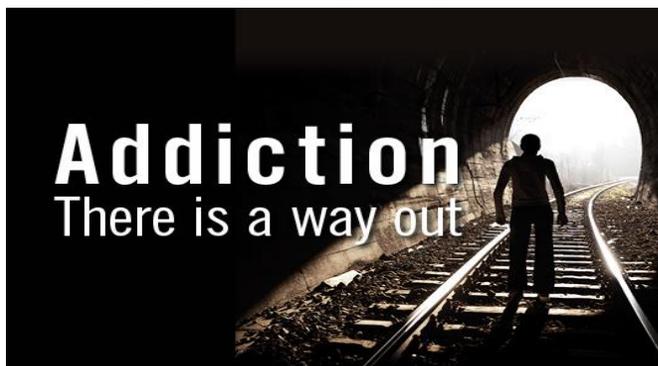




# Who Is an Addict?

*The second part of a series about addiction, this article combines my personal experiences and a definition of addiction.*



I believe that I have the disease of addiction. When I was younger, my addictions determined the course of my life. This short article is an exploration of the nature of addiction.

“Who is an Addict?” originally published by *Narcotics Anonymous* examines this question. “Very simply, an addict is a man or woman whose life is controlled by drugs. (Cont’d on page 2)



## WRITING FOR WELLNESS FREE 4-WEEK WORKSHOP



July 4, 11, 18 & 25<sup>th</sup>  10:00am to 12:00pm

Facilitated by Heather Frenette  
Call Melinda at 679-7464 to register

Offered by CMHA-King’s County Branch  
11 Opportunity Lane, Coldbrook

Funded by “Reaching Out”  
A Consumer Led Initiative Grant from NS Dept. of Health & Wellness  
All supplies and snacks will be provided

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Who is an addict?
- 2 Write Your Way to Wellness
- 3 Teens and Suicide Contagion
- 4 Optimism for Optimum Health

We are people in the grip of a continuing and progressive illness whose ends are always the same: jails, institutions, and death.”

Deep within my heart I knew I was an addict but I just didn’t want to admit it. My whole thought life was occupied with drugs, a relentless obsession, and I used them because of the psychological, emotional, and physical feelings drugs gave me. I enjoyed the altered state of consciousness that drugs and alcohol created. Rather than being in a normal state of mind, I preferred to be in a state of oblivion. Feeling normal was foreign to me. Using drugs was the only way I could survive.

Another thing that makes me an addict is my obsession with control. I spent most of my waking hours trying to control my consumption of drugs and alcohol. I thought I was in control but in reality the drugs controlled me. When I was able to give drugs up for a short period of time, which wasn’t very often, the reason I started again is that I thought I could become a social user or drinker. It only took one drink, one toke, one hit, or one pill to set me off on a run. I was like a train rushing down the tracks out of control heading for destruction.

I have been institutionalized in psychiatric hospitals many times because of my addiction. According to the laws of science I should not even be alive because of all the overdoses. It is a miracle I have survived the psychological damage drugs and alcohol have done to me. At this moment in life I feel alive, I love life, and I love being alive. I now feel fully human and fully alive because I am now living in recovery.

By Tony Legere



Reference:  
“Who Is an Addict.” Narcotics Anonymous. 16 June 2013.  
<[http://www.na.org/admin/include/spaw2/uploads/pdf/litfiles/us\\_english/misc/Who%20Is%20an%20Addict.pdf](http://www.na.org/admin/include/spaw2/uploads/pdf/litfiles/us_english/misc/Who%20Is%20an%20Addict.pdf)>



**Write Your Way to Wellness**  
*Benefits of Keeping a Journal*

“I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read on the train.”

*-Oscar Wilde*  
*19<sup>th</sup> century playwright and satirist*

My nearly senior brain thrives on lists. If I don’t have a written “to do” one, my thoughts keep running over my mental compilation like a child learning to play scales on the piano. When I have a list, it is all there in black and white and it can be checked as many times as needed, definitely an anxiety reducing activity.

Keeping a journal can provide the same benefits. Writing about your experiences, especially stressful ones, can help you to come to terms with them. Once you have written an account of events, you can review it as much as you want and you can even change it as needed. Who says you can’t re-write history?

As an adolescent, my diary was my friend, a place to record secrets, to reveal the inner part of me no one had ever seen. As an adult, although I may be writing on my computer instead of in a book with a lock and key, my writing serves the same function. Writing uses the left, analytical side of the brain. Writing an account of your feelings helps to understand what you are thinking. It’s a way to step back, detach yourself, gain some perspective and get a grip on your emotions.

By Heather Frenette



**Contact:**  
op-ed@cmhakings.ns.ca  
902-690-2422

## Teens and Suicide Contagion

A study published on May 21, 2013 in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* reported that teens whose schoolmates took their own lives were more likely to attempt suicide themselves-- a phenomenon the authors call the "suicide contagion."

The contagion study also found that by age sixteen, twenty-four percent of teens had a schoolmate who had committed suicide and twenty percent personally knew someone who had taken their own life.

"We were also really surprised how strong the effect was, especially among the younger adolescents," said Dr. Ian Colman, one of the co-authors of the study and Canada Research Chair of mental health epidemiology at the University of Ottawa. The study found that twelve to thirteen year olds who had experienced a suicide in their school were about five times more likely to contemplate it themselves.

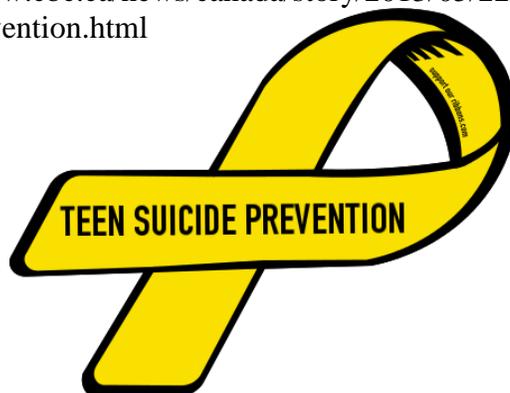
According to Amy Cheung, adolescent psychiatrist and researcher at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto, suicides in schools and communities tend to happen in clusters, largely due to copycat acts. "We need to intervene and identify kids who are at risk to prevent more suicides from happening," she said.

Given how vulnerable teens seem to be to the idea of suicide, there is probably a need to change counseling techniques and media coverage of the issue, says Nora Spinks, Executive Director of the Vanier Institute for the Family.

Colman says that even though suicide is a sensitive issue, it's important to keep talking about it. "We want to create a culture, whether in our schools, at home, our communities, where people feel comfortable talking about mental health and especially children feel comfortable seeking help, coming forward, if they're struggling with their mental health. We should talk about suicide, but we should be careful," he concludes.

By Melinda Cadarette

Source: Mayer, A. CBC News. 23 May 2013. "Needed: New approaches to defuse 'suicide contagion' among teens." Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2013/05/22/f-suicide-contagion-prevention.html>



## USED COMPUTERS WANTED



CMHA-Kings will gratefully receive donations of computers and computer hardware (towers, keyboards, mouse, laptops, and flat monitors) to be refurbished and given to people in the community who are in need of them. Please contact our volunteer (and CMHA-Kings Board of Directors member) Morley Robinson at (902) 678-7563.



Phone: (902) 679-7464  
[admin@cmhakings.ns.ca](mailto:admin@cmhakings.ns.ca)

[www.kingsns.cmha.ca](http://www.kingsns.cmha.ca)

## Subscribe to

A MENTAL HEALTH  
**PERSPECTIVE**

By email or online  
To Order: email  
[editor@cmhakings.ns.ca](mailto:editor@cmhakings.ns.ca)

Or call 679-7464  
It's Free!

## Optimism for Optimum Health

*To get up each morning with the resolve to be happy is to set our own conditions to the events of each day. To do this is to condition circumstances instead of being conditioned by them.*

**- Ralph Waldo Emerson**

The *Anxiety Disorders Association of Canada* states that one important aspect of treating mood disorders involves “. . . identifying the thoughts and thought patterns that make you anxious and keep you anxious and then challenging them.” People with mood disorders may experience unnecessary worry and unease when confronted with an uncomfortable situation because of the effect of the mood disorder on how they think, feel, and behave. Sometimes one’s state of mind or reaction is disproportionate to the situation at hand.

Thinking positively reduces anxiety by unveiling false assumptions and shedding light on anxiety-laden emotions. How we think about ourselves can be positive or negative and can be rational or irrational. For example, the negative thought, “Everyone else can do this task better,” can become, “Is this really true? If I do my best I will feel pride in my accomplishments.” Approaching circumstances in a positive and productive way is directly proportional to our level of personal happiness. According to the *Mayo Clinic*, thinking positively has enormous health benefits, as seen in the following:

- Boosts the immune system
- Limits the effect of stress
- Reduces the risk of depression
- Reduces the risk of heart disease
- May increase life expectancy

It is important here to apply the golden rule in reverse: treat yourself as well as you would treat someone else. Positive thinkers are less affected by stress than pessimistic people and cope better in times of adversity, supporting an overall healthful mind and body. The mind is truly a powerful entity.

By Dena Walker

### Resources

**Mindfulness meditations** – YouTube

**Personal Affirmations** – <http://www.how2bhappy.org/16-affirmations-to-overcome-anxiety>

**The Power of Music to Relieve Stress** – This website provides information on music therapy and gives suggestions and helpful links. <http://psychcentral.com/lib/2007/the-power-of-music-to-reduce-stress/all/1/>

### References

*Anxiety Disorders Association of Canada*. Date accessed: June 14, 2013. (Web).

<http://www.anxietycanada.ca/english/treatment.php>

*Mayo Clinic*. Date accessed: June 7, 2013. (Web). <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/positive-thinking/SR00009>

Tanya. *How to be Happy*. Date accessed: June 7, 2013. (Web).

<http://www.how2bhappy.org/16-affirmations-to-overcome-anxiety>



#### A Mental Health Perspective Mission Statement:

The purpose of this newsletter is to bring faith, hope and courage to members of the local mental health community of Kings County, Nova Scotia, as well as others who are involved with a mental, emotional or psychological condition.

Donations to support this newsletter and other important programs and services can be made to CMHA, 11 Opportunity Lane Suite 3 Box 10 Coldbrook NS B4R 0A5 (Cheque or money order will be accepted).

#### Staff & Volunteers

Editor: Heather Frenette Writers: Tony Legere, Melinda Cadarette and Dena Walker  
Printing and Distribution: Melinda Humphries, Dena Walker and Heather Frenette

We also thank Brenda Main and Laurel Taylor for their help.

