



VOLUME 1

JULY 2025

A2 LIONS CLUB

IT'S OK TO NOT BE OK
LET'S TALK ABOUT IT



MENTAL HEALTH
NEWSLETTER

A2 MIND MATTERS



A message from our Governor

– Louise Agnew

I am thrilled to announce that District A2 will introduce Mental Health and Well-being as a District focus. A2 will quickly lead the way as Lions International moves to make Mental Health and Well-being a global area of focus.

On April 15, 2025, our IP International President; Dr. Patti Hill, announced that the World Health Organization and Lions International have signed a Letter of Intent, to: Create Awareness, Education and Advocacy for Mental Health and Wellbeing. Recently, Lions International designated October 4-12 th 2025, as a week in Service for Mental Health and Well-being.

As a Registered Nurse and Mental Health professional for most of my 42 years, my passion and commitment to my profession and now Lions in Service, will come together.

I am excited to have the support of Lion Sharmmila Rajkumar as our first Chair of Mental Health and Well-being for A2, to assist our District with improved knowledge, understanding, advocacy and compassion.

Mental Health and Well-being spans the human experience from child hood, youth, adulthood and in to our senior years. This is a wonderful opportunity for Lions to Serve, often the most vulnerable and sometimes invisible in our communities. I urge each club to consider how you are or could address this need in your community? This is a great opportunity to develop more partnerships with both individuals and service providers our communities.





Let's Talk About It

– Creating Safe Spaces in Our Communities



Mental health struggles do not discriminate – they touch every community, every age group, and every background. And yet, many people still suffer in silence, afraid of being judged, dismissed, or misunderstood. That's where we, as Lions, come in.

Why the Silence?

Stigma is one of the biggest barriers to healing. Phrases like "just snap out of it" or "you don't look depressed" can discourage people from speaking up. Shame takes root in silence, and silence keeps people isolated. For many, admitting they're struggling feels like weakness – when in truth, it takes immense strength to say "I'm not okay."



Why Talking Matters

Open conversations are powerful. They normalize mental health struggles and remind people they're not alone. A simple check-in or a listening ear can shift someone's entire day. Often, what people need is not advice or answers – just to be seen, heard, and accepted.



Lions as Safe Listeners

As a service organization, Lions are known for action. But service also means presence. Being a safe listener is one of the most valuable ways we can serve today.

Here's how Lions can help create safe spaces:

- **Model Openness:** Share your own stories or challenges – it builds trust.
- **Encourage Dialogue:** Begin meetings with a mental health check-in or reflection.
- **Offer Support, Not Solutions:** Let others speak without rushing to "fix" things.
- **Make Referrals:** Have local support resources or helpline numbers available at events.
- **Lead with Compassion:** Assume people are doing their best. Kindness always matters.

It Starts With Us

Creating a culture where people feel safe to talk starts with everyday moments – a phone call, a hug, a coffee, a pause to ask “how are you really?”
Let's be the ones who make space for those conversations. Let's listen more, judge less, and walk alongside one another with empathy and care.
Because when we talk about it, we heal – together.

Reach Out: Mental Health Helplines & Support Networks

★ Immediate Help in a Crisis

Talk Suicide Canada

☎ 1-833-456-4566 (24/7)

... Text: 45645 (4 PM – 12 AM ET)

🌐 talksuicide.ca

9-8-8: Suicide Crisis Helpline

☎ Call or Text: 988

(24/7, free and confidential)

📍 Nationwide access



... Mental Health Support Lines

Wellness Together Canada

🌐 wellnesstogether.ca

☎ 1-866-585-0445

(talk to a counsellor, 24/7)

... Text: “WELLNESS” to 741741

ConnexOntario (for mental health, addiction, and gambling)

☎ 1-866-531-2600 (24/7)

🌐 connexontario.ca



👥 Support for Specific Groups

Kids Help Phone

☎ 1-800-668-6868 (24/7, for youth)

... Text: “CONNECT” to 686868

🌐 kidshelpphone.ca

Hope for Wellness Helpline (for Indigenous peoples)

☎ 1-855-242-3310 (24/7)

... Chat: hopeforwellness.ca

LGBT YouthLine

☎ 1-800-268-9688

... Text: 647-694-4275

🌐 youthline.ca

🧠 Therapy and Community Services

BounceBack Ontario

📄 Self-guided CBT program for anxiety and depression

🌐 bouncebackontario.ca

211 Ontario

☎ Dial 2-1-1

🌐 211ontario.ca

For finding mental health, housing, food, and community programs



How to Start a Mental Health Conversation

-Simple Scripts + Do's & Don'ts

talking about mental health can be challenging, especially if you're not sure how the other person might respond. But starting the conversation – with warmth, care, and respect – can be life-changing.

✓ Simple Scripts to Open the Door

You don't have to say the perfect thing – just be sincere.



Try these openers:

- "Hey, I've noticed you haven't seemed like yourself lately. Want to talk?"
- "You've been on my mind – how are you really doing?"
- "If you ever need someone to listen, I'm here."
- "Would you like to grab a coffee or go for a walk and talk?"
- "Is there anything weighing on you these days?"

Do's (What Helps)

✓ Be Present

Put away distractions. Give your full attention with open body language.

✓ Listen Without Fixing

Let them speak without jumping to solutions.

Say:

"Thank you for sharing that."

"That sounds really hard. I'm here for you."

✓ Validate Feelings

"It's okay to feel that way."

"You're not alone in this."

✓ Check In Again

One talk isn't always enough. A simple follow-up a few days later can mean the world.

✓ Respect Boundaries

If they're not ready to talk, say:

"That's okay. Just know I care and I'm here when you are ready."

Don'ts (What to Avoid)

✗ Don't Minimize or Compare

Avoid: "Others have it worse" or "You're just overthinking."

Instead: "That sounds painful. I'm here for you."

✗ Don't Force It

Don't pressure someone to open up. Let them know it's their choice.

✗ Don't Judge or Diagnose

This isn't the time to play doctor. Avoid labels or assumptions.

✗ Don't Promise Secrecy If You Can't Keep It
If someone is at risk of harming themselves or others, it's okay to get help – gently and respectfully.

Final Encouragement

Talking about mental health isn't always easy – but it's one of the kindest things you can do. You don't need to be a professional. You just need to be a safe, compassionate listener.



5-Minute Mental Check-In Activity



Pause. Reflect. Reset.




Sometimes we get so busy that we forget to ask ourselves the most important question:

"How am I really doing?"

This short check-in helps you tune into your thoughts, feelings, and needs – without judgment.

STEP 1: Breathe (1 minute)

- Sit comfortably.
 - Close your eyes or soften your gaze.
 - Inhale deeply for 4 seconds, hold for 2, and exhale slowly for 6 seconds.
 - Repeat 3–5 times.
-  Let go of distractions. Arrive in this moment.

STEP 2: Notice (2 minutes)


Ask yourself:

- What am I feeling right now? (Physically and emotionally)
- What thoughts are running through my mind?
- Am I holding any tension in my body?
- ♦ There's no right or wrong answer. Just observe without fixing.



STEP 3: Reflect (1 minute)

Ask:

- What do I need right now? (Rest, movement, connection, kindness?)
 - What's one thing I'm grateful for today?
-  Write it down or say it aloud. Naming it is powerful.

STEP 4: Re-enter the Day (1 minute)

- Take one last deep breath.
- Set a small, kind intention:
- "I will be gentle with myself today."
- "I will ask for help if I need it."
- "I will take one step at a time."
- 👉 You're ready. And you're not alone.





Helpful App of the Month

HeadSpace



Meditation made simple, even if you've never done it before.



🧘♀️ What is Headspace?

Headspace is one of the most popular and trusted meditation and mindfulness apps in the world – and for good reason. Designed to help people reduce stress, sleep better, and find moments of calm in a busy world, Headspace makes mental wellness approachable and enjoyable.

With cheerful visuals, soothing voices, and bite-sized guidance, Headspace is perfect for beginners and seasoned meditators alike.

🌱 What It Offers

Headspace offers hundreds of guided meditations and mental wellness tools including:

- Daily meditations for stress, anxiety, grief, or motivation
- Sleepcasts and soundscapes to help you fall asleep
- Mindfulness reminders to check in with your breath or body
- Short mood-boosters like 1-minute resets and 5-minute walks
- Courses for managing anger, focus, burnout, and more

💛 Why People Love It

- ✓ Super beginner-friendly
- ✓ Wide range of topics for all ages
- ✓ Kid and teen meditation sessions
- ✓ Great for falling asleep faster
- ✓ Science-backed, used by athletes, teachers, and workplaces worldwide



🌐 Where to Get It

- Free version available
- Premium unlocks full library (discounts for students and educators)
- Available on iOS, Android, and web
- Visit: www.headspace.com





Meet THE EDITOR

Sharmmila Rajkumar

Dear Lions of A2,

I am proud to share the very first issue of our district's mental health newsletter-A2 Mind Matters. With our theme this month, Let's Talk About It, we take a bold and compassionate step forward. Mental health affects us all, and the more we talk, the more we heal.

Thank you for being a Lion who listens.

In service and solidarity,

Sharmmila Rajkumar

District Chair – Lions Quest / Mental Health Initiatives

Do you have a story to tell?

A personal experience with mental health?
Tips that helped you cope or support someone in need?

We'd love to hear from you.

What You Can Share:

- Personal mental health journeys (with or without your name)
- Reflections or poems
- Artwork or photography
- Helpful resources you've discovered
- Club events promoting emotional wellness

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Let's inspire, encourage, and lift each other up – one story at a time.!