



# H.R. Mental Wellness

Mental wellness presents a shift in focus away from illness to a holistic approach that emphasizes a view of the entire being and the ability to reach the pinnacle of psychological health—self-actualization.

Volume 2, issue 1

January 2012

H.R. Mental Wellness Centre

## A two-day workshop on January 22 (limited seating)

### The Centre will be holding a two-day workshop on healing from depression/anxiety

Dates: Two weekends (January 22 and February 4). For more information, or to register, please visit our website at <http://goo.gl/iG6EC>

## Happy New Year! Any New Year's resolutions?

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Most of us start the New Year with resolutions to achieve some goals and make some changes in our lives. We know that these resolutions are important and can make a difference in our lives. They may be geared towards improving our health, finances, career, social life, friendships, relationships, etc. Unfortunately, we always have busy schedules and overwhelming demands on our time. As a result, urgent things take priority and we get distracted from the important resolutions we decided to pursue in the New Year. If that is what happens to you, you are not alone. In the technology age, instead of using the technology to save us time for leisure, we used it to do too much and

take on too many tasks at work, and in our personal, family, and social lives. Moreover, time passes too fast to realize that another Christmas is approaching and we go through the same cycle. Have you ever thought of breaking this cycle? A feasible solution is to make sure that your resolutions remain alive despite the many distractions with other urgent things. You can achieve that by having someone who would hold you accountable to your resolutions, work with you on preparing your plans to achieve them, follow up on your progress, and periodically offer guidance on what you need to do next to achieve the desired results. This person can be a trusted friend who would not be emo-

tionally involved with implementing these resolutions and uses his/her intellect to evaluate and offer constructive opinion that facilitates your progress. If you do not have that someone whom you can trust with these resolutions, you can get help from H.R. Mental Wellness Centre. If you attend the support group or one-on-one coaching, I work with you on planning, following up on your progress, and offering guidance, when needed, to help you achieve your goals in the New Year. Either way, you will maintain your New Year's resolutions, keep them in the forefront, track your progress, and achieve the changes you desire.

“Butt Out!”

**Panic Attacks More Common in Smokers Panic Attacks More Common in Smokers**



According to a recent study conducted by Naomi Breslau, PhD and Donald F. Klein, MD, of s were published in the December issue of the journal *Archives of General Psychiatry*. Breslau told WebMD, “We know already a whole lot about the effect of smoking on just physical health, and now we are also starting to see the adverse effects in new research on mental illness. “This is one example.”

Based upon Klein’s previous research, panic attacks among smokers may be the body’s mistaken reaction to the belief it is suffocating and they suggest that the carbon monoxide found in cigarette smoke may set off panic attacks in people who are prone to overreacting. “There can be other mechanisms by which smoking induces panic: the effect of nicotine for example,” Breslau says, “Nicotine has a stimulating effect on the brain. It does all sorts of things.” Furthermore, Breslau states, “It’s not simply that the two things go together, but it’s suggesting that smoking is

playing a causal role.” According to Breslau, smoking increases a person’s lifetime risk of a panic attack by three to four times. Clinical psychologist Benjamin Fialkoff tells WebMD that the findings of the study reflect his experience in treating patients with panic disorder. “It doesn’t surprise me in view of the findings that smoking increases stress,” he said. “What we have in a panic response is the body’s stress response going full out. ... In general, you don’t feel a soothing, calming feeling after you have a cigarette.”

Smoking increases a person’s lifetime risk of a panic attack three to four times

**How Can I Prevent Panic Attacks?**

You can learn to deal with panic attacks and manage them by following a few steps. First, you must realize and recognize when you are having a panic attack. When you are able to recognize that you are having a panic attack you create an awareness of the panic attack. Tell yourself that you are having a panic attack and realize that other symptoms could follow. Tell yourself that you’ve survived panic attacks before and you will survive

this one, too. Most of all - take your time. There is no quick cure. It takes time and baby steps to overcome anxiety and panic attacks.

Remember:

- Go easy on yourself. People who feel panic tend to be overly critical of themselves.
- Learn to lower your level of everyday stress through a variety of

- techniques, including meditation and [exercise](#).
- Learn other relaxation techniques, like deep breathing or guided imagery. Avoid stimulants, such as nicotine and caffeine, which can be found not only in coffee, but many teas, colas, and chocolate.

Source: <http://www.Webmd.com>



Deep breathing helps to overcome anxiety and panic attacks



## How to Beat the Winter Blues

Welcoming winter can be hard for many people, particularly those suffering depression. However, there are many ways to beat the winter blues.

### Light Therapy

Light therapy is suggested for people who are prone to the winter blues. Exposure to bright light in the usual cold and dark winter months, especially first thing after waking up, has three major positive effects that can relieve depression by:

- Keeping the circadian clock (aka your body clock) in check, preventing it from drifting later than your desired sleep period;

- Energizing and giving you a morning boost, whether you're depressed or just sluggish; and

- Stimulating the same neurotransmitters as antidepressant medications.

Special types of lights are required. You can visit a therapist who specializes in light therapy or purchase a lightbox, no prescription is necessary. Research has found that light therapy is useful for treating bipolar depression, depression during pregnancy and chronic depression.

### Socializing

Do you find yourself avoiding social occasions or losing interest in social situations that normally bring you pleasure? Depression can worsen fears of social rejection, but socializing is very important for recovering from depression and avoiding relapse. Make a

commitment to social events and even if you feel like backing out of them, make yourself attend them. Be aware that depression can cause you to be oversensitive to perceive social interactions in a negative way or a way they were not intended. Szalavitz writes, "if you think someone has rejected you in some way (for example, a colleague failing to say hello to you in the hall), try to consider alternative explanations for the incident (For example, she was pre-occupied with concerns over her imminent meeting with the boss) and avoid overreacting or ruminating on depressing thoughts."

### Exercise

Consistent exercise can boost your mood, even if you don't feel like exercising before you start. Schedule an exercise that you enjoy, or at least can stand, to make it part of a routine that works for you.

### Deep Breathing

Deep and slow breathing relaxes you by stimulating the vagus nerve, which is responsible for counteracting the stress response.

When stressed, a person's heart beats faster, blood pressure rises, and the vagus nerve sends the opposite message. Try making your exhalation twice as long as normal. If you suffer from anxiety, slowing down your breath and breathing deeply can help prevent escalating anxiety into depression. For a deep breathing exercise, watch our video on Youtube.com at <http://goo.gl/4xnbp>

### Massage

Massage, with at least moderate pressure, can be as effective in treating depression.

"During massage, levels of the stress hormone cortisol, which is often high in depressed people, fall while levels of the neurotransmitter serotonin — the same brain chemical increased by antidepressant medications — rise", Szalavitz writes.

### Supplements

Two supplements studies have shown to have positive effects on depression: S-adenosyl-L-methionine, or SAM-e, and omega-3 fatty acids, particularly eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA). Omega-3s are abundant in oily fish. Try eating salmon and sardines to improve your mood, and check with your doctor what the right amount of consumption is for these fish. SAM-e is not found in foods, but this and Omega-3 supplements appear to be safe.

### Professional Help

Seeking professional to explore and experience different ways of dealing with and healing from depression. If you're already seeking help, now is a good time to talk about a seasonal slip in mood to prevent it from becoming worse. There is no need to suffer it alone, depression is common and more treatable now than ever before.

Source: Maia Szalavitz, 8 ways to beat the winter blues, Time Magazine, <http://goo.gl/joSOo>



**Light Therapy helps beat the Winter Blues**

"During massage, levels of the stress hormone cortisol... fall while levels of the neurotransmitter serotonin... rise"



**Consistent exercise boosts your mood**

## H.R. Mental Wellness Centre

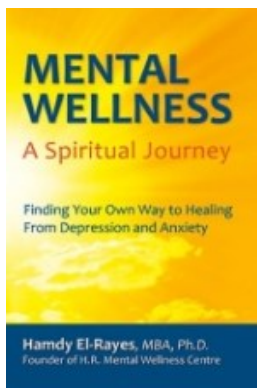


**Dr. Hamdy  
El-Rayes**  
Author of *Mental  
Wellness A Spiritu-  
al Journey*

**Finding your own way to healing from  
depression, anxiety and addictions.**

The H.R. Mental Wellness Centre was established by the El-Rayes Foundation to help you heal from depression, anxiety, and addiction, enjoy your life to the fullest, become more successful in your career and personal relationships, and share your gifts with the world. The Centre promotes a holistic approach to healing that addresses the whole person: body, mind, and spirit. The program uses an integrated approach including mindfulness, principles of Cognitive Behavior Therapy (BCT), Logotherapy, and spirituality. Membership at the Centre is free of charge.

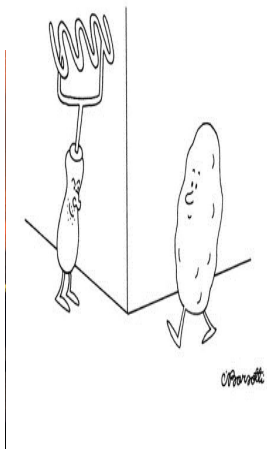
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**We're on the web!**  
[www.mentalwellnessbc.ca](http://www.mentalwellnessbc.ca)

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### Autobiography in five chapters



**Chapter One**  
I walk down the street.  
There is a deep hole in the  
pavement.  
I fall in.  
I am lost... I am hopeless.  
It isn't my fault.  
It takes forever to find a way  
out.

**Chapter Two**  
I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the  
pavement.  
I pretend I don't see it.  
I can't believe I'm in the

same place.  
But it isn't my fault.  
It still takes a long time to  
get out.

**Chapter Three**  
I walk down the same street  
There is a deep hole in the  
pavement.  
I see it is there.  
I still fall in.... it is a habit.  
My eyes are open.  
I know where I am.  
It is my fault.  
I get out immediately.

**Chapter Four**  
I walk down the same street  
I see a deep hole in the  
pavement  
I walk round it

**Chapter Five**  
I walk down another street.

From: Sogyal Rinpoche,  
*The Tibetan Book of Living  
and Dying*