

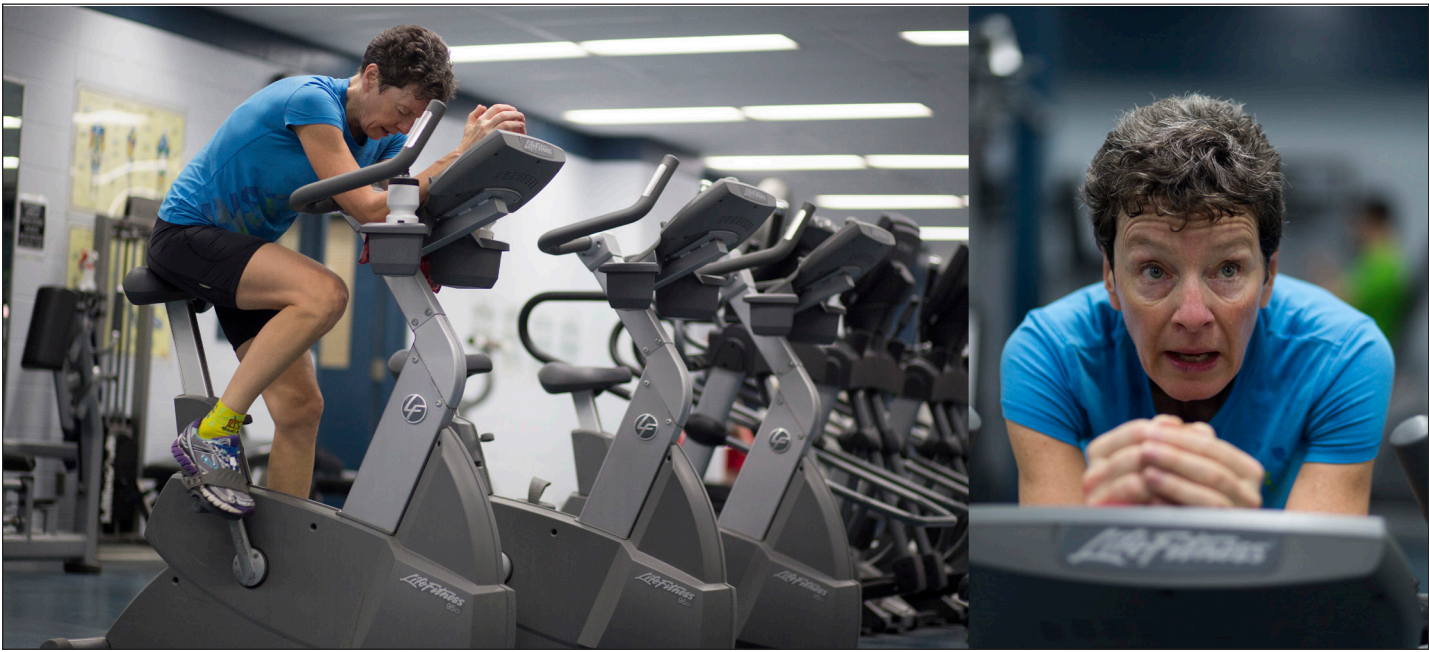


Top: Taylor Davies suffers from depression and general anxiety disorder. She has found comfort in nature and often goes on adventures to get away from her troubles.



Right: Patti Gower, who suffers from panic disorder without agoraphobia, has found that biking lessens the number of panic attacks she endures.

“One time I was sitting at the table and got a funny text so I laughed a bit and my dad looked at me and said ‘why are you smiling? I thought you were depressed.’”



Right: Dominique Bilodeau suffers from depression. She turns to art for comfort and enjoys drawing.

Below: Alex Duncan enjoys walking in the park to calm is Seasonal Affective Disorder or SAD.



Below: Kyra Scaletta enjoys the comforting presence of her cat, Opie, to help against her anxiety and panic disorder.



Comfort

Story and photos by Amanda Paulhus

Though the year is 2015, society still struggles with understanding mental illness and those affected by it.

One in five Canadians will suffer from a mental illness in their lifetime according to The Canadian Mental Health Association. This is a pretty substantial statistic to be ignored. Suicide is also one of the leading causes of death in both genders.

One of the main issues is how society as a whole treats those with mental illness. People like Alex Duncan, 20, and Dominique Bilodeau, 17, have both experienced this firsthand in the workplace. Duncan suffers from Seasonal Affective Disorder, or SAD, a disorder that causes people to be vulnerable to depression following season change.

“They basically told me if I can’t get a grip on it then I’m out,” Duncan stated, explaining what occurred when he attempted to seek help in his workplace.

Bilodeau, on the other hand, feels like her mental illness lost her her job. “She [manager] kept harassing me about my depression. She would text me to take my pills.”

When asked where they received the most negative responses towards their mental illnesses, nine out of ten named a family member of close friend.

Kyra Scaletta, 19, who suffers from generalized anxiety disorder, separation anxiety and panic disorder described some of the difficulties she’s had because of her mental illness.

“Obviously I get ‘it’s all in your head’ a lot. People say stuff like ‘it’s really not that hard to talk to people,’ ‘you just need to calm down’ or ‘you’re being over dramatic.’ When asked what the most hurtful thing said to her was, Scaletta responded, “One time when I was with my sister and her

friends I had a panic attack. My sister told me to ‘stop being such an attention w*ore.”

Another example is Mikayla Gauthier, who has recently left school during her third year at Guelph University because her depression and anxiety became hard to handle with the stress many students feel during post-secondary.

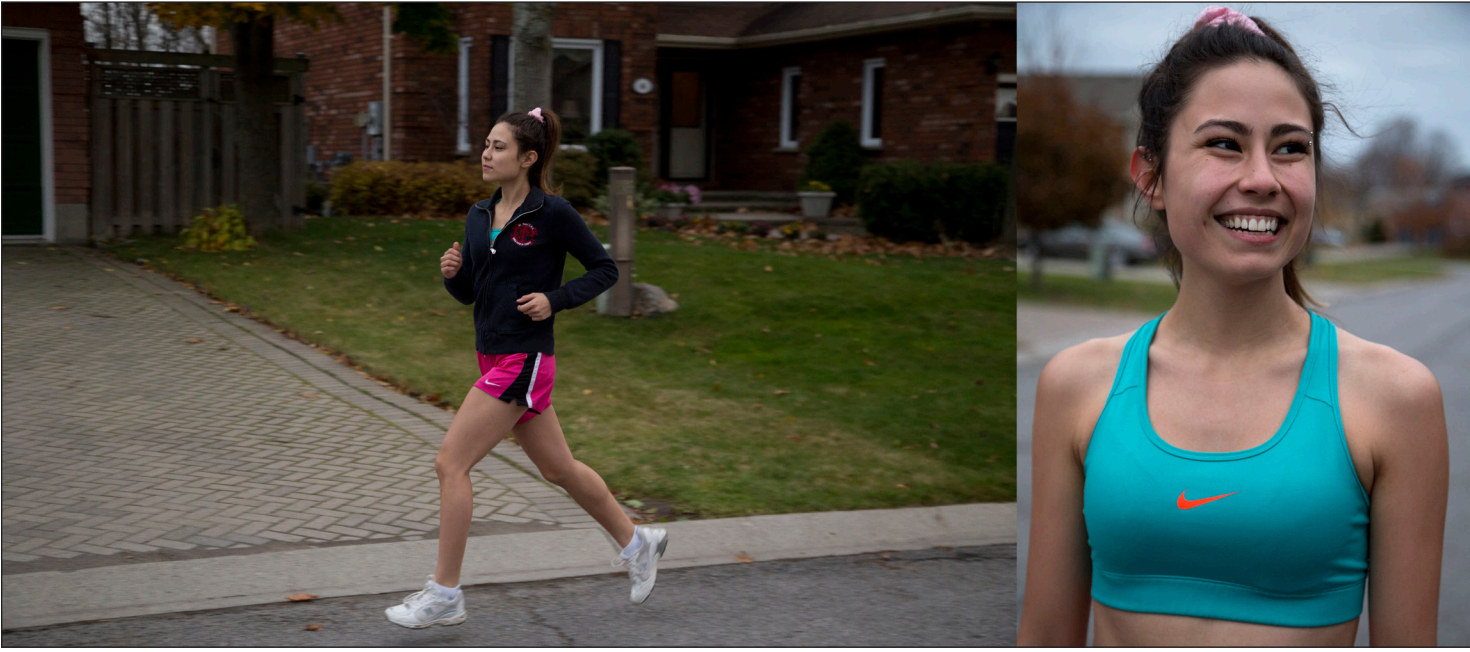
“I’ve had a sadness and dissatisfaction with the world that I repressed since I was 15, but my symptoms arose in June,” Gauthier explained. She said her parents have had a hard time understanding her mental illness.

“One time I was sitting at the table and got a funny text so I laughed a bit and my dad looked at me and said ‘why are you smiling? I thought you were depressed.”

It does not necessarily get any easier for those who have a parental figure that is knowledgeable about mental illnesses. Taylor Davies’ mother is a registered nurse and has an understanding of both physical and mental illnesses. However, when Taylor attempted to talk to her mother for the first time about her depression like symptoms, her mother told her “You have everything you could need. You have no reason to be depressed.” This was when Davies was 14.

These are just several cases of the ignorant treatment people with mental illnesses receive in several aspects of life. Having a mental illness can take away a person’s ability to lead a normal life and that burden is not made any easier when they receive negative responses and criticisms in the workplace or amongst their friends and family.

Society as a whole needs to look at how they treat those with mental illnesses and rethink some of the things they say to those close to them that are suffering.



Top right: Gabrielle Smith recovered from non-purging bulimia, but still suffers from emetophobia (the fear of vomit). She finds comfort in hot showers while sitting in the tub.

Bottom right: Mikayla Gauthier suffers from anxiety disorder and depression. She has found running and fitness to be a good coping device for her mental illness.