

There's more to me.

#UnmaskingMentalHealth

A WEEK TOWARD UNMASKING

Masking is hiding or suppressing something about ourselves — emotions, personality traits, behaviours, or symptoms — from others. It's a coping mechanism used to stay safe, hide in plain sight or "fit in," and we may even do it without being aware of it. People mask for a lot of different reasons, including social acceptance, economic necessity and, sometimes, fear. Masking can be a helpful tool in our day-to-day lives — it can help people navigate social situations, feel safe, and maintain personal boundaries and privacy. Unfortunately, people with mental illnesses and addictions often feel the need to mask to keep a job, find housing, or simply be accepted, but it takes a toll. Masking is mentally and emotionally exhausting, can lead to isolation, disconnection and low self-esteem and, most critically, it can stop people from getting the help they need.

This Mental Health Week we invite you to explore what masking is, why and how it shows up, the impact it has on the people who mask and those around them, and how we can all help unmask mental health together.

Visit MentalHealthWeek.ca for more information and resources.

MONDAY

People mask different parts of themselves for different reasons. What are some things you think people might choose to hide from others and why?

TUESDAY

In the past week, do you remember masking a struggle, mood, or emotion? What did you mask, who were you masking for/from, and why did you mask?

WEDNESDAY

Remember a time when you had to wear a mask to fit in or make an impression. Maybe it was a job interview, or maybe it was a social event. How did you feel during the event, and how did you feel after?

THURSDAY

When someone feels the need to mask all the time, they can lose sense of who they really are.

What are some things that might make others feel the need to mask? What's something you can change to help others feel free to be who they are?

If you're someone who often masks, what's something others could do to help you unmask?

FRIDAY

Part of unmasking mental health is having open and honest conversations. Plan to start a conversation about mental health today. Who will you have it with, when and where? It doesn't have to be personal—you can use Mental Health Week as a conversation starter.

SATURDAY

Unmask something about yourself today. It can be something small like a fleeting feeling in a moment, and it can be with one person or in a group. What did you share and how did others respond?

SUNDAY

Create space for people to unmask with you. Whether it's in person, over the phone or email, or on social media, tell people that you value authenticity and are someone people can be themselves with.
