

HAVE YOU CONSIDERED THERAPY?

Written by: Charlotte Johnston

Over the years working on-the-line I feel this question has popped out of my mouth too often.

As we all know, the conversations we have with each other while working away can sometimes twist and turn in to some very personal directions- the commonality being that we are all navigating some kind of stressful life change.

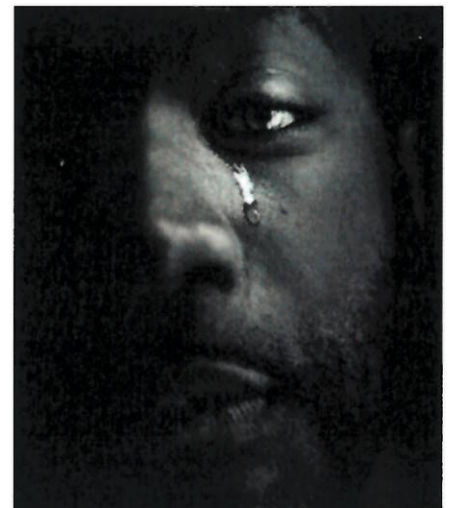


The years pass by as we go through so many new chapters and personal life shifts: new relationship beginnings, parenthood, step-parenthood and new family merging's, relationship challenges, relationship breakdowns, separation, divorce, death of loved ones, ambiguous grief, family estrangements, children experiencing behavioural difficulties or exceptionalities, children, partners or aging parents experiencing mental health crises, our own mental health struggles, mental illness, addictions, coping with BPD personalities, codependency stress, financial stress, loss of purpose, fear of the unknown future, loneliness... need I go on? So many people I have worked with over the years have stumbled out stories of their challenges with the above.

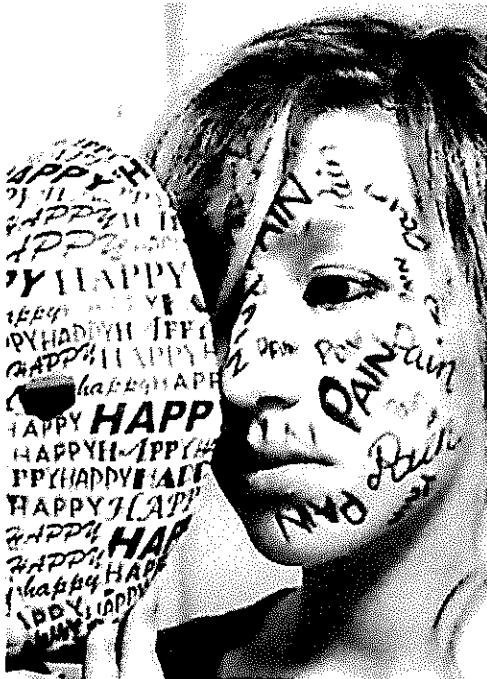
The stress over the lack of control we feel over the changes in our lives, the hopelessness, the anger and frustration, the guilt, shame and the self-loathing, the way our mind sometimes feels like its running us and we can't shut it off, the ways we cope that we know are the best tools we currently have (but, deep down know aren't really helping) are all feelings I know too well.

The reason I feel so comfortable asking the question about therapy so directly is because I don't see it as a question to suggest there is something wrong with you, that you are defective and can't "cope like the rest of us", or that you are beyond help – quite the opposite! Therapy can be an excellent resource, support and practice for developing new tools on the inside that can help navigate all the challenges of life on the outside.

We wouldn't let people drive cars without licenses, and yet we all navigate relationships from trial and error and feel shame when we reach out for assistance because we finally can't cope. We feel



we should be able to do it all on our own. How is that working for you? I know it didn't work for me. I have been in-and-out of therapy for just shy of 10 years. The first few years were trial and error of finding the right fit for me, the last 7 have been with the same therapeutic relationship. At first, I went bi-weekly, then for many years monthly, and now keep the relationship active at least once every couple months as a courtesy to my self and commitment to my wellness. If difficult struggles surfaced, I would book more without shame.



For the most part, my tool box for staying anchored when life appears to be storming around me is large. My support system is strong. My self compassion, generally on point. Life will never stop handing me challenges, but the subtle effects of therapy and the work I have put into the process has allowed me the confidence to know I can handle them or have the courage to seek support without shame when I can't. I couldn't say any of this a decade ago - my life was running me and I was drowning in the storm.

I wish in those earlier years someone who had gone through the process had compassionately asked me if I had thought about going to therapy, but it seems the only people who ask are the ones who haven't ever experienced it themselves which further isolates the one who needs support. The ones who have (like myself) tend to keep it quiet in fear that it will change the way we are seen. There is a large underground group of healthy individuals who have gone through the therapeutic process.

Entering therapy will be work. It will require honest vulnerability. It will mean finding the right fit in a therapist and approach – and sometimes not on the first try. It will require some faith in the process even when you want to skip your appointment. It will sometimes feel darker before it feels light. It will require you to change and make changes to your lifestyle, close relationships and ways of thinking and accessing your emotions – without any idea of what outcome to expect. The therapist will not tell you what to do or give you advice if they are skilled. The changes you know you need to make will come from inside.

Therapy is about going through, not around, and it is understandably scary – no sense in sugar coating it. You will get out what you put in, and start wherever you are.



If (like me) you have almost picked up the phone and made an appointment dozens of times, and are still reading this, it might be time to again consider that call.

Do we have benefit coverage? Yes. Will it still be expensive? Yes.

Was it the best investment I have ever made? Yes, without a doubt.

Life is too short to struggle on your own, especially when life feels like it won't stop storming. So, I'll ask again: Have you ever considered therapy?

Please contact your EFAP Rep Dave Simmons / Charlotte Johnston / Joy Hickox for the therapist designations covered by our psychological benefits for you and your families, or support in finding the right resources for you.

Just so you know,

you're worth it.

**MENTAL
HEALTH
MATTERS**

Charlotte Johnston will be activated

MAY 8th to MAY 12th

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