

MENTAL ILLNESS

MEET LYNN, an 18-year-old who recently started her undergraduate studies at Tyndale. Lynn describes herself as a timid and shy individual with a close circle of friends. She is extremely close to her family and friends, who describe her as a smart and kind young lady. Academically, Lynn is a high-achiever, who is extremely motivated to do well. She has a desire to serve others and wants to pursue social work to directly help those in need. Lynn lives on campus and shortly after moving in she was overtaken by the feeling of extreme loneliness. She felt overwhelmingly sad after moving away from her family and friends, and being in a completely new environment where she didn't know anyone. Though she quickly made new friends and joined a few student clubs on campus, and appreciated the Tyndale community along with the help of her professors, yet she just couldn't stop feeling completely alone. She reports the feeling of isolation and complete loss of motivation or desire to do anything. After close to failing her midterm exams, Lynn felt hopeless, ashamed and considered dropping out, but a supportive professor guided her to book an appointment with the Academic Advisor. Through the coaching of the Advisor, Lynn learned about the various campus supports that are available to her. She soon booked an appointment with Counselling Services and the Accessibility Office at Tyndale to discuss her needs. Lynn learned through Counselling, that she has been dealing with symptoms of Depression and is working with her doctor for a psychiatrist referral. While working with her Counsellor, Lynn received interim accommodations from the Accessibility Office for her needs which helped her to manage academically. Lynn is working with the psychiatrist to obtain a formal diagnosis, at which point she will evaluate her treatment options and formalize a permanent accommodation plan. Until then, Lynn is glad that she is being supported and has a plan in place.

This is an example of a student that meets the profile for a 'Mental Illness'. This example does not represent an actual student but the challenges represented are very typical of a student with Depression. Students with Mental Health Disabilities can be impacted in a variety of different ways, the example above is only one instance of the type of difficulties faced by students with Depression. Any resemblance to real persons, past or present, is purely coincidental.

WHAT IS MENTAL ILLNESS?

Mental illness is a term often used for a wide range of disorders that affect mood, thinking, and/or behaviour. This impact on one's emotions and thoughts decrease the student's ability to cope with everyday life challenges (CAMH, 2001).

DOESN'T THIS HAPPEN TO EVERYONE THOUGH, I THOUGHT THIS WAS NORMAL?

Yes, feelings of isolation, loneliness, and stress amongst others are common throughout one's lifetime and especially during post-secondary years, but these feelings are often temporary. 'Normal' levels of stress and anxiety are often managed quite easily and students learn to cope with them. When the duration and intensity of these feelings interfere with everyday life, it is no longer 'normal'.

RESOURCES

On-campus:

Student Development Centre www.tyndale.ca/student-life

Tyndale Counselling Services www.tyndale.ca/counselling

Centre for Academic Excellence

www.tyndale.ca/centreforacademicexcellence

Off-campus:

Connex Ontario Health Services www.connexontario.ca

Mental Health Services www.ementalhealth.ca

Post-Secondary Student Helpline

www.good2talk.ca or 1-866-925-5454

Mental Health Helpline www.mentalhealthhelpline.ca/home/call or 1-866-531-2600

Mind Check www.mindcheck.ca

WHAT ARE SOME COMMON SIGNS?

Academic

- Increased absence
- Lack of participation
- Missed exams/assignments
- Prolonged extension requests
- Decline in quality of work

Emotional or Behavioural

- Withdrawn or animated than usual
- Expressions of hopelessness or worthlessness
- Severe irritability

Physical

- Deterioration in personal hygiene
- Visible change in weight
- Change in appetite
- Change in sleeping patterns

WHAT NOW???

If you suspect something is wrong but can't put your finger on it, TALK TO A HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL

Tyndale Counselling Services www.tyndale.ca/counselling

*If you are impacted by a mental illness, either temporarily or permanently, REGISTER WITH ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES. To book an appointment: **Email:** accessibilityservice@tyndale.ca, **Phone:** 416-226-6620 ext. 2189, **Drop by in person:** E305*

FACTS

- The onset of most mental illnesses occurs during adolescence and young adulthood (PHAC, 2002)
- One in five Canadians will experience a mental illness in their lifetime (CMHA, 2012)
- Anxiety and Depressions are the most reported mental health disabilities amongst post-secondary students in Canada (NCHA, 2016)
- Almost one-half (49%) of those who feel they have suffered from depression or anxiety have never gone to see a doctor about this problem (CMHA, 2012)
- Once depression is recognized, help can make a difference for 80% of people who are affected, allowing them to get back to their regular activities (CMHA, 2012)