SSMU Mental Health Commission Working Report

Submitted by SSMU Mental Health Co-Commissioners for the 2017-2018 year:

Ebby Crowe, and Vithushon Thayalan

Introduction:

An up-to-date overview of the workshops, panels, outreach initiatives, and events executed by the 2017/2018 Mental Health Commission.

Workshops:

**ONGOING – Weekly Mindfulness Yoga with Registered Instructor (Until Shatner Building Closure)**

With the support of Counseling Services Workshops and Groups Coordinator Dr. Calli Armstrong, we’ve begun offering students free weekly yoga sessions until Shatner building closure.

* Time and place: Thursdays, 9:30am-10:45pm (starting on the 22nd) in Madeleine Parent
* Our Goal: “The goal for this class is to provide a supportive and nurturing environment for students to meet themselves wherever they may be emotionally and physically on any given day. Suited to all levels and abilities, we will explore physical postures and use our awareness like a spotlight to highlight areas of tension in the body. Breathing exercises will be incorporated to calm the nervous system and invite muscles to release, and guided meditation will help us to investigate the patterns of our minds and the connection between our thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations. While the class will have active, physical components, there will be ample time to unwind in restorative postures and a long savasana at the end of class. Registration is not required, but please be sure to show up a few minutes early to ensure your spot. We will have mats available to use, but feel free to bring your own if you would like.” – Written and provided by the instructor.
* Our Instructor: Elena Dikaois, registered yoga instructor, and McGill Psychology Major.

“Elena is originally from the Maritimes and draws inspiration and a deep sense of calm from the nature that surrounded her growing up. She began practicing yoga with her mom at the age of four and, deeply devoted to the practice, she completed her teacher training when she was sixteen years old. Having struggled with mental health issues in her adolescence, she has experienced first-hand the positive benefits of yoga on stress and anxiety, as well as in promoting a healthy relationship with her body. From this context and history, her teaching style and philosophy have become centered around using yoga to foster embodied mindfulness with the goal of mental and emotional wellbeing in mind. With a keen interest in mental health both on and off the mat, she infuses her classes with pranayama (controlled breathing), meditation, and basic mindfulness techniques to train awareness and manipulate the functioning of the nervous system to alleviate stress. Having been trained in power yoga but developing a more recent interest in restorative yoga, her classes are powerful yet gentle—an invitation and opportunity for her students to check in with themselves on a deep level and nurture self-compassion. She considers herself primarily a curious student, and plans to continue exploring the intersection between yoga, therapy, mindfulness, and psychology in her future studies. Most of all, she looks forward to sharing her discoveries with others” – written and provided by instructor.

**Mindfulness Workshop – Offered as part of Mental Health Awareness Week**

* Workshop Description: Feeling overwhelmed? Come and explore the benefits of mindfulness. Learn to incorporate mindfulness practices and techniques into your everyday life, as a means of combatting stress and anxiety.
* Time and Place: Tuesday, January 16th, from 12:00pm-1:00pm, in Brown Building Room 3001
* Our Instructor: Staff Member from McGill Counseling Services

**Mental Health Awareness Workshop (Mental Health 101) – Offered as part of Mental Health Awareness Week**

* Workshop Description: Feeling unsure about how to contribute to the conversation around mental health? Do you hear a lot about mental health but are unsure about how you can help? Learn about how mental health affects our campuses and further your knowledge here!
* Time and Place: Wednesday, January 17, from 2:00pm-3:30pm, Brown Building Room 3001
* Our Instructor: Dr. Evelyn Rodinos, from Counseling Services

**Art Therapy Workshop (Drama) – Offered as part of Mental Health Awareness Week**

* Workshop Description: Looking for a creative space to express yourself productively?  
  “According to the North American Drama Therapy Association, drama therapy is an active, experiential approach to facilitating change” ([http://www.aatq.org/en/Drama-therapy](https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.aatq.org%2Fen%2FDrama-therapy&h=ATNWWAI9FAjy_KW_6ML9Hg7S0EUausiVdDnyy0lF0mavLR3GI71dAekoh4XVGOZUa40NwHLcX58MuL_EliJ24dbZxvvtX-qTNaMYvVQo7-UfmsS8juJv7vviiyAIWMcG6imHK0GkKKhZScyKvCv6pcs)). Dr. Agiman will lead you through a combination of role-playing, storytelling, and crafting exercises, which are designed to allow participants to practice and perform their desired behaviors, relationships, and life roles.
* Time and Place: January 18th, from 1:00pm-3:00pm in SSMU Building Room 302
* Our Instructor: Dr. Denise Agiman, Dramatherapist, and member of the Association des arts-thérapeutes du Québec (AATQ)

**Sleep Hygiene Workshop (Healthy McGill) – Offered as Part of Mental Health Awareness Week**

* Workshop Description: Trouble sleeping? Come and join us for a discussion on all things sleep related, and maybe even learn a trick or two for improving your quality of sleep.
* Time and Place: Monday, January 15th 6:15 PM to 7:00 PM, Madeleine Parent
* Our Instructors: Mental Health Peer Educators from Healthy McGill

Panels:

**Mental Health and Dating, Student Led Panel – Offered as part of Mental Health Awareness Week**

* Our Goal: This panel has been assembled to cultivate a space where people can speak openly about their experiences with mental health and dating. We hope to facilitate conversations on the interactions and interfaces that can arise when dating while experiencing mental health issues and/ or mental illness. We hope attendees leave this panel, with a deeper understanding of how the interaction of mental health can affect experiences in the dating world. We hope that the panel will be inclusive of a wide variety of relationships and identities.
* Time and Place: Monday, January 15th from 12:00pm-1:00pm, Madeleine Parent
* Panelists:

Charles Lowe   
Adrian Petterson   
Bee Khaleeli  
Alice Shen

**Mental Health in Rez: Seeking Support & Stopping Stigma**

* Panel Description: Having trouble navigating through your first year? Not sure whether or not you're able to keep your academic life balanced with your social life? Not sure about where to go for mental health related help? Not sure about what resources there are that you can take advantage of? Not sure about HOW to go about and get support? Having trouble talking about mental health in residence?
* Time and Place: Tuesday, January 16 at 7 PM - 9 PM, Carrefour Sherbrooke Games Room
* Panelists: Both residents and floor fellows

Outreach Initiatives:

**ONGOING – Frequent Tabling in Library and SSMU Front Lobby**

* Our Goal: To disseminate information on campus services and supports, while building peer-to-peer care connections.
* Frequency: Approximately 10 times over the course of the school year, with more dates commencing next week.

**ONGOING – Social Media Campaign, spearheaded by members of both Outreach and Advocacy**

* Our Goal: Interview one member from each different relevant Mental Health Service/Group on campus and feature them on our Facebook and Instagram pages once a week on Mondays, until school is over.
* Status: We’ve contacted groups for interviews and are waiting to hear back from them. We currently have an interview scheduled with Psychiatric Services for the end of the week, and will begin posting in approximately 1 week time.

**ONGOING – Mental Health Listserv**

* Our Goal: To provide interested members of the McGill community with a Mental Health specific Listserv, featuring up-to-date events and opportunities on campus that relate to wellness.
* Frequency:distributed twice over the course of the school year
* Challenges: finding an efficient way to aggregate date (we came up with a solution last meeting, which was creating an input google form)

Community Events:

**MHC x Vent Over Tea “Coffee Break”**

The Advocacy Mental Health Commission collaborated with Vent Over Tea on February 7th to host a “Coffee Break” event at Café Joe’s (a local haunt).

* Our Goal: To facilitate a discussion on listening and being heard. We wanted to provide members of the McGill and wider Montreal Communities with a short taste of what a vent session is like, in a free, non-judgmental, and casual space.
* Outcome: Even given the massive snow storm, approximately 20 people showed up to our event and participated in small active listening sessions. We welcomed not only McGill students, but members of the Saint-Henri community, and even some new friends from outside of Montreal. After individualized vent sessions, we congregated as a group to de-brief. Participants voiced commendation and gratitude for the opportunity to gather, some saying that this was the first time they have had the pleasure of being heard, recognized, and validated by a peer. We were lucky enough to have both Chloe Chow (founder of Vent Over Tea) and Audley present, both of whom were the faces of this year’s Bell Let’s Talk Campaign. They both expressed a heartfelt desire to continue running this type of event. We have our second session already scheduled for March 14th, set to take place at the same location.

Counseling Service Advisory Board

Ebby Crowe sits on this board, and you can find her Annual Report Attached to this document. Please note: they were submitted last semester, and so the information is not up-to-date.

Psychiatric Services Advisory Board

Vithushon Thayalan sits on this board, and you can find his Annual Report Attached to this document. Please note: They were submitted last semester, and so the information is not up-to-date.