



MENTAL WELLNESS

Dear Editor,

As parents of aspiring musicians we pull out all the stops, open our kids up to the best opportunities, and give them all the instruments and theory they need in order to fuel a passion for music, or perhaps to have them one day become centre stage.

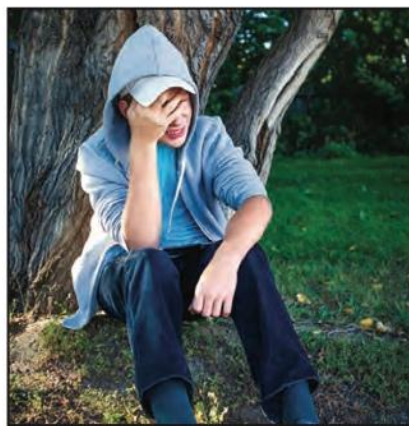
I am a parent of a karate kid. Twice a week, she's in one of the best karate classes in our area, she does extra training sessions, she attends seminars and competitions, and is mentored by expert teachers (Sensei), some of whom come from other countries. She's progressing nicely and has all the ingredients of success at her disposal.

There is no argument against opening doors for our children for any sport, art or activity that they find themselves interested in. Our energies and our hearts are in the right place – we want to see them become well-rounded contributors to society. However, what about mind health? What about emotional balance? Are we putting enough into those aspects of our children's lives?

Life rarely blows a consistent, fair wind: all of us have storms to face, and all of us, young and old alike, need some mechanisms to navigate these storms.

It is common nowadays to say that we understand that well-being is a matter of balance in both mind and body, and we acknowledge that with the onslaught of technology, in many cases it is more difficult to get enough exercise, let alone look after our mental capacities.

As parents, we do our best to make sure there is some kitchen table talk about how they are feeling and about the



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importance of mental self-care, but we're not always the experts, and sometimes young people need to hear it from those other than us. I feel myself smiling a mile wide when Claire comes home and says something like "My yoga teacher says it's really good for your mind if you..."

In my opinion, now more than ever, the tools that work to reduce nervous illness and stress have to become just as readily available to our kids as the sheet music they study or the dance choreography they perfect. I think we have to accept and integrate a more concerted mental health strategy – sooner rather than later, and not just for those children of ours who are already presenting with signs of emotional uneasiness or uncertainty.

The martial arts classes I assist in teaching have an element of breathing and breath control incorporated regularly. A simple project called 'Just Breathe' has become extremely effective and the kids love it, and they use the basic principles we teach them in their everyday lives.

I don't believe there is a need to reinvent the wheel, but rather to reevaluate the programs that our kids are involved in and see if we can incorporate an element of mindfulness and awareness – simply teaching them to pause here and there during their activities and to consciously relax, and to be honest and open about their emotional trials. No different than taking a break after a gruelling hockey practice, our kids need to take a break from the constant bombardment of human and technological firestorms that they deal with every day.

It's been proven time and time again that a few moments of calming music or a short walk is like a hot bath for the mind.

In addition to that, I believe we need to incorporate a few minutes of positive thinking by way of simple acts of kindness or dialogue. My kids and I have little talk after school about letting their lights shine, they found it a little odd at first, but now promptly respond with some little thing they did that day to help someone else or to try to spread a little positive energy.

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If our child presents with regular headaches we don't wait to see if it progresses; if they complain of a sore abdomen we don't ignore it; we nearly always encourage them to eat well, and we have a vested interest in the amount of exercise they get. Perhaps now it's time to change the narrative a little.

Perhaps it's time to stick mental health reminders on the fridge door right alongside the other to-do lists and our food guides.

With the exponential increase in anxiety and nervous illnesses, depression, etc., in our society, it's time to start talking; talking between us, and talking with our kids. The basics of this discussion are easy. Are our children and youth taking time to mentally recharge, to breathe, to do some reading, take mindful walks, or even pray or meditate?

Are we encouraging them to express in detail what they are feeling when they are uptight or anxious? Are we setting them up with simple coping strategies to allow negative energy to pass through them, and to raise positive thoughts to the minds forefront?

If we are what we think, are we reminding them to think positive – to think big?

In my eldest daughter's class, a Yoga instructor visits them occasionally and it is the highlight of the class' week. Many kids leave feeling refreshed and with a sense of clarity.

In my experience, mental well-being is just like your body's wellbeing: it has to be fed properly (junk in, junk out), exercised properly, it has to be attended to with kindness, and it needs consistent loving attention. A little understanding about anxiety goes a long way to assisting in dissolving it.

I'm not the expert, but I do see some of the very difficult scenarios and life situations that kids and youth are finding themselves in. The little things on the path to mental well-being can go a long way. Why not have kids turn their electronic devices into mindfulness coaches for a few moments a day? Ten minutes a day of an app Like Headspace is amazing for mental clarity.

Mental health Professionals need to speak up more (and speak louder), and



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society needs to shed the stigmatism around mental illness once and for all. Governments need to take a stand and put their money where we need it most: better mental health programs for youth and timely access to the same. Parents need to encourage mental health education and training in schools, churches, in sports clubs, and at home.

Kids need to feel safe and supported during times where they just aren't feeling themselves – times when they need to find some balance. A little kind and heartfelt prevention will save lives.

There's always help and there's always hope. I think its time to turn up the volume on that very message.

— Jeff Hutching

CARBON COVER-UP

Dear Editor,

Andrew Scheer's Conservatives have been calling on Justin Trudeau to finally reveal how much the carbon tax will cost regular Canadian families.

Over the last two years, the Liberal government has refused to release key facts about the true costs of the carbon tax. Instead, they only provide the public with censored documents.

Canadians are being left in the dark about the added costs that their families will now have to bear because of Trudeau's new tax.

Justin Trudeau promised to help middle class families. Instead, he's failing them by hitting them with a carbon tax that will make everyday life more expensive.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer's report found that the carbon tax will take \$10 billion out of the Canadian economy by 2022 – while other esti-



mates say it could be as much as \$35 billion lost per year.

This hurts Canadian workers and their families, and chases away investment and jobs

Canada's Conservatives know families deserve better than this.

We are determined to get the truth about Justin Trudeau's Carbon Tax Cover Up.

And an Andrew Scheer Government will get rid of the carbon tax in 2019.

— Rob Moore, Conservative Shadow Minister for Atlantic Issues

