boundaries.

3. **Let it change you.** Ask yourself: What did this friendship teach me? What do I want from future friendships? You don't need to find a silver lining right away. But reflection can bring clarity and growth. It's okay to raise your standards.

From Grief to Growth

If you've lost a friendship and it still hurts: we see you.

You're not being dramatic, you're being human. It means you care. It means you invested in someone who mattered. And it means you're allowed to grieve, whether it ended in fireworks, silence, or a single unread message.

- Here's what I know now:
1. You can miss someone and still accept they're not meant to stay.
 2. You can love the past while making space for the present.
 3. You can let go without erasing what you had.

Grieving the end of a friendship is real. So is your ability to move forward with tenderness, resilience and a better understanding of what you need.



Photo courtesy: Pexels (@Tarawinstead)



The Grief of Growing Up with an Emotionally Dismissive Family

Written by AUTUMN BRAMBELL

Photo courtesy: Pexels (photos by Sofia Alejandra, Andrew Neel & mododeolhar)

Grief doesn't just follow loss; it can come from the absence of what never was.

Maybe you grew up in a home where no one yelled, but no one really **heard** you either. Where emotions were awkward, where “you’re too sensitive” was the answer to everything and where being vulnerable meant being shut down or ignored. If this sounds familiar, you’re not alone, and what you’re feeling has a name: hidden grief.

This kind of grief is tricky. It doesn't come from something obvious like a breakup or a funeral. It's quiet. Lingering. It shows up when you second-guess your feelings, when you shut down during conflict or when you struggle to trust people even though you crave connection.

So many young people carry this kind of emotional pain without realizing it. And the worst part? Most of us don't even know it **counts** as grief.

What Is Emotional Neglect?

Let's be clear: emotional neglect isn't the same as abuse. It's not what happened, it's what didn't. No one held space for your feelings. No one taught you how to name or process what was going on inside. You might've heard things like “You're overreacting,” “Just get over it” or “We don't need to talk about this right now.” Maybe your family looked fine from the outside, but inside, you felt like your emotions took up too much space.

Over time, you learn to shrink yourself. To edit your feelings. To stay quiet. Not because you want to, but

because you've learned it's safer that way.

Experts call this kind of pattern **developmental trauma**, when you grow up without the emotional safety you needed, even if your basic needs were met. Psychiatrist Dr. Bessel van der Kolk explains that when your emotional world gets ignored over and over, you learn to shut down those parts of yourself. You become disconnected from your own needs, like you're always performing, even around the people closest to you.



You might wonder, Why does this still affect me? Maybe you're in your 20s now, trying to build healthier relationships, but something still feels off. You struggle to open up. Or maybe you don't feel safe even when nothing is actually wrong.

That's because emotional neglect shapes how we attach to others. If no one showed you that your feelings matter, it makes sense you'd doubt them, or doubt that anyone else would care.

“I Thought I Was Just Being Dramatic”

One 21-year-old, who asked to stay anonymous, opened up about how emotional neglect affected her in ways she didn't fully realize until recently. “There wasn't yelling or anything like that in my house. My family wasn't dramatic. But no one really asked how I was doing,” she says. “I figured out pretty early that big feelings made my family uncomfortable, so I just kept them to myself.”

For a long time, she didn't question it.

“I thought it was normal to not talk about big feelings with my parents and siblings. But when I turned 13 in middle school and was trying to find a friend group, I kept feeling like I had to prove I was worth being around. I'd get anxious about needing support, like I was too much. And I couldn't explain why.”

It wasn't until she started therapy in the last two years that she heard the words emotional neglect, and things began to make sense.

“I remember telling my therapist, ‘Nothing bad really happened.’ And she said, ‘Exactly.’ That really hit me. I hadn't realized how much the absence of feeling like someone cared about my emotions could leave a mark and how much it continues to impact me.”

Now, she's trying to break those patterns, slowly.

“I still apologize for having feelings sometimes. I still worry I'm asking for too much. But I'm learning to pause and remind myself, ‘It's okay to feel this.’ I'm just trying to be a little kinder to myself. It's hard but that's where I'm starting.”

Healing Takes Time

Let's be honest: healing from emotional neglect isn't a 30-day glow-up. It's messy. It's nonlinear. Some days you feel empowered, and other days you feel stuck.

You don't have to do this alone. Supportive friendships, peer groups, or even online communities can help you feel less isolated. Studies show that feeling seen and supported, even by just one person, can make a huge difference in how we cope.



Reclaiming What You Needed

If you grew up in an emotionally dismissive home, healing might feel overwhelming, but you don't have to fix everything overnight. Here are some small but powerful ways to begin:

- **Practice self-compassion.** Talk to yourself like you would to a friend. You don't need to “earn” kindness.
- **Write about your feelings.** Journaling can help you understand what's going on underneath.
- **Open up to someone safe.** This might be a friend, a mentor, a therapist or even a support group.
- **Express yourself creatively.** Art, music, poetry, movement, whatever helps you feel connected to your emotions.
- **Follow creators and mental health advocates who get it.** Sometimes hearing someone else put words to your experience is the validation you didn't know you needed. If you're looking for somewhere to start, you might want to check out Instagram creators @nedratawwab and @the.holisitc.psychologist or YouTuber Anna Akana.

You Matter, Even If No One Taught You That

Growing up feeling invisible can make it hard to believe your emotions matter. But they do. You do. Emotional neglect may not leave bruises, but the grief it causes is real, and so is the healing.

You're allowed to feel. You're allowed to need things. You're allowed to take up space.

So if this resonates with you, take a breath. You are not too much. You are not alone.

Maintaining Long Distance Friendships

Written by STEPHANIE TAYLOR

With the widespread use of social media, staying in touch with friends, no matter your location, has never been easier.

Moving to a new city or country — whether for school, a new job or just wanting a change of scenery — can be scary. With the help of technology, social media and other messaging apps, relocation doesn't have to mean saying goodbye to your loved ones.

Here are tips on how you can keep your friendships strong despite being apart.

Communication is Key

It shouldn't be shocking that the first step to maintaining long distance friendships is keeping in touch.

Sporadic messaging is encouraged, but having a scheduled time to check-in is even more important. Whether this is through a weekly video call or a chat on the phone before bed, find what works for you and your friend.

Having a set time to talk with your friend shows you [care](#) about the friendship and prevents it from dissolving.

Utilize Technology

Just because you are in different places doesn't mean you can't still have fun together. Think about the small things you'd do together. Maybe you both like to read, watch movies, do crafts or maybe you just liked to eat together and chat. Whatever your favourite hobbies were, they can most likely be done virtually too.

If you like to read, consider starting a small book club. Read the same book as each other and have scheduled meetings just to discuss the book.

Browser extensions such as [WatchParty](#) and [Teleparty](#) allow you to watch TV shows and movies with friends. The extensions work by syncing whatever you are watching with your friend's computer (as long as they have an account for whatever you are streaming). Both extensions have chat boxes, allowing you and your friend to chat about the movie without any complication.

If you want to have a cozy craft night with your friend, just set up your webcam and grab your supplies. If you want to have dinner with your friend, the same logic applies. Cook the same meal or order take-out while on a video call and eat your meal together.

[Apps](#) such as the Locket Widget allow you to send photos right to your friend's phone's homescreen. Having silly photos pop-up from your friend can help keep the friendship fun.

Gestures Matter

Being long distance can prevent you from being there for your friend when it matters. This can include times when your friend is going through a rough patch, it is their birthday or they are celebrating a major life achievement. It is important to find ways to show you love and care for them other than through words.

Consider sending a letter and gift in the mail as a surprise. Receiving a handwritten letter has been [linked](#) to increasing one's mood. Writing a letter is a lot more time consuming than sending a text. When a loved one receives a letter, it shows you care and value them.

Don't Let Your Physical Distance Get in the Way

The most important thing to keep in mind is that any sort of relationship takes work to maintain. Even the friends you have physically close still require time and energy. If you don't let your move ruin your friendship, you should be fine.

There will be times where you feel lonely and miss your friend, but those are the moments that show you care for them.

Lastly, remember you can plan visits with your friends. If you are at school, reading week is the perfect time to make plans. If you are employed, consider taking the same vacation time as your friend.

If you and your friend put in the effort, you'll have no problem keeping the friendship alive.

Photo courtesy: Pexels (photo by Kindel Media)



Cringe Culture: How youth are missing out in fear of being judged

Written by RUTH MOON LOPEZ

Photo courtesy: Pexels (photo by Ron Lach)

In a recent [interview](#) with ABC News, professor and author Ocean Vuong discusses how 'cringe culture' has become a subtle but powerful form of social policing. What once served as a humorous way to bond over shared awkwardness has evolved into a practice that shames sincerity, mocks earnestness and discourages individuality. Vuong observes that many of his students have become increasingly "self-conscious of trying," often stifling their creativity and interests for fear of being mocked.

This reluctance to show passion isn't happening within a vacuum. Under the constant surveillance state of social media, young people now operate in what feels like a digital panopticon — constantly putting on an act, not because someone is watching, but because someone could be.

In this climate, many young people shy away from vulnerability or appearing too eager, preferring to give the impression that their success came effortlessly. "There's this immense desire for sincerity ... but people want to arrive at it without being vulnerable," says Vuong.

Besides sincerity, cringe culture also dismisses curiosity, learning and enthusiasm as 'try-hard' behaviour. When we treat the pursuit of knowledge as something to be ashamed of, we create a society that's easier to manipulate and control.

Challenging cringe culture begins with transforming how we talk about passion and effort. Rather than seeing risk-taking or unconventional pursuits as embarrassing, we need to embrace and celebrate the bravery it takes to try new things, follow your interests and share the process rather than just the outcome.

This change starts in our daily environments, classrooms, community spaces and online platforms, where young people should feel supported the most to take risks, learn from mistakes and express themselves freely without fear of judgment.

The Rise of Mental Health Language on TikTok: Helpful or Harmful?

Written by JOSEPHINE NAGAVY

TikTok isn't just for dance trends and memes anymore — it's become a major platform for mental health conversations. While increased awareness is a win, [experts](#) warn that the short-form format and unregulated content can come with serious drawbacks. Let's unpack both sides.

The Upside: Destigmatizing and Informative

For many Gen Z users, TikTok is their first exposure to discussion about mental health. Short clips titled [how I handle my anxiety](#) or [my OCD routine](#) have helped normalize these experiences and validate feelings that might otherwise go unseen.

A recent [study](#) found that brief TikToks on mental health, even those made by non-professionals, helped reduce stigma over time. However, the study also found that these TikToks didn't reduce internalized shame.

Emily Hemendinger, clinical director of the [OCD Program](#) at the University of Colorado, told [CU Anschutz News](#) that while TikTok isn't a replacement for therapy, it's an "excellent" starting point for raising awareness. [Harvard Public Health](#) called TikTok a "powerful platform for information transmission," especially for youth who prefer bite-size learning.

The Danger Zone: Misinformation and Oversimplification

It's not all positive. [A Guardian review](#) discovered that more than half of the top 100 TikTok videos tagged with the hashtag #mentalhealthtips included misleading or false information. This included content about quick fixes or equating every emotional dip with a mental disorder.

According to the [New York Times](#), TikTok's algorithm can exacerbate these issues by trapping fast-scrolling youth in echo chambers that pump out similar content in response to one click. It's not only talk about anxiety or depression — bullying advice, disordered-eating trends and pseudo-therapeutic talk have also surfaced. Even when [platforms remove](#) specific harmful hashtags, users often just reinvent them, continuing the cycle under new labels.

So... Is It Helpful or Harmful?

The answer lies somewhere in the middle. TikTok is a tool, not a therapist. The problem isn't awareness — it's whether that awareness is accurate and responsible.

[Mental health videos](#) can help break stigma and prompt people to seek help — even clinical support. But [misinformation is rampant](#), with serious risks when people self-diagnose, try unverified "cures" or normalize unhealthy behaviours. [TikTok's addictive design](#) and algorithm-driven loops can intensify anxiety and push youth further into comparison or harmful content.

Tips for Using TikTok More Safely

Young people can still benefit from mental health content on TikTok — but mindful use is key. Here are some ways to stay safe on TikTok:

- **Check the credentials of [mental health creators](#).** Prioritize content from registered professionals.
- **Look for signs of nuance.** Real advice

acknowledges complexity; blanket statements are red flags.

- **Balance what you watch.** Alternate mental health clips with lighter content like hobbies, humour and social updates.
- **Turn it off when it's too much.** If the feed makes you spiral, take a break.
- **Use videos as a springboard, not a substitute.** If something resonates deeply, consider talking to a counsellor or trusted adult.

Final Thoughts

TikTok has opened the door to important mental health dialogue. But it's a starting point — not a destination. With awareness and skepticism, it can inspire self-care, community and help-seeking. Without caution, it risks misinforming and overwhelming.

Just like therapy or medicine, youth-friendly mental health talk on TikTok works best when paired with nuance — and professional guidance

Photo courtesy: Pexels (photo by cottonbro studio)

Let's Talk About It: The Ins and Outs of Therapy

Written by LISA MANGANIELLO



Graphic by Alisha Velji

Many special milestones occur during one's younger years. At the same time, young people can face challenges as life transitions occur. Pursuing post-secondary education, starting a career and moving out of the family home, for example, are all positive, but they can also be overwhelming and stressful.

Therapy and counselling are great tools to help people navigate through life. They are both services that are available to anyone, including teens and young people.

Read below to find out more about therapy and when it might be time to start it.

What is Therapy?

[Therapy](#) can also be referred to as "talk therapy" and "psychotherapy." It is a long-term treatment for mental health. Therapy is meant to treat severe mental health concerns including recognized mental health conditions. Therapists help individuals work through trauma and they also help to determine individuals' thought patterns. Overall, therapy can help with mental wellness.

What is Counselling?

[Counselling](#) targets particular challenges that the client is dealing with such as grief and abuse. For example, there are certified counsellors that offer alcohol and drug counselling. Counselling is a short-term psychological treatment.

When You Should Seek Therapy or Counselling

Sometimes it can be hard to ask for help or recognize that you need help. Therapy and counselling are excellent ways to receive help for different life matters.

"Counselling or therapy can be helpful more often than people assume," says Joyce (Sijia) Luo, a registered social worker and psychotherapist at [MindPeace Psychology Toronto](#). "Whenever people feel lost, uncertain, frustrated, overwhelmed, stressed out or identify a need to talk to someone, it can be a good time to seek mental health support like counselling or therapy."

Therapy can benefit anyone, and it is a safe space. Therapy touches upon all aspects of life, and it can be used for a variety of reasons from treating mental health concerns to personal development.

"Therapy is not just for moments of crisis, nor should it be waited until serious mental health issues occur but can also be helpful for people to gain more clarity, build emotional resilience and develop a healthier sense of self," says Luo.

Counselling and therapy can also particularly benefit young people.

"For teenagers and young adults, therapy can be especially beneficial during periods of rapid transition or moments of increased stress, such as when they are dealing with academic pressure, navigating family transitions, facing social challenges, or exploring their independent identity," she says.

Benefits of Therapy or Counselling for Students

Therapy and counselling can benefit students and make a difference in their mental health and wellbeing.

Attending therapy or counselling allows students to stay mentally healthy and improve their [academic performance](#). Engaging with a therapist or a counsellor will allow a student to clear their mind. This will ultimately allow the brain to concentrate better on exams and assignments which can lead to achieving good grades.

Taking care of mental health allows students to feel more energized and more focused as any concerns or issues can be dealt with in therapy, therefore [boosting productivity](#).

"Many young people also use therapy to improve their emotional regulation, manage stress more efficiently," says Luo. This can allow students to get work done in an efficient and effective manner.

Participating in therapy also allows students to [gain self-awareness](#) by having a better understanding of their thoughts and emotions. This helps them to feel well mentally and physically. Students will also be able to know their limits and when something or someone is bothering them.

Therapy can help students improve their [overall wellbeing](#) by allowing them to develop inner tools and coping strategies that they can carry with them wherever they go. "For students facing complex academic, social and personal demands, therapeutic support can make meaningful differences in their mental wellbeing and overall life development," says Luo.

How to Reach Out to a Therapist or Counsellor

Finding the right therapist or counsellor can seem overwhelming, but the search does not need to be stressful. Here are [some ways](#) you can start the process of finding a therapist or counsellor:

- Get in touch with your family doctor. They can refer you to therapists, counsellors and other professionals.
- To get more information about therapy and to find a therapist/counsellor, talk to community health centers like the [Canadian Mental Health Association](#).
- Phone a help center. You can reach out to [Good2Talk](#) which supports Ontario post-secondary students, [Kids Help Phone](#) which offers supports for youth or the [Gerstein Centre](#).
- Search for relevant books and websites that can help guide you in your search of finding a therapist or counsellor. The [Ontario Psychological Association](#) has a directory for psychologists and [Psychology Today](#) also has a list of therapists in Ontario.



Photo courtesy: Pexels (photos by SHVETS production)



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Why Saying “No” Is a Full Sentence

Written by JOSEPHINE NAGAVY

Have you ever said “yes” to something you really didn’t want to do — just to avoid awkwardness, guilt or disappointing someone? Maybe it was agreeing to help when your plate was already full. Or going out when you were mentally drained. Or doing something that didn’t feel right, just to “keep the peace.”

If that sounds familiar, you’re not alone.

Many of us — especially teens and young adults — are taught to be agreeable, accommodating and polite. But here’s the truth: “No” is not rude or selfish. It’s a complete sentence — and sometimes, the healthiest one you can say.

Saying No Means Setting Boundaries

Boundaries are not walls; they are guidelines that protect your time, energy and emotional well-being. Saying “no” is one of the simplest and most powerful ways to set those boundaries.

Whether you’re turning down a favour, an invitation, a group project request or pressure from friends, you’re not being difficult — you’re being clear. But why can it feel so hard?

Many people, especially young women and marginalized groups, are [conditioned](#) to people-please. Common worries include:

- “They’ll think I’m mean or flaky.”
- “What if they don’t ask me again?”
- “I feel bad saying no.”

However, people who care about you won’t disappear because you set a boundary. And if they do, that reflects on them — not on you.

The discomfort of saying no is temporary. The peace it brings is long-lasting.

Insights from a Child and Youth Worker

We spoke with a child and youth worker employed by a large Ontario school board who requested anonymity to protect their professional role.

“A lot of the students I work with — especially in grades nine to 11—don’t know they’re allowed to say no,” they said. “They feel like they have to explain everything or feel guilty for prioritizing themselves. We try to teach that boundaries are not a rejection of others — they’re an act of self-respect.”

The worker often uses role-playing activities and journaling prompts to help students practice setting boundaries in low-stakes situations.

“It’s not about being rude or cold,” they added. “It’s about learning to check in with yourself first and say no when something doesn’t feel right.”

How Saying No Protects Your Mental Health

Here are some ways saying “no” can support your well-being:

- Turning off your phone for a day
- Skipping an event to rest
- Avoiding gossip or drama
- Saying no to substances, social pressure or unsafe situations

You don’t need to earn rest. You don’t need to justify your limits. And you don’t have to say yes just to avoid awkwardness.

“No” is a sentence. A decision. A boundary. A right.

Say it confidently. You deserve to take up space, protect your peace and choose what works for you.



Photo courtesy: Pexels (photos by SHVETS production)



Comparing university and college: A personal experience

Written by ISABELLA DISLEY

Photo courtesy: (photo by Isabella Disley)

After graduating last month from the University of Ottawa and Algonquin College, I finally had the time to reflect on the past four years of my post-secondary journey. The journalism program was a four-year joint program between the two institutions, and looking back, I noticed many differences.

My University Experience

My first two years of university, which coincided with the pandemic years, were a mix of online and in-person lectures. One of my first classes was on Zoom, and another was in an eerie classroom where we were five feet apart, wearing masks. Eventually, the restrictions lightened, which made the environment more welcoming.

But within the academic details of my two years at university, I sat through hours of theory-based lectures, with no hands-on work, and the GPA was out of 10. I felt like I wasn't learning as much through their curriculum. I had a few asynchronous classes, which seemed useless because it was just teaching yourself the material instead of a professor.

The course enrollment process was odd since the sequence required taking fourth-year classes in the second year, with the prerequisites being waived. Nonetheless, besides the compulsory courses, I took some very miscellaneous classes that didn't have a relation to journalism. I also found myself enrolling and dropping courses that I didn't like or knew that I wouldn't do well in. The fourth-year courses had a graduate professor and soon-to-be graduates, which definitely made a difference in furthering my education.

There weren't many assignments, but they were heavily weighted task-wise and grade-wise. Usually, it would be three major assignments per course, whether it was papers, exams or a combination of both, each worth 30 per cent minimum. The deadlines for these assignments would be during the midterm and final exam periods.

There were high-pressure moments because of the grading scheme, and it would be especially difficult and more stressful if the first assignment didn't go well. I found myself stronger at writing papers compared to tests. I ended up having a mixture of numerical grades by the end.

Overall, it was a decent experience. I learned about writing research papers, essays and completing presentations and group projects. But those two years were completely different from my two years at college.

My College Experience

At college, the GPA was out of four, and there was immediate hands-on work. I also didn't have to choose my courses; there was a sequence set up for students and their specific programs. There was only one online class that I took, and the only courses I had to choose from were electives, which happened twice. All the courses that were part of the sequence were mandatory.

However, I took more courses per semester at college than at university. In comparison to five courses per semester, I was taking a minimum of six courses, with, in some cases, a maximum of eight.

The 'compensation' for the number of courses was the major difference in the amount and weight of assignments. Assignments were a maximum of 30 per cent, while the others would be worth as little as five to 10 per cent. It wasn't the end of the world if an assignment went badly, but the deadlines were tight. There would be at least one thing due by the next class, and in my final year, there were multiple things due every day.

Instead of having a more 'laid back' semester, it was more overwhelming and eye-opening because it was easier to fall behind, while having a bunch of assignments flying at you at once. But with those challenges, it defined and strengthened my work ethic and time management abilities. I learned to thrive in high-pressure situations while maintaining my composure.

The assignments were visual and hands-on, making the learning experience for me easier to comprehend and enjoy. Additionally, much of the work had me out in the field, which was refreshing since I had spent two years in lecture halls.

All in all, I found college to be better suited for my academic journey. Grade-wise, I did way better than at university; however, that isn't the most important part. I gained way more experience and felt more prepared for my career because of college.

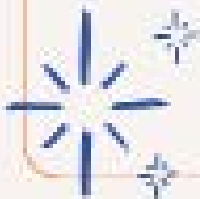


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An after-school High School Tutoring program would provide the necessary, safe space, tutoring, and support to inspire students to excel, including but not limited to completing assignments and reading/literacy activities.

At the end of the school year, the management team of OLDF, along with the tutors, will evaluate to assess the milestones, accomplishments, and areas of improvement for the High School Tutoring program to remain it successfully for the following school year and beyond.



Coming Soon: Sept. 2024 & March 2025

Registration opens each fall and goes through until the end of the school year.



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