



**Canadian Mental
Health Association**
Champlain East
Mental health for all

**Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale**
Champlain Est
La santé mentale pour tous

329 rue Pitt Street
Cornwall, ON K6J 3R1
Tel 613-933-5845
1-800-493-8271
Fax 613-936-2323
cmha-east.on.ca
acsm-est.on.ca

Submitted by: Canadian Mental Health Association Champlain East

Mental Health Week: Unmasking Mental Health

Did you know that Mental Health Week in Canada is happening May 5th to May 11th, 2025? The theme this year is “Unmasking Mental Health.” During this week, people across Canada are encouraged to look beyond the surface and see the whole person when interacting with individuals living with a mental health or substance use challenge. Many mental health benefits can emerge when we choose courage and adopt an attitude of understanding. Here are some information shared by the national Canadian Mental Health Association to help us unmasking mental health.

WHAT IS MASKING?

Masking is hiding or suppressing something about ourselves - emotions, personality traits, behaviours, or symptoms - from others. It's a coping mechanism used to stay safe, hide in plain sight or “fit in”, and we may even do it without being aware of it. Unfortunately, people with mental illnesses and addictions often feel the need to mask to keep a job, find housing, or simply be accepted. When asked how we're doing, even if we are not living with a mental illness or substance use challenge, many of us respond with the socially acceptable “I'm fine” or “I'm good” even though we might be having a bad day or struggling with something bigger.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE MASK?

- Masking can take a lot of effort and lead to feelings of exhaustion and mental strain.
- Masking can lead to isolation, disconnection, and a loss of self-identity. It can prevent individuals from forming authentic relationships and can make them feel like they don't belong.
- Masking affects a person's sense of self-worth and can cause feelings of emptiness and shame.
- Masking may stop people from getting help when they need it. Without access to help, it's harder to recover from a mental illness or substance use disorder.

HERE ARE SOME STRATEGIES TO START UNMASKING OURSELVES

- Learn more about when and why you mask: figure out which people or situations cause you to put on a mask and, conversely, identify situations and people you don't mask for.
- Set boundaries: decide who you will open up to and what you're okay sharing or talking about and, if you're comfortable, communicate your needs to others.



**Canadian Mental
Health Association**
Champlain East
Mental health for all

**Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale**
Champlain Est
La santé mentale pour tous

329 rue Pitt Street
Cornwall, ON K6J 3R1
Tel 613-933-5845
1-800-493-8271
Fax 613-936-2323
cmha-east.on.ca
acsm-est.on.ca

- Seek peer support: connecting with others who share similar experiences provides space for validation and comfort and can provide extra support as you explore unmasking.

HOW CAN WE HELP OTHERS UNMASK?

- Fight stigma: have open conversations about mental health and substance use to help normalize different experiences and situations.
- Lead by example: open up and be vulnerable around others to show them it's ok.
- Ask twice: when someone says, "I'm fine" and you suspect they aren't, take a moment to ask again, showing genuine care and interest.
- Give people permission to share real feelings.

When and how a person chooses to unmask is personal, and unmasking might not always be safe. The more we all work together to fight stigma, challenge the idea of normal, and foster open conversations, the easier it gets for people to be who they are without fear. This May 5-11, let's create a ripple effect of courage and understanding across the country!

Source:

<https://cmha.ca/mental-health-week/>

DO YOU NEED HELP?

Dial or text 2-1-1 for free and confidential service that easily connects people to the critical social and community supports they need.

If you are thinking of suicide, please call 9-8-8 which is a mental health crisis and suicide prevention line.

The information provided is not a substitute for professional advice. If you need advice, please consult a qualified health care professional. For further information or if you want to access our services at CMHA, please call 1-800-493-8271 or visit our web site at www.cmha-east.on.ca