

UNSEEN

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH ZINE
ISSUE 6: GROWING PAINS



CASA YOUTH AND FAMILY ADVISORY COUNCIL

July 2023

EDITOR'S LETTER

Hello again! Thank you for picking up the long-awaited sixth issue of the Youth and Family Advisory Council's *Unseen: Youth Mental Health Zine*. We couldn't be more excited to share this edition with you! *Unseen* is created entirely by youth. Youth council members and CASA patients ranging in age from 12 to 22 have come together to contribute thought-provoking artwork, poetry and stories that speak to their diverse experiences with mental illness.

For those of you who experience the challenges of mental illness, we hope you find comfort and hope in knowing that you are not alone. For those who are seeking to learn and support, we hope you take away valuable knowledge and new understandings from the words and art of our youth.

The theme of this issue is "growing pains." Everyone's mental health journey looks different, and the road to recovery is not always a straight line. Whether you are looking back at how far you've come, looking forward at a hopeful future, or recovering from a rocky bout of ups and downs, your story is important.

We hope you enjoy this issue. We'd like to share this message in closing: **You are not alone. There is hope. Keep going on your journey and fight through those growing pains.**

Sincerely,
The Youth and Family Advisory Council

This zine is a continuation of the CASA Youth Council's Unseen: Youth Mental Wellness Magazine. The CASA Youth Council and the Family Advisory Council joined forces in 2021, and Unseen lives on through the newly formed Youth and Family Advisory Council. You can read more about the council on our website at casamentalehealth.org/yfac or on the council's Instagram page @casacomunityab.

Cover artwork and editorial design by Cecily Lowe



BY CECILY, YOUTH AND FAMILY ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBER

"AT CASA HOUSE, I WAS CREATING A NEW PATH. IT WASN'T JUST A STRAIGHT PATH; THERE WERE A LOT OF UPS AND DOWNS, AND SQUIGGLES, AND CURVES, BUT I MADE A LOT OF PROGRESS THERE."



Tell us about your drawing.

The tears represent the darkness leaving my eyes. A lot of times I would dissociate, and that's why I didn't put a pupil in. The eyes have another meaning too - they are glowing with potential. An iris can look any way, so when an iris is blank, it's like creating a new path in a forest. At CASA House, I was creating a new path. It wasn't just a straight path; there were a lot of ups and downs, and squiggles, and curves, but I made a lot of progress there.

My time at CASA really helped me move forward, make progress and restart. I made so much progress in just four months through meds and therapy. The environment that I was in was so accepting. I could solve the things that were going on in the back of my mind that I couldn't move past. And I had people there to support me. It was so much support, like 24/7 support, and a good routine. Everything was just healthy. It felt good. It felt good to be alive.

What was it like after you left CASA House?

It was weird. It was really different going back to my house and to my family. And it was weird starting a new school, but the school at CASA's Adolescent Day Program just helped me more with my journey and to lock in all these skills I learned. I got the next level of support, even though it wasn't 24/7, it was just at school.

It felt really nice to be out as well. It gave me a new perspective on everything. I learned a lot about myself at CASA House. I learned new mental health skills and stuff like that, but also discovered new hobbies and things I was interested in.

What are some improvements that you see in yourself now compared to how you were before?

It's a lot easier to build up motivation. I know how to deal with distress a lot better, and I have a higher tolerance to negative things. I have skills that I can use every day. I'm a lot happier.

What I Wish I Could Tell My Younger Self About Mental Health and Illness

You are not alone in feeling how you feel. There are others who understand and genuinely want to help you figure it all out.

- Angella

That my experiences are not the same as others, so I cannot expect people to react to situations the same way I would. I would tell myself to lay off the problem solving, and instead, focus on listening with empathy.

- Mykaela

IT IS IMPORTANT. Make time for your mental health. Work at it every day. Treat yourself with kindness, because you deserve it.

Practice mindfulness and meditate. Find new ways to love yourself.

- Tiana

There are many things I wish I could tell my younger self about mental health. The main piece of knowledge I would give is that I am not crazy, and that it is okay to feel the way I do. There are many other individuals also struggling the way I am, and that I am going to be alright in the end. There are many ways to handle one's mental health, along with many organizations and supports available. Because I was unaware of these things when I was little, I suffered more than I had to.

– Jasmine

I would remind my younger self to embrace the present and live each moment as it comes, rather than getting caught up in what the future may bring. The ups and downs of life are inevitable and sometimes unexpected. Instead of constantly dwelling on what's next, take some time to acknowledge how far you've come, and cherish the things that bring you joy and happiness, such as all the meaningful relationships in your life.

– Jasmine

I wish I could tell myself that it's okay to be afraid. That it's okay to feel alone and self-loathing. It didn't diminish who I was, or make me less worthy. What mattered most is that I sought help. I wanted to get better, even if I didn't know how. Despite the feelings of hopelessness, and the days where it felt impossible to see the light at the end of the tunnel, I kept trying. More often than not, I would fail. But I always wanted to try.

- Andrew

I wish I could hold my younger self, and stroke her hair. I wish I could tell her that she has been so very brave for so long, but that it is okay to fall because she will be caught. That she can trust her mother even though she does not yet trust herself. I wish I could show her that holding on to your past does not mean living in it, and that her scars will one day be covered in art, only serving as a reminder of the resilience embedded in her soul. I want to talk with her about relapse, as something not to be feared but rather as lessons from which to learn. I want her to know that someday she will take this pain and turn it into fire; advocating for and supporting other youth trudging through mental health crises. I want her to know that choosing life is one of the hardest things I've ever done, but one of the best decisions I've ever made. I want to tell her that I am so, so sorry for not being more kind. But most of all, I want to tell her that I love her, and that she is enough.

- V

Expectations

By Jasmine

Stop, think, breathe, now breathe again.

*Rushing to the car, train and then the office. Sit, breathe a sigh of relief, you
made it on time*

but then the thoughts rush in

*so much work, so much left undone, and time is slipping through your fingers
like sand sliding into the vast ocean.*

*Just focus. Obstacles are everywhere, the wall of discouragement continues to inch
closer*

"It's okay," they say. Everyone goes through this.

*Does the insidious smell of failure fill the air for everyone? It's not easy but you
stand tall,*

ready to face the next roadblock on your track.

*Then again, a wave of anxiety washes over your body, and it lingers. The hairs on
the nape of your neck stand up as if a cold breeze has taken you by surprise*

Surprise, surprises, are all around

Some good, some bad.

Yet you continue on with your day, insistent on making them proud

Who's them?

Whose expectations am I chasing?

But there's no time...

Stop. Think, breathe, now breathe again.

*The next day begins and the nagging ache in your stomach grows louder, stronger
longing for attention*

Push it aside, that feeling, do not allow it to occupy your thoughts

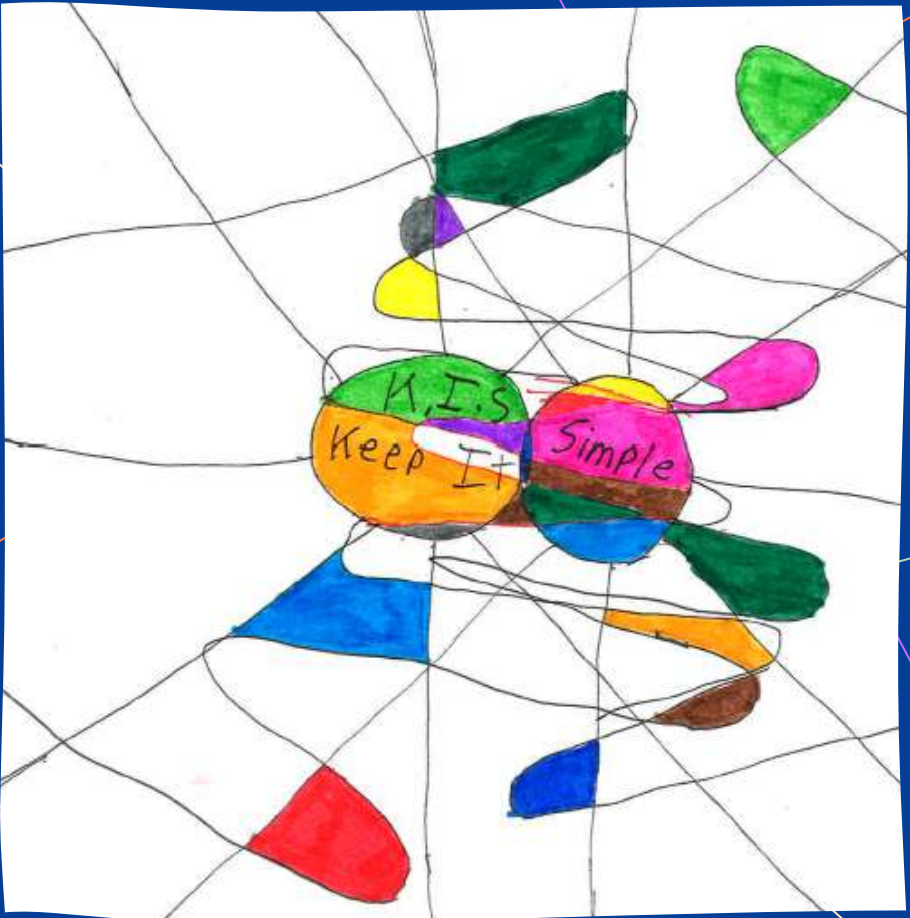
Project deadlines, new timelines

Is there an end in sight?

With more days ahead, what will change...

*Then, a reminder of the path already travelled, the barriers crossed,
To hear words of support, like a shining beacon in an endlessly dark tunnel*

Stop, think, breathe, now breathe again.



I chose to draw this because it represents my journey through CASA. It is chaotic but has hidden potential. The acronym K.I.S. (keep it simple) applies to almost every problem that could possibly arise. The different colors represent how "colorful" my journey has been. The hands represent the people who have helped me so far. The circles represent how all things come in a full circle as you have ups and downs.

NATHAN

LUCAS



2021



ZINES

WITHIN

A ZINE

you are beautiful the way you are

ABNORMAL CASES

The department said Women's College Hospital, about a half-mile from Yorkville, had tested 749 persons for the disease and had recorded 79 "abnormal" cases, most of which involved policemen.

Of these, 28 were confirmed cases of hepatitis, which turns the skin and eyes yellow, weakens the patient and can cause death if untreated. Earlier reports placed the number believed infected at more than 100.

It was not known how many of these had the infection variety of the agent, spread by contact or urinary excretions. The disease also can stem from infected syringes or from reaction in the liver to certain drugs.

WAR



VIOLENCE

THIS IS THEIR STORY.



BE YOU

twisted tale

SCENE 1

SCENE 2

EXIT
BREATH
LOVE
MOON
TALK
DINKY
STARS
WINTER

SCENE 3

SCENE 4



SCENE 5

SCENE 6

- Lucy



I am

The Tree

when it started, it was
dark...



when I
sprouted,

I felt great



I started to
grow

life was
good



But then it got
cold...

I wanted to give up



It was hard,
but the sun
told me to
Keep going,
I did



I grew big and
strong



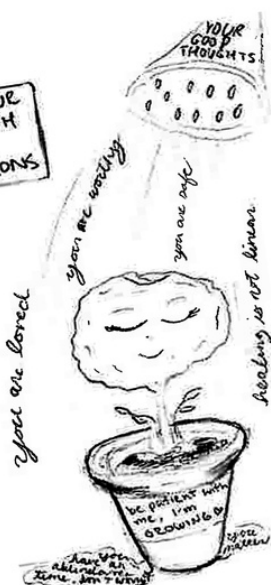
Now
when
it gets cold,
and I lose
my leaves

I
Know I'm not
alone when it
gets
hard

- Jade

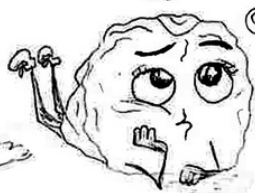


SHOWER YOUR BRAIN WITH POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS



HOW TO MAINTAIN A HEALTHY & HAPPY BRAIN?

GIVE YOUR BRAIN THE REST AND REJUVINATION IT NEEDS - MEDITATE, LISTEN TO MUSIC, OR WATCH A COMFORT SHOW.



THIS IS CHALLENGING...

I GOT THIS!



TRAIN YOUR BRAIN WITH ACADEMIC EXERCISES SUCH AS MATH AND READING

The CASA Youth and Family Advisory Council is currently looking for new members!

The Youth and Family Advisory Council (YFAC) is a group of youth, parents and family members with lived experience in accessing mental illness treatment. They advise CASA on creating an organization that puts those we serve at the centre of our decisions and service model.

If you have lived experience in accessing child and adolescent mental health services and live in Edmonton or nearby areas, please fill out the application form on CASA's website. You may also contact yfac@casaservices.org for more information.

casamentalhealth.org/yfac

What would I do as a YFAC member?

- Share input on mental health services
- Contribute to mental health advocacy projects
- Tell your story to the CASA board, staff and in the community.

THE END

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casamentalhealth.org/yfac

