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MEET

Jitendra Jasmat

Jitendra Jasmat is an employee at Plastcoat in Brampton, Ontario. He is the primary caregiver of his 14-year-old son who has Muscular Dystrophy. Jitendra speaks to us about his role as a caregiver and the importance of keeping a positive attitude when faced with challenges. Here is Jitendra's story.



Jitendra immigrated to Canada 20 years ago from Zimbabwe, Africa. He grew up playing sports and excelled in field hockey. He played international field hockey for Zimbabwe and participated in the Africa Cup of Nations. Approximately ten years ago, he joined the Magna division, Plastcoat, and was recently promoted to Area Leader.

Jitendra's son Rishay was only five years old when he was diagnosed with muscular dystrophy. Jitendra and his wife were approached by Rishay's kindergarten teacher, who noticed that Rishay was not able to stand up without the support of a chair. Jitendra took his son to a doctor, who diagnosed Rishay with muscular dystrophy. People with muscular dystrophy are not able to form healthy muscles and develop gradual muscle weakness and eventually lose their ability to walk. There is no cure for muscular dystrophy, but medication and therapy can help slow the course of the disease. The doctor told Jitendra that children with muscular dystrophy usually lose their mobility by the age of ten years.

Jitendra is the primary caregiver for his son. He speaks to the challenges that come with the responsibility of being a caregiver and strategies he has used and continues to use to be resilient during difficult times. Jitendra recalls his anxiety and distress when Rishay was first diagnosed with muscular dystrophy. He did not know how he could overcome the situation. "There are days where you think about it and ask why me? Why us?" Jitendra no longer lets these anxious thoughts overwhelm him. He believes that if he does not keep a positive mindset then Rishay's mental health could be affected.

Jitendra has several ways to cope and increase his resilience. Sometimes he uses vacation and days off work to rest, relax and calm his mind by spending time with family and doing activities that he enjoys. Jitendra enjoys being physically active and finds this one way to cope with stress. He has taken up running and he recently bought Rishay a bicycle so they could exercise together. Jitendra says that running helps him clear his head and sheds any daily tension that he may be feeling, all while Rishay gives his muscles a workout.

Rishay, who is now 14 years old, is still able to walk on his own and only uses a wheelchair for things that are difficult to complete. Jitendra is grateful that his son is still able to walk, and remains independent, but he knows that harder times will come. He knows it is easy to be caught up in self-pity when faced with a challenge, but by focusing on things that he can be grateful for, he keeps moving forward by staying positive while remaining resilient.

Jitendra recalls that Rishay was assigned a counsellor when first diagnosed with muscular dystrophy. The counsellor helped Rishay work through his emotions and feelings. Jitendra also worked with a counsellor, who played a large role in supporting his mental health.

Speaking to a counsellor helped him realize that he was not alone and that having a strong support network is key when facing mental health challenges. Jitendra's family, friends and counsellor are all part of his support network.

"I think certain things make us stronger and my son has surely made me stronger. We take a lot of things for granted - simple things like running in a park or going on the jungle gym in school, but my son is not able to do that. Everyone should look at their situation and be proud of who they are."

When Jitendra shared his story at work, his colleagues were encouraging, understanding and supportive. They fundraised and joined Jitendra at the "Walk for Muscular Dystrophy" event.

Having a loved one with a serious illness can negatively impact caregivers and family. Jitendra notes that changing a negative attitude into something positive is essential for moving forward. This understanding and mindset motivates Jitendra to work hard on his mental health and to live life with his son to the fullest.

The Magna Wellness program provides many resources for mental health - reach out to find more information and stay ahead of your health!

JITENDRA JASMAT

Area Leader



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RESILIENCE

Mental health includes our thoughts, emotions, feelings, ability to solve problems, to cope with stress, our relationships, our sense of community, and our sense of self. Maintaining good mental health allows us to enjoy life and better deal with life's challenges.

**Resilience is an important aspect of mental health.
It is our ability to quickly recover from a difficult situation.**

Having good mental health allows us to be more resilient. Resiliency does not make a problem go away, but it allows us to understand the situation and use strategies to cope and adapt to the situation. Like strengthening a muscle, building resilience can be learned. It takes hard work and training to try and get our brain to adapt well in the face of difficulty. Building resilience involves changing our behaviours, thoughts, and actions. It consists of four main components—better connections, mental and physical wellness, healthy thinking, and having a purpose. Let's look at some ideas on how we can build resilience:

1 LEARN FROM YOUR PAST

Reflect on the strategies that were used to deal with challenges in the past. Identify positive skills, strategies, strengths, or behaviors that helped during those difficult times and apply them to current circumstances. Understanding how we dealt with situations in the past and when we were successful can help us cope better with current problems.

2 PRACTICE SELF-CARE

It is important to take care of our own needs and feelings, especially in times of stress. Some ways to strengthen our body/mind to adapt to stress and ease feelings of being unwell include eating healthy and nutritious foods, doing some physical activity each day, aiming for good quality sleep each night, keeping up with hobbies, and practicing mindfulness and relaxation.



3 AVOID UNHEALTHY COPING STRATEGIES

Consuming alcohol, drugs or other substances may mask the emotional pain in a given situation, but it is more likely to cause harm than do any good. Using substances to help us with our problems causes a temporary relief, and once the effects of the substance go away, those negative feelings are guaranteed to return. Instead, we can focus on resources to help manage and cope with the pain rather than trying to eliminate or hide it completely.

4 ASK FOR HELP

Learning to be resilient takes time and practice. It is okay if we cannot do it on our own. Talking to a physician or counsellor can help develop strategies to build resilience.

5 MAKE SMALL TASKS OUT OF BIG ONES

During difficult times, a lack of control may cause us to feel overwhelmed. Instead of viewing a situation as impossible, break down the situation into smaller tasks and do the easier ones first. This approach allows us to make progress and gives us control over the situation. For example, if we are dealing with the sudden loss of a loved one, a simple task could be to speak with or text a friend or family member to stay supported. Visiting a spiritual leader of a faith group can also be helpful as they can provide us with strategies we can use during hard times.



6 STAY HOPEFUL

It is easy to get lost in our negative thoughts, feel alone and hopeless. Break the negative cycle of thinking by creating a balanced and realistic thinking pattern. The past cannot be changed, but we can maintain a hopeful outlook for the future. Accepting change makes it easier to deal with challenges. Many problems solve themselves with time, giving ourselves time is important.

7 BUILD A HEALTHY SUPPORT NETWORK

Develop close relationships with our friends, family, and community so that we have people we can rely on for support during hard times.



MENTAL HEALTH *of* TEENAGERS

The teenage years lead to young adulthood. These years bring changes physically, mentally and socially. Teenagers learn independence, which plays an important role in shaping their personalities. This time is challenging for teens as they try to fit in with the people around them.

Rapid personal changes along with the demands of preparing for adulthood can have a lasting impact on a teen's mental health. Almost 1 in 6 teens (10-19 years old) experience a mental health disorder. Managing teenage mental health is essential, otherwise these disorders may follow them into adulthood resulting in a lifetime of difficulty. Without support, these disorders may lead to fewer opportunities and a lower quality of life.

Talking to your Teen About Mental Health

WHEN TO TALK

As a parent, you play a key role in supporting your child's mental well being. To help your child with their mental health, the first step is to talk about it. This helps reduce the shame that your child may feel when speaking about their mental health. Speak to your children about mental health as early as possible, this will allow them to develop a better understanding of their emotions and feelings.

HOW TO TALK

Approach talking about mental health in the same way as physical health. When we speak about physical health, we focus on the changes that we can create in our lives to better our physical health. These changes may include taking care of our bodies with things like healthy foods and daily exercise. Similarly, when talking about mental health, emphasize that good mental health helps deal with stress; that it's normal to feel low, stressed, anxious, or disappointment at times. It's important to speak up and get help to manage problems that come up. Tell your child that you will always take their concerns seriously, without judging them, and try to help them find the right solution.

Homewood Health Q&A: SELF COMPASSION & RESILIENCY

Q I keep seeing articles on resilience or self-care, and it makes it seem like an easy fix, but I am really struggling to bounce back since the pandemic started. Is there something wrong with me?

A There is nothing wrong with you! Many people are finding that their usual ways to deal with stress are not available during the pandemic. Other ways are not as helpful as in the past. There are also much higher rates of depression and anxiety since the pandemic. Resilience is not a personality trait — it is learned. Like building muscle, increasing resilience takes time and effort. Focusing on four core components (better connections, mental and physical wellness, healthy thinking, and purpose/meaning) can help you to withstand and learn from difficult experiences. You may want to do some research on “resilience factors.” Call your EFAP (Employee and Family Assistance Program) to meet with a professional for free. They can help you build resilience and rule out other issues. Book recommendation: *Resilience: The Science of Mastering Life’s Greatest Challenges* by Stephen Southwick and Dennis Charney.

Q I have two children, and it seems like one of them is much better at “letting things go” and moving on than the other one. Is there anything I can do to help the one who seems to struggle with every challenge they encounter?

A Yes! While certain factors might make some people more resilient than others, resilience is not something that kids either have or do not have; it is a skill that kids develop as they grow. Here are some research-based ideas for you: First, do not solve their problems for them! We never want our children to experience discomfort or hurt, but if you step in, you are weakening their resilience. They need to experience discomfort to learn to work through it — say “I know you can solve this yourself if you try!” Next, encourage them to step outside their comfort zone. Applaud them no matter the result — “great job trying something that makes you uncomfortable!” When children avoid risk, they may think they are not strong enough to handle challenges. Also, children learn about resilience from watching how adults around them respond to challenges. When your child sees you try again, or sees you think positively in difficult situations, they learn that they can do the same. There are many more ideas out there! Book recommendation: *Building Resilience in Children and Teens: Giving Kids Roots and Wings* by Kenneth Ginsberg and Martha Jablow.

Recovery, Getting Help, & Building Your Support Team

Mental health is how you think, feel and deal with the things happening in your life. It is normal to feel sad, angry, or worried from time to time. But when those feelings do not go away and start interfering with your daily routine and activities, that is when you may have a mental illness.

Mental Illness is a condition that affects the way you think, feel, behave, or interact with others. Mental illnesses are diagnosed by family doctors and specialist doctors. A psychiatrist is a medical doctor who specializes in mental health. If you feel like you are having recurring episodes of anxiety, stress, depression, or mood swings, it might be best to go see your family doctor who can refer you to a psychiatrist if needed.

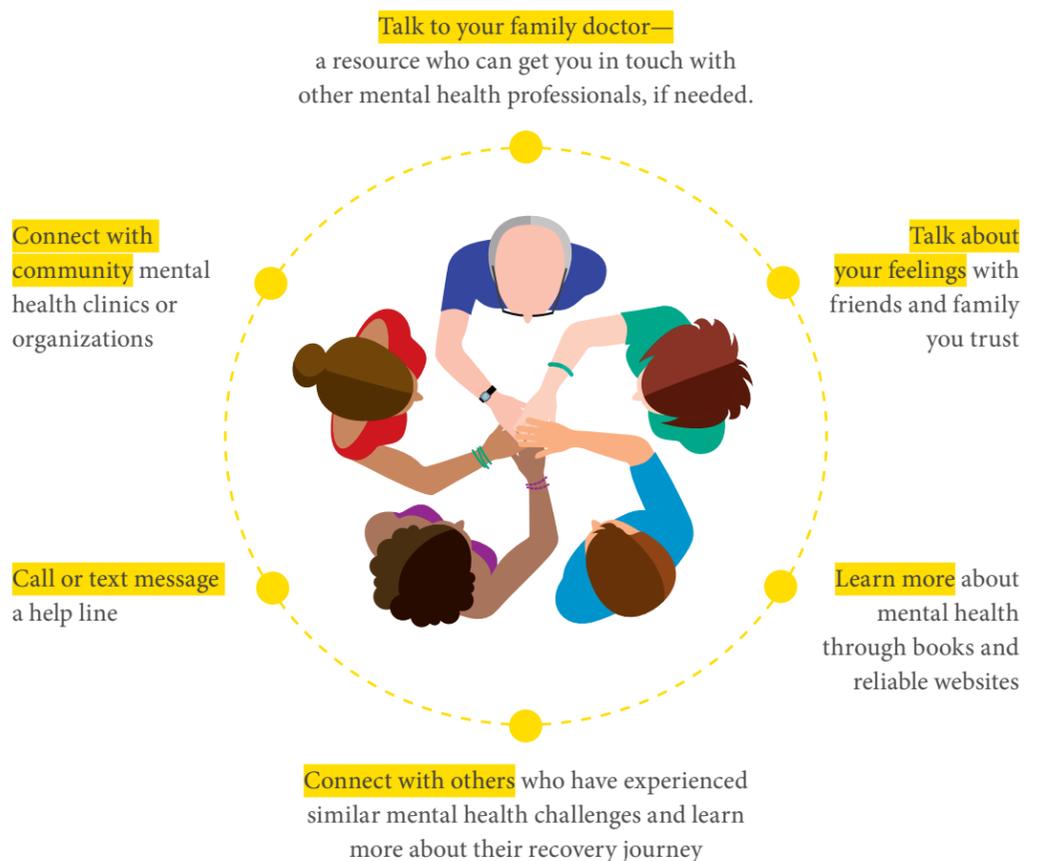
It can be hard to talk about your mental health because you may be afraid of being judged or labelled with a mental illness. The truth is an open conversation about mental health with a family member, friend, or a mental health professional can help you deal with the issues you face.

Mental health conditions can affect anyone, and 1 in 5 people experience some sort of mental illness each year.

Opening up, sharing how you are feeling, or getting professional help means that you want to make a change and are taking a step to accomplish your health goals. We celebrate the courage it takes to start a conversation about mental health.

Most people with mental health concerns or mental illness can get better. Treatment and recovery will take time and may look different for each person. For some, recovery might be living symptom-free. For others, recovery might mean managing the condition and learning to live a meaningful life in spite of the condition. Setting up a team of caregiving supports, and healthcare resources gives you guidance and helps back you up when you need it!

The first steps may seem tough but knowing where to look for help is a good start. Here are some ideas to help you build your support team:



What to do if your Teenager Asks for Help

TAKE TIME TO LISTEN

- Ensure that you are attentive and show that you are listening to their concerns
- Ask questions kindly to learn more about what they are experiencing
- Allow them to gradually share more as they understand that you are there to help
- Validate you hear them, even if you don't fully understand
- Believe what they are telling you

PROVIDE SUPPORT

- Work together with them to set up new goals and offer ideas to achieve these goals
- Provide guidance rather than commands
- Encourage them to identify how they are feeling with words and to think of coping skills to manage
- Encourage them to do some research on their own and make their own choices, or if they would prefer, with your support





CHICKEN Barley Soup

SERVES
5

INGREDIENTS

1½ LBS	Skinless bone-in chicken breast
8 CUPS	Water
1½ CUPS	Chopped carrots
1 CUP	Chopped celery
½ CUP	Medium pearl barley
½ CUP	Chopped onion
¼ TSP	Reduced sodium bouillon granules (Optional)
PINCH	Morton Lite Salt
1	Bay leaf
½ TSP	No salt poultry seasoning
½ TSP	Black pepper
½ TSP	Rubbed sage (or powdered sage)

DIRECTIONS

- In a large stockpot, cook chicken in water until tender. Cool broth and skim off fat.
- Set chicken aside until cool enough to handle. Remove meat from bones; discard bones and cut meat into cubes.
- Return meat to pan along with remaining ingredients. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer 1 hour or until vegetables and barley are tender.
- Discard bay leaf. Soup is ready to be served!

NUTRITIONAL FACTS

per 1 cup

215 calories	112mg sodium
4.03g fat	3.34g carbohydrate
92.73mg cholesterol	1.07g sugars
	34g protein



Adult COLOURING

Adult colouring is relaxing and helps put the mind into a meditative state.

Scan the QR code with your phone's camera and try some colouring!



Riddle ME THIS!

Solving puzzles or riddles can improve your mood and cause the release of the happy hormone dopamine! Try these brain teasers below:



A woman wants to enter an exclusive club, but she doesn't know the password. A man walks to the door and the doorman says 12, the man says 6, and is let in. Another man walks up, and the doorman says 6, the man says 3, and is let in. Thinking she's figured it out, she walks up to the door and the doorman says 10, she says 5, and she isn't let in.

What should she have said?

You're escaping a maze, and there are three doors in front of you. The door on the left leads to a pit of lava. The door in the center leads to a room filled with deadly gas. The door on the right leads to a lion that hasn't eaten in three months.

Which door do you choose?



Read out loud the colour that each word is written in, not the word itself. Move as quickly as you can through the set.

Can you do it?

Blue Red Green White Purple
Red White Blue Green Purple
Green Purple Red Blue White

ANSWER KEY (1) THREE, THE NUMBER 10 HAS THREE LETTERS (2) RIGHT, THE LION STARVED TO DEATH

DID YOU know?

Self-criticism can have a negative long-term impact on our mental health.

When we see an individual in distress or suffering, we tend to feel compassion for them and a desire to help them in some way. When faced with a personal hardship, we may feel emotions such as self-pity or self-hatred. Both reactions to personal hardship are extreme and can negatively impact our mental and physical health. Practicing self-compassion by being understanding to ourselves in moments of hardship can help work through the challenge. This allows us to experience greater composure, mental calmness, and balance temper in difficult situations.



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WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

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