

Foods for Wellness

Learn about the mental health benefits of various foods

Finding Comfort in Hygge

How this Danish concept can improve your wellbeing

40th Anniversary

Four decades of working with caregivers in the community

Family Matters

Quarterly review by **Friends for Mental Health**, an association that helps provide support and other resources to those close to a person with a mental health disorder



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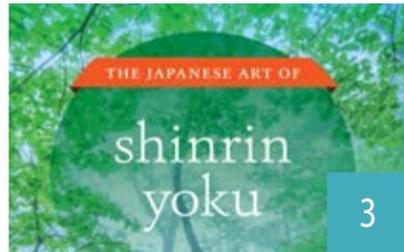
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Please note that Friends for Mental Health continues to offer online services. This includes online counseling, art therapy, workshops, support groups, and more.

Reach out to us for support or to make an appointment:

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Executive Director's Message



How About Some Therapeutic Anti-Stress "Forest Bathing"?

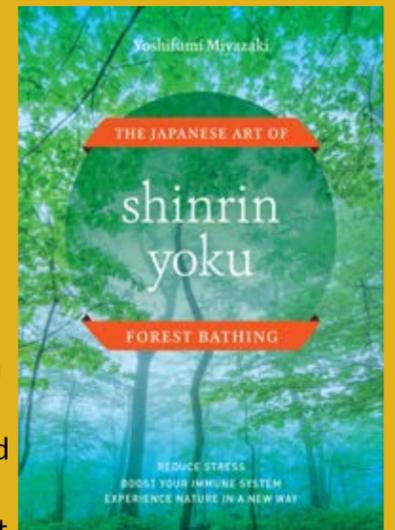
In this issue of Family Matters, we'd like to offer you some resources for creating a warm, soothing and gentle fall season. I would like to introduce you to an increasingly popular preventive medicine. The Japanese practice of Shinrin Yoku, also known as forest bathing or sylvotherapy, has many confirmed health and well-being benefits. Scientific studies have confirmed that, despite urbanization, our bodies continue to recognize nature as their natural.

The benefits of Shinrin Yoku that have been measured are:

- Improved immunity, increased number of killer cells known to fight tumors and infections.
- Physical relaxation due to increased activity of the parasympathetic system.
- Decrease in physical stress due to the increased activity in the sympathetic nervous system.
- Decrease in blood pressure after the first 15 minutes of sylvotherapy.
- General feeling of well-being.
- Decrease in blood pressure after one day of sylvotherapy, which lasts up to five days.

In Professor Yoshifumi Miyazaki's book:

Shinrin Yoku, The Japanese way of Forest Bathing for Health and Relaxation, you will find out which ecotherapy suits you best. For some, the smell of undergrowth or pine trees is a source of well-being, while for others, it is the sound of birds and wind in the trees. You will also find a complete chapter on current research in ecotherapy. Autumn is a good time to go for a walk in the forest or in a park since the climate is pleasant and the colours are delightful.



Have a relaxing walk in nature this fall!

Johanne Bourbonnais
Executive Director



Foods for Wellness

Alexandra Bellefeuille, Administrative Assistant

Healthy eating has long been associated with good physical health, but what about mental health? Researchers from the Nutrition Network of the European College of Neuropsychopharmacology (CNEP) have conducted a study on the influence of food on mental health. The new field of nutritional psychiatry confirms that there is a correlation between poor eating habits and mood disorders such as depression and anxiety.

So, what are the recommended foods that contribute to the maintenance of good mental health?

First of all, it is important to mention that it is best to avoid consuming too many highly processed foods. They generally do not contain enough nutrients to support our mental and physical well-being.

Foods rich in Omega-3: Omega-3 fatty acids play an important role in maintaining a good mood. In this category, we find fatty fish such as mackerel and salmon, as well as vegetable oils.

Magnesium-rich foods: Magnesium plays a key role in the

synthesis of serotonin, a brain hormone involved in feelings of well-being. Magnesium deficiency can lead to feelings of irritability, anxiety, and distress. Magnesium is found in dark chocolate, various nuts (such as Brazil nuts and almonds), spinach, lentils, and bananas.

 **Did you know?**
A Mediterranean style diet best promotes good mental health. Full of fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as fish rich in Omega-3, the Mediterranean diet can play an important part in our well-being.

Foods rich in vitamin B6: Combined with magnesium, vitamin B6 contributes to the creation of serotonin, which has a calming effect. Meats, fish, whole grains, potatoes, hazelnuts, pistachios, and chickpeas contain a good amount of this vitamin.

Foods rich in vitamin D: Several studies show that a vitamin D deficiency contributes to depression. Also known as the sunshine vitamin because it is produced by the human body when exposed to the sun, vitamin D is even more important for people

living in areas that have winters. Vitamin D is found in sardines, fresh or canned tuna, fish liver oils, dairy products, eggs, and mushrooms.

We can see that having a healthy and balanced diet is an important part of taking care of our mental health. However, we must not forget the most important thing: the joy of eating!

**Consult your health care professional before making any changes to your diet.*

Movie Nights

Join Friends for Mental Health for our virtual movie nights! The movies will be played in English on Zoom, and will be followed by a facilitated discussion with one of our counselors.

FEEL GOOD MOVIE NIGHT

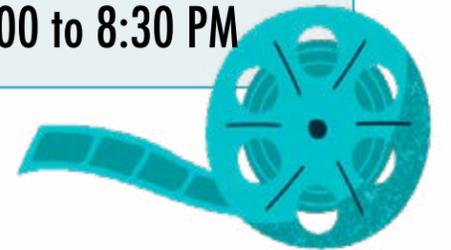
Finding Hygge

September 23
7:00 to 8:30 PM

FEEL GOOD MOVIE NIGHT

My Year of Living Mindfully

November 23
7:00 to 8:30 PM



Collaboration Corner FMH x NISA Support

For many communities, there continues to be a barrier when it comes to seeking help for mental health issues within the family. This year at Friends for Mental Health, we are working to reach out to members from diverse cultural backgrounds to open up a conversation about mental health and reduce the stigma that remains present.

As a part of this initiative, we aim to create workshops that are informed on cultural sensitivities and are personalised to the needs of the communities that we wish to reach. Culturally-sensitive services move beyond simply inviting individuals to engage in a service — they place a strong emphasis on involving them in the process.

To gain a better understanding of how we can make our presentations accessible and pertinent to families of all backgrounds, we are working with community organizations that serve diverse populations, such as family organizations and local cultural centers.

Nisa Support, with its namesake meaning “woman” in Arabic, is a local Muslim women’s community group based in Pierrefonds that offers support groups and events regarding a variety of topics, such as health, finance, and parenting. Led by a passionate team of Muslim women, the organization is open to all and works to promote the well-being of its members.

We are pleased to be working with Nisa Support to offer a series of presentations dedicated to introducing the topic of mental health and providing information about caregiving for loved ones with mental health issues.

The collaboration, set to begin in late September, is an exciting addition to our Fall programming, and we look forward to sharing more details with you in future issues of Family Matters.

- Hope Jaikaransingh, Community Agent



Finding Comfort with Hygge

How the Danish concept of hygge can improve your mental wellbeing.

Sara Hashemi, Communications Coordinator



Illustration by Sara Hashemi

As Fall approaches, curl up with a good book, light a candle, and embrace the Danish practice of *hygge*. *Hygge*, pronounced “hoo-ga,” focuses on creating comfort, warmth, and coziness. Although there is no direct translation for the word in English, the Oxford English Dictionary defines it as “a quality of cosiness and comfortable conviviality that engenders a feeling of contentment or well-being.”

Practicing *hygge* isn’t just about Pinterest-worthy decor. In “The Little Book of *Hygge*,” Meik Weiking describes it as being “about an atmosphere rather than about things.” It’s about celebrating

living in the moment, and doing what you can to create a sense of peace and security around you. By doing so, *hygge* also promotes a sense of calm and emotional well-being, which is especially needed as the weather gets colder and the days get darker. *Hygge* has been linked to lower levels of depression and anxiety, increased feelings of self-worth, a greater sense of mindfulness, increased optimism, and other mental health benefits.

The feelings of safety and calm that *hygge* engenders allow for better sleep, less cortisol spikes, and improved self-care practices. Since *hygge* is also about community and making time for

others, embracing a *hygge* lifestyle allows for increased intimacy and deeper connections.

So, here are some things that can help you create your own sense of *hygge* at home – but remember that *hygge* is about finding your own comfort.

Make sure to join us on September 23 for our Feel-Good Movie Night to learn more about hygge!



40th Anniversary: Four decades of working with caregivers and the community

Alexandra Bellefeuille, Administrative Assistant

On Tuesday, August 19, 1980 at 8:00 PM, a small group met to plan the creation of a mental health self-help group. One year later, on October 6, 1981, Friends for Mental Health was born as a community organization. The mandate of the organization created by Mrs. Françoise Vien was very clear: to provide bilingual support to the family and friends of a person suffering from a mental health problem. There was a lack of resources for caregivers in the West Island at the time, and the organization began offering aid and respite services to its members. From the beginning, Friends for Mental Health was concerned with providing reliable and relevant resources, which is why many mental health experts have been invited to give conferences.

In 1996, the Family Support

Program was created in collaboration with another local organization, Community Perspective on Mental Health. This was the first time that Friends for Mental Health welcomed professional counsellors to provide services to member families.

Over the next few years, the community organization developed a multitude of programs and training. Members of the Board of Directors went to Ontario for training to become leaders in a family-to-family program called NAMI. It has now become one of our most popular trainings. Friends for Mental Health also now offers services to children in the form of art therapy and a specialized summer camp. Kids can have a place to express their emotions and learn more about their loved one's mental health condition. This

year, we're also developing a new program for cultural communities to provide culturally appropriate presentations and to help reduce the stigma around mental health.

Initially created by families for families, surviving financially only through donations, 40 years later, Friends for Mental Health now has 10 employees and consultants and receives funding from CIUSSS, Partage-Action, Centraide and various other foundations. On October 8th at 6:30 p.m., Friends for Mental Health will celebrate 40 years of service and support to the community. We invite you to join us in commemorating 40 years of determination, courage and resilience of our members!



Goodbye Emily!



It is a bittersweet moment to say goodbye to the wonderful team and amazing community that I've had the honour of being a part of for the past 2 years. I've made a lot of great connections and a ton of fun memories along the way. This experience has also made me truly value and place importance on mental health and wellness, and for that I will be forever grateful. I have no doubt that Sara Hashemi, Friends' new Communications Coordinator, will have fresh, new ideas to bring to the organization. I wish Friends continued success and I wish all of my colleagues the very best in their future endeavors. Take care!

Emily Vidal

Hello Sara!



I am excited to join the Friends for Mental Health team as the new Communications Coordinator!

I recently graduated from McGill University, where I studied Environment & Development and English Literature. During my time at McGill, I worked at various student publications, including Ylara Magazine, where I was editor-in-chief for two years, and the McGill Daily, where I spent the last year working as the Culture Editor. I am extremely eager to bring forth all the skills I've acquired throughout my studies and work experiences to communications at FMH. I'm grateful to have the opportunity to work for an organization that does such important work in the West Island community.

Goodbye Emily, and I am looking forward to working with you all!

Sara Hashemi

Fall 2021: Online Training & Workshops

The calendar of events is also available on our website

Mindfulness Hour - Zoom

Every Thursday from September 9th to October 14th
& Every Thursday from October 28 to December 2
6:30 PM - 7:30 PM
FREE • English



Creative Expression Workshop

Every Thursday from September 16th to November 4th
4:00 PM - 6:00 PM
Cost: \$30 • English

NAMI Family-to-Family Education Program - Zoom

Every Thursday from October 7th to November 11th
6:30 PM - 8:30 PM
Free with membership • English



Preventing Crisis Situations

Every Thursday from September 16th to October 21
1:00 PM - 3:00 PM
Cost: \$30 • French

Peer to Peer Techniques Workshop (for NAMI participants)

Every Tuesday from October 18th to November 11th
6:30 PM - 8:30 PM
Free with membership • English



Borderline Personality Disorder Training - Zoom

Every Tuesday from September 14th to October 19th
6:30 PM - 8:30 PM
Cost: \$30 • French

Healthy Boundaries Training - Zoom

Every Thursday from November 29th to December 3rd
1:00 PM - 3:00 PM
Cost: \$30 • English

Please note

All dates and times indicated here may be subject to change. Our training, workshops and support groups are offered on the Zoom video platform. You must have access to a computer, tablet or cellphone in order to participate. Contact us at info@asmfmh.org or 514-636-6885 to register in advance.

Fall 2021: Online Support Groups

Grandparent Support Group - Zoom

Every 2nd Wednesday of the month
12:00 PM - 2:00 PM
Cost: Free with membership • Bilingual
Starting: September 8



Men's Support Group - Zoom

Every 2nd Monday of the month
6:30 PM - 8:30 PM
Cost: Free with membership • Bilingual
Starting: September 13

Depression and Anxiety Support Group - Zoom

Every 3rd Wednesday of the month
6:30 PM - 8:30 PM
Cost: Free with membership • Bilingual
Starting: September 15



Psychosis and Bipolar Disorder Support Group - Zoom

Every 3rd Monday of the month
6:30 PM - 8:30 PM
Cost: Free with membership • Bilingual
Starting: September 20

Borderline Personality Disorder Support Group - Zoom

Every 4th Monday of the month
6:30 PM - 8:30 PM
Cost: Free with membership • Bilingual
Starting: September 27



Borderline Personality Support Group & other mental health issues - Zoom

Every 1st Monday of the month
6:30 PM - 8:30 PM
Cost: Free with membership • French
Starting: October 6th

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Mindful Walking & Photography

Ground yourself in the beauty of nature, connect with your surroundings, and take some time for yourself. As you walk along the park, take photos that best represent themes related to mental health and wellness. We can't wait to see you!

Location: Centennial Park, DDO

Time: Friday, September 3 from 12:00 - 1:00 PM

To register, please contact 514-636-6885 or

info@asmfmh.org

