



MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

COVID-19 has compounded mental health issues amongst our family, friends and coworkers, whether facing everyday life or changes in their work.

While in the midst of a global pandemic, it's perhaps unsurprising to hear that half of Canadians say their mental health has deteriorated since COVID-19 began. But even before COVID-19, one-in-four people on Vancouver Island had mental health challenges.

Tracy is just one of those people. She came to Mental Health Recovery Partners (MHRP) in a complete crisis. "I had teenagers at home and a marriage that was struggling. I could barely leave the house my anxiety and OCD had gotten so bad."

After her first appointment at MHRP, what she found was a community of compassionate people who had been through their own journeys with mental health struggles.

"Before MHRP I thought I never fit in anywhere. Thanks to their support I have found hope and I'm making community connections. I am far more outgoing; I advocate for myself now and volunteer. Because of MHRP I have a great quality of life," shared Tracy.

Like many other community groups, COVID-19 has hit MHRP and disrupted services to the many people they help.

"It has certainly been challenging times during COVID," said Paula Roumeliotis, a trained peer supporter and facilitator at MHRP. "We know that having a sense of connection is important and we want to ensure people don't feel alone."

Feeling a sense of connection and community is the keystone to mental health recovery where people can learn, grow and thrive. While MHRP isn't able to offer traditional in-person support, they have adapted and moved all of their services online.

Additionally, they have created a new program called 'Friendly Caller,' where trained volunteers and staff call people once a week to check-in and provide encouragement.

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“People come to us in crisis and they feel isolated and alone in their struggles,” said Paula. “I have seen people begin to feel a sense of hope that they can and will recover. It is wonderful to see people begin to feel more in charge of their lives. As they learn ways they can support themselves in their recovery, we see people’s quality of life changing and improving every day. United Way funding helps make this happen.”

Mental health and addiction challenges can be hard to talk about and even harder to face when you or someone you love is affected by it. The stigma surrounding the subject can keep people from asking for help. Together with partners like MHRP, United Way is shedding a light on the importance of mental well-being through investments in prevention, education, outreach, peer-support and recovery programs.

It is because Tracy broke her silence and asked for assistance, she has her life back. “I can say I am healthy again. My kids have a mom who is actually present in their lives and my husband has a wife, not a shell of the person he married.”



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