

Three Hard Words!

Published 1/23/2023 by [Ashley Ribbel](#)

[View all the Teaching & Learning Centre Spark Plugs!](#)

by Sherri Parkins, Learning Strategist in Accessibility Services and Faculty Development Advisor in the Teaching & Learning Centre

What are the three hardest words in the English language? As Canadians we might think that they are, "I am sorry," as we are known for that phrase. Actually, the three hardest words are, "I'm not okay" (Brodie, J. 2023). When it comes to mental health, it is hard for us to verbalize our need for help. You might have noticed recently that Bell Let's Talk is coming up on January 25 (#BellLetsTalk). Bell Let's Talk is an initiative to help us stop stigmatising mental health and start talking about mental health. When we start conversations, we can begin to understand.

As we transition from the isolation experienced in the COVID-19 pandemic to more on-campus activities and what appears to be a new normal, we still need to keep in mind the statistics regarding student's mental health. The Canadian Alliance Of Student Associations (CASA) in partnership with the Mental Health Commission Of Canada (MHCC) created a report: [The New Abnormal: Student Mental Health Two Years Into COVID-19](#). It reports that three out of four students state that COVID has negatively impacted their mental health. Thirty-eight percent of students identify that academic workload had a negative impact on their mental health. It only takes a few minutes of listening to the news to hear a gamut of others additional stressors such as finances stretched to the limit and local and worldwide news events. As students reach out, mental health on campus initiatives are trying to support while they tackle the stigma attached to Mental Health, but wait times for services and worries about confidentiality still create barriers.

So, how do we act when we feel a student is unable to verbalize those three words, "I'm not okay"? We can acknowledge high-stress times throughout the term and share what we are trying to do to support our own mental health. We can normalize the idea of acknowledging the stress and look for ways to connect the student to potential services such as Seneca's Personal Counselling Services. For further ideas, consult the [Faculty Guide to Supporting Student Mental Health](#).

The saying “A single twig breaks but the bundle of twigs is strong” by Tecumseh reminds us that we are stronger when we work together in community. Let’s start the conversation. Let’s erase the stigma of saying “I’m not okay” and reach out with another three words: “Are you okay?”

Check out the various [Seneca Bell Let's Talk Day activities](#) and share this information with your students.

Don’t forget that you also need to care for yourself! Tiny changes to daily habits can have an incredible impact. The article from Seneca’s Academic Newsletter contains a list of healthy habits you may wish to explore and adapt into your daily routines.

References

Brodie J. (2023, January 8). Is Mental Health Connected To Your Spirituality?? [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6iGoheftRgg&t=11s&ab_channel=ConnexusChurch

Teaching & Learning Day Winter 2023

Seneca's [Teaching & Learning Day Winter 2023](#) is on Monday, February 27, 2023 at Newnham Campus! It is a one-day conference dedicated to showcasing and sharing ideas and activities about how to enhance teaching and learning. The focus of *Teaching & Learning Day Winter 2023* is on **Educational Technology**.

More details will be coming soon!

[Register for this free conference in MyPD](#) and join us on Feb. 27 (during Study Week) at Newnham Campus!

This Photo by Unknown author is licensed under CC BY.

[View all the Teaching & Learning Centre Spark Plugs!](#)

tags : mental-health, spark-plug, student-support, teaching-and-learning, teaching-and-learning-centre, the-teaching-and-learning-centre-team