

I wish I had the benefit of Living Life To The Full during high school

By: Ashley Roy

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My name is Ashley. I am a young adult in recovery who has struggled with mental illness throughout my high school years. As part of my peer support volunteering at CMHA Champlain East, I had the amazing opportunity to support the *Living Life To The Full* (LLTTF) youth project, implemented in various schools of Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry counties.

My mental health issues have brought me to several therapies such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), Dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT), mental health group support and various medication prescriptions.

Since the beginning of my involvement in the youth project, I couldn't stop thinking: "if only the LLTTF course had been offered to me during my high school years." It might have helped prevent my life leading down a long dark tunnel. I have experienced the pressure of growing up, struggling alone with my mental health and bottling it all in until one day it became too much and almost cost me my life. Looking back, had I been more aware and had strategies to help me cope in distressing moments, my suffering would have not been as intense during my high school years.

During teenage years, reaching out is so hard, finding resources, having a place to open up about our difficulties in a safe environment, sharing with others about mental health in a safe manner with trusted adults and realizing that we're not the only one struggling is what a program such as LLTTF at school can accomplish.

Never in all the therapies I have experienced, have I had such clarity about my issues. With LLTTF I was



taught easy to understand strategies that had a life transforming impact on me. It serves as a behavioural change mental health toolbox that, when applied sooner in life, provides us with great skillsets to learn how to tackle large obstacles. For me, it has really improved my capacity for setting realistic goals and also helped me attain academic success. Overall, it has propelled me towards a brighter, happier and productive future. Today I am working on my Honours Bachelor of Behavioural Psychology degree. I am more aware of my talents, my intelligence and I have a renewed confidence in myself and my academic capacities.

LLTTF taught me to react differently when life is a mess. I can take a step back to remind myself of what I learned from the course and I can refer to the course booklets to help me implement the solutions. The booklets and worksheets content are relevant. It is easy to understand and to implement stress free.

I've never found anything in life to be simple other than doing nothing and staying stuck. LLTTF taught me that we only need to change one part of our life to kick start a chain reaction in breaking the vicious cycle we are in when we struggle. Helping me get unstuck, tackling emotional stress, leading me back on track to enjoying life's beautiful moments – these are the impacts that the LLTTF course had on my life. It was a refreshing learning experience and such a great reminder and reset for when we get lost in the chaos of life. This course is practical, transformational and very important.



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