The Clinical Psychology Outreach Program Launches the Got Your Back! Campaign

by Queen's Psychology
Photo by Eric Brousseau

It can be very challenging to deal with mental health issues, especially if you feel like you need to deal with them alone. Having peer and professional supports can make a big difference for one’s sense of wellbeing. While many students know that there are professional mental health supports on and off campus, students with mental health issues can often feel isolated, not knowing if their friends will understand what they are going through.

In an effort to address this issue, Jackie Huberman, Joyce Li, and Abi Muere, all Ph.D. students studying clinical psychology, formed the Clinical Psychology Outreach Program (CPOP) earlier this year. With funding from Jack.org/Queen’s Student Initiative Fund, the group aims to run evidence-based mental health events on campus and in the Kingston community. A number of psychology graduate students (from clinical psychology and other sub-disciplines in the department) and psychology undergraduate students are involved. Psychology faculty have shown their support as well, by advising on and participating in events (Dr. Kate Harkness will deliver a talk on depression on November 17th). CPOP has also partnered with other groups on campus and in the Kingston community to harness ideas and skills for promoting well-being.

From November 16 to November 20, CPOP will be running the Got Your Back! campaign, through which they’re hoping to empower the Queen's community with the information, resources, and language needed to support one another’s mental wellbeing.

“We have both worked as counsellors with Student Wellness Services and we have seen the mental health challenges that many students face,” co-organizer Jackie Huberman says of herself and Joyce Li. “We have also observed that many students don't feel comfortable speaking with their peers about their mental health difficulties, which can make them feel isolated. We want to empower students to reach out to their friends who may be in need of
extra support, and have difficult but important conversations with the hope of building a more supportive and comfortable community."

The Got Your Back! campaign will be comprised of a week of events and an extended multimedia campaign, including 3-minute psychoeducational talks given at the start of large first- and second-year undergraduate classes by psychology undergraduate and graduate students, on effective peer support; a public talk at the Kingston Public Library, Central Branch, on the science and experience of living with depression; a poster and online campaign promoting peer support; and brief student-targeted talks and workshops on different mental health topics, developed by graduate students. The effectiveness of these efforts will be evaluated in a research study.

“I think psychology graduate students are uniquely positioned to participate in the mental health conversation on campus,” Joyce adds. “We are excited to be using our knowledge and skills in evidence-based practice to develop and evaluate this initiative, and to improve student support on campus. We have a passionate team of graduate students, undergraduate students, and faculty in diverse areas of psychology helping with various aspects of Got Your Back! It has been wonderful to see the department and other campus groups rally together to work towards a common goal. We look forward to building on this campaign together in future years.”

For more information about Got Your Back! please visit the campaign’s website at www.gotyourbackqueens.ca.