Low-Beer Memorial Lecture

FAMILY, MEDICINE AND MADNESS: A PERSONAL JOURNEY

What was it like growing up surrounded by depression and psychosis in a time when no one talked about mental illness?

James FitzGerald is the 2019 Low-Beer Memorial Lecture guest speaker. Don’t miss his talk about the legacy of his grandfather and father, both prominent figures in Canadian health care, who, despite their remarkable achievements, were tormented by depression and psychosis in times when such experiences were largely hidden.

FitzGerald was educated at Upper Canada College and Queen’s University and spent over 40 years in the fields of journalism and book publishing. His second book, What Disturbs Our Blood: A Son’s Quest to Redeem the Past, was a multi-layered exploration of madness and high achievement within his prominent Toronto medical family. In 2010, the book won the Writers’ Trust Non-Fiction Prize and was shortlisted for three other major literary awards.

As described on FitzGerald’s website: “As he watches his own father plunge into a suicidal psychosis, FitzGerald intuits some unspeakable secret buried deep in the family unconscious. Growing into manhood, he knows that he must stalk an ancient curse before it stalks him. To set himself free, he must break the silence and put words to the page. His future lies in the past.”

Join us to hear this remarkable story.

Dance the night away at AMI Rocks!

Get your tickets now for our annual fundraiser featuring:

- Live musical entertainment with MTL, the band that brings the best interpretations of Pop, Rock, and R & B.
- A special performance by mental health advocate Mike “bboy Piecez” Prosserman. Michael founded Unity Charity, an organization that uses Hip Hop to improve youth mental health.
- Cocktails, bar, dinner hors d’oeuvres, and a raffle for 2 Air Canada tickets anywhere they fly.
- Emcee Andy Nulman, co-founder and CEO of Play the Future, will entertain with his energy and spirit.

Proceeds from this event go directly to our programs, helping ensure that they remain free of charge for everyone in need.

Wednesday October 16, 2019, 6:30 pm at the Corona Theatre, 2490 Notre-Dame St. W.

Tickets:
$180 includes 2 drinks ($60 tax receipt)
$25 Young Adult (ages 18-35) includes 1 drink

Get your tickets now
amiqoubec.org/AMIRocks
514-486-1448
TOP 8 TIPS FOR MAINTAINING GOOD MENTAL HEALTH

You don’t have to live with mental illness to benefit from good mental health. These tips can improve your life!

Manage your stress levels
Keeping control of your stress can make a world of difference when it comes to your mental health, especially if you live with anxiety (and anxiety is on the rise, as research suggests). There are several ways you can manage your stress levels: go out for a walk, dance to your favourite song, do some colouring, or read a thrilling new book. These tips may help you, but remember that it is a personal experience, meaning that each person uses different ways to manage their stress levels. Try different things and see what works for you!

Be mindful
Being in the present is important for managing stress, especially as our modern lives are in constant motion. According to Mindful, a non-profit organization, “mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we’re doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what’s going on around us.” Try practicing a little mindfulness everyday.

We have several resources in our library if you would like to read more about mindfulness and how you can practice it in your everyday life.

Maintain relationships
The people around us have more of an impact on our mental health than we think. There are those who bring us joy, and other who bring us misery. Remove toxic relationships from your circle: they not only bring you down, they contribute to additional stress. Make sure to maintain your interpersonal relationships with family and friends. Close relationships with people increase your sense of support and fulfill the social aspect of your being. If you do not have close friends, get involved in your community or sign up for an activity; you will meet new people that can become your close friends!

Make sure you get the right amount of sleep
We all know the importance of a good night’s sleep, and yet we often neglect it. On average, adults need between seven and nine hours of sleep per night. If you have trouble falling asleep, try deep breathing or put on background calming music. Another trick is to not look at electronic devices one to two hours before going to bed. By looking at a screen, especially in the dark if you are in bed, you are unbalancing the melatonin levels in your brain, which help with falling and staying asleep.

Follow a healthy diet
What we eat can have an impact on how we feel. If you eat too much junk food or miss out on important nutrients, your body will be negatively affected. This doesn’t mean you should avoid your favourite junk foods completely! You have to practice moderation. Insert healthier foods like fruits and vegetables in your diet, and don’t feel badly when you have the occasional indulgence.

Exercise a little every day
A lot of people groan at the dreaded word “exercise”, but there is no need to fear! Exercise can mean going to the gym and following a regimented routine, but it can also be taking a daily walk around the block. Depending on your schedule and health, there are countless ways to exercise. Even just 10 minutes at a time can make a difference. When you exercise you release endorphins in your brain, which elevate the chemicals that make you feel good.

Keep a work-life balance
Sometimes the lines between work and life are blurred, especially when our work emails are always accessible on our phones. Although it might be tempting to check that email that just came in after your work hours, don’t look at it! Make sure that there is a separation between your work life and personal life, meaning that you maintain a healthy and enjoyable personal life outside work.

Reach out to others when in need
Don’t be afraid to ask for help when you are struggling. Reaching out for help is not sign of weakness, but rather a sign of strength. Call a friend to talk, or visit a community organization that can connect you with the resources that will best help you. AMI-Quebec is here for you. You are not alone!

– Gabrielle Lesage

Consultation Fees for Disability Tax Credit Reduced

The Disability Tax Credit (DTC) provides tax relief for certain disability-related costs for an eligible individual who has been certified by a qualified medical practitioner as having a “severe and prolonged” disability. The credit amount can also be transferred to a supporting spouse, parent or other immediate family member of the individual with the disability. Qualifying for the DTC can be challenging, depending on the type of disability; as a result some Canadians have turned to consultants to help apply for the credit. Up until now there were no regulations governing consultation fees.

It has taken more than five years, but it appears that legislation to significantly limit the amount that consultants can charge for assisting persons with disabilities or their family members in applying for the DTC will finally become effective. Under the new regulations, the maximum fee that a promoter can accept or charge is $100 for helping to complete the DTC application form.

For information on the Disability Tax Credit, visit https://amiquebec.org/disability-tax-credit/
Take care of your mental health with a tool you always have at hand—your smartphone

Technology is constantly evolving, and more and more individuals and organizations are creating technological tools to enrich people’s lives. These range in topics and genres, and one category that is increasing is mental health/illness. We have put together a list of FREE apps that you can download both on the App Store or Google Play.

Please keep in mind that these apps are not a replacement for psychological or medical treatment.

**Healthy Minds**
*Coping with stress*
Even though this app is targeted to students, anybody can use it. Healthy Minds is a tool made to help deal with emotions and the stresses of everyday life. It was developed by The Royal, one of Canada’s top mental health care and academic science centres. With this app, you can take advantage of a mood tracker, breathing exercises, stress relief activities, a journal, and more.

**Mindshift-CBT**
*Anxiety*
Created by Anxiety Canada, Mindshift is a great tool to take control of your anxiety. It uses Cognitive Behavioural Therapy to help users relax and come into a mindful state. The app tackles issues like worry, panic, perfectionism, social anxiety, and phobias. Some key features include CBT-based tools, a thought journal, and goal-setting options.

**MoodTools**
*Depression and/or suicide*
Created in collaboration with multiple mental health professionals, MoodTools includes a depression test (PHQ-9 depression test), a symptom tracker, a thought diary, and a suicide safety plan to help combat depression and alleviate negative moods.

**PTSD Coach**
*Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*
The US Department of Veteran Affairs created an app for those afflicted with PTSD. Important to note is that this app is not just for military veterans; it is for anyone with PTSD who has suffered a traumatic event. PTSD Coach provides users with educational resources, self-assessment tools, stress managing tips like relaxation skills, and anger management.

**Rise Up + Recover**
*Eating disorders*
This comprehensive app is a great addition to the treatment of anorexia, bulimia, obsessive eating, binge eating, and compulsive eating. Rise Up + Recover uses CBT to help its users in their treatment journey. Users can log in their meals, emotions, and behaviours, and export their entries to PDF to share with their therapist. It also includes custom reminders to inspire users, shares motivational quotes, and has additional resources.

**Saying When: How to quit drinking or cut down**
*Addiction (drinking)*
The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), Canada’s largest mental health teaching hospital, created Saying When to help users take control of their drinking habits. The step-by-step program includes self-assessments, additional resources, personalized goals, and a dashboard to organize it all. CAMH stresses that this tool is not meant for those with a serious drinking problem (but they do provide resources for those that do).

**Quit That! (iOS only)**
*Addiction*
This is an app that helps you track the things you are trying to quit (smoking, drinking, etc.). A great bonus is that there are no pesky ads! Interesting features in Quit That! include a live counter to show your progress, a calculator to see how much money you saved since quitting, a schedule maker, and a note taking section.

Coming soon:
**A4i (AppforIndependence)**
*Schizophrenia*
CAMH (The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health) has teamed up with MEMOTEXT Corporation to create A4i, a platform designed for those with schizophrenia and other psychoses. It is still in the process of being created, but key features that will be included are a curated news feed, evidence-based strategies, pill reminders, personalized crisis tools, and an ambient noise recorder to help differentiate between real noises and hallucinations.

Interested in testing the platform before it is released? Visit https://a4i.me/ for more information.

– Gabrielle Lesage

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**STAY INFORMED!**

Find our most up-to-date information at: **www.amiquebec.org**

For regular updates, follow AMIQuebec on:

Find us on Facebook: ![Facebook](https://www.facebook.com)

Find us on YouTube: ![YouTube](https://www.youtube.com)

Find us on Twitter: ![Twitter](https://twitter.com)

Find us on Instagram: ![Instagram](https://www.instagram.com)

Or call us: **514-486-1448**

(1-877-303-0264 outside Montreal)

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**Sign up for monthly emails:**

amiquebec.org/email

**Contact Us:**

For general inquiries: **514-486-1448**

(1-877-303-0264 outside Montreal)
REGISTRATION IS OPEN FOR OUR FALL PROGRAMS

Help for all with new workshops and perennial favourites

This fall we introduce new one-time workshops, including Boundaries & Setting Limits, BPD: A Family Affair, and Crisis Intervention For Caregivers. We are also introducing a 6-week Meditation For Resilience series.

Last year, we created a Facebook Hot Topics series—live, online videos where you can use your computer or smartphone to watch experts discussing trends in mental health, and interact live by sending in questions and comments. We will continue to provide this valuable program.

Plus we have several workshops that will provide you with information and hands-on experience; they will help reduce stress and increase confidence. Read through the information below and you’re sure to find something that suits you.

If you live outside Montreal, don’t despair! We can still support you through counseling by phone or Skype, our YouTube videos, SoundCloud podcasts, and Hot Topics Facebook Live videos, and if you give us a call we can help guide you to services in your area.

All our programs are free!

SUPPORT GROUPS

Open-agenda sessions facilitated by people who have experience, either as a caregiver or having lived with mental illness. No registration necessary. All our Montreal support groups start at 6:30pm. We also have a support group on the South Shore. See Calendar, page 7, for dates and locations or visit amiquebec.org/support

WORKSHOPS

Please note: space is limited for all workshops and registration is required.

All workshops take place at the AMI office, 5800 Decarie.

Register at amiquebec.org/workshops or call 514-486-1448.

ONE TIME WORKSHOPS

FOR CAREGIVERS ONLY

6-8PM

NEW!

BOUNDARIES & SETTING LIMITS

Boundaries are not easy to understand, and even harder to set in relationships. As a caregiver of a loved one with mental illness, being aware of our feelings and needs while respecting another person’s limits makes it necessary to ensure safe and positive interactions and living situations. We will discuss and practice setting boundaries with others who live in similar situations.

September 17 with Melanie Hughes.

CREATIVE EXPRESSION

This workshop is an innovative and creative way to explore your own challenges and how they can be overcome. Led by Joyce Cohen, you will use your intuition to create small collage cards with magazine images, scissors and glue. You will then learn how to ‘read’ your cards to discover what personal and hidden meanings your card reveals to you.

No art experience is required. If you are a caregiver struggling to maintain your balance while caring for a loved one touched by mental illness, you may find the experience of self-discovery and respite rewarding.

September 19 with Joyce Cohen.

INTRODUCTION TO BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER

This introductory session will provide basic knowledge on Borderline Personality Disorder: what it is, what are some of the challenges, and what can be done to reduce conflicts. You will gain a better understanding of the condition and how to cope.

September 24 with Sylvie Bouchard.

COPING SKILLS

Dedicated to solving one of the stickiest worries for caregivers: how to deal with stressful situations and keep harmony in the family. Plus learning resilience—the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or other sources of stress.

November 19 with Melanie Hughes.

NEW!

CRISIS INTERVENTION

The aim of this workshop is to provide caregivers with both preventive and in-the-moment crisis interventions for their loved ones. Dr. Kate Drury will draw from several trauma-informed therapies such as EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing), DBT (Dialectical Behaviour Therapy) and Sensorimotor Psychotherapy to provide you with strategies for more effective caregiving. We will be looking at strategies to better manage our own nervous systems as well as those of our loved ones.

November 21 with Dr. Kate Drury.

LETTING GO & ACCEPTANCE

We all deal with various forms of losses in our lives; whether death, a loss of relationships, or loss connected to mental illness. This workshop looks at how we grieve mental illness and the losses associated with it and how we can let go of what was, what we hoped for, and accept what exists in the present moment.

December 12 with Melanie Hughes.
NEW!

BPD: A FAMILY AFFAIR

The goal of this workshop is for both people with Borderline Personality Disorder and family members to understand each other’s perspective. This helps create a climate of trust and connection. Together we will explore the challenges that you face when you communicate with each other, as well as what could help.

This workshop is for people with BPD or Emotional Dysregulation and family members of people with BPD (you do not have to attend together). Participants must be 18+.

Prerequisite: watch Carl’s story on AMI-Québec’s YouTube Channel: http://bit.ly/CarlBPD.

Sunday, November 3, 10am-12:30pm with Sylvie Bouchard + Carl Riambon.

TYPES OF MENTAL ILLNESS

There is a wide spectrum of mental illnesses from Depression to Hoarding to Bipolar Disorder. This workshop goes over the various diagnoses and characteristics of each mental illness.

November 28, 6-8pm, facilitated by doctors in McGill University’s Psychiatry Postgraduate Program.

COMMUNICATION

In communication the idea is to strengthen mutual respect and trust, thereby allowing people with diverse attitudes and opinions to develop effective partnerships. It’s the type of approach that can help reduce your anxiety and improve your relationship with your ill loved one.

October 15 and 22 (must attend both), 6-8pm with Melanie Hughes.

BPD VALIDATION

In this two-part workshop, you will be introduced to communication skills that have the potential to defuse conflicts and improve relationships. For family members or friends of loved ones with “Emotional Dysregulation” or Borderline Personality Disorder. No diagnosis necessary. You will learn: what is validation, why validation is important, the difference between validation and invalidation, and how to validate.

*Emotional Dysregulation: difficulty in controlling or regulating emotions, intense mood swings, hyper reactivity, hypersensitivity.

October 17 & 24 (must attend both), 6-8:30pm with Laura MacMartin.

CAREGIVERS GROUP

This group will offer an opportunity to explore how caring for a loved one with mental health challenges affects the caregiver’s experience and own wellbeing.

A group setting can be viewed as a social microcosm that offers opportunities for interpersonal learning and growth. As participants share their experiences and learn from each other, they can gain new insights. This experience can alleviate some of the isolation and other difficulties that are often associated with caregiving.

Interested caregivers will be interviewed in order to determine whether the group experience could be beneficial to them.

Starts October 21 and runs for 8 weeks on Mondays, 6-7:30pm, with Ella Amir and Miriam Byers.

MEDITATION FOR RESILIENCE

How do we gain the strength to work with life situations that are difficult and stressful? Resilience is certainly important but how does a person develop more resilience? For millennia meditation has been used to develop a personal centre — a place of peace and tranquility that people can go to at times of turbulence in their lives. Meditation is widely used today for stress reduction or to help cope with pain, anxiety, or depression. The truth that meditation reveals is that we are all stronger than we think and have resources that we are unaware of. This workshop will use meditation to help participants get in touch with these deeper parts of themselves.

Starts October 10 and runs for 6 weeks on Thursdays, 10-11 am with Bill Byers.

WORKSHOP SERIES

FOR CAREGIVERS ONLY

must attend all days

EDICATION FOR RESILIENCE

HOT TOPICS

For all

Use your computer or smartphone to spend some rewarding time learning about trends in mental illness and mental health. Presented live by doctors in McGill University’s Psychiatry Postgraduate Program as well as local mental health workers. The hosts interact with you, and you can send in live questions and comments through Facebook while watching. Registration not necessary, and you do not have to have a Facebook account. Videos can be watched at a later date if you miss the live event.

7-9pm.

Visit www.facebook.com/AMIQuebec

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

Our first Facebook Hot Topic Q&A of the season is for anyone frustrated with the medical system and not receiving the treatment they seek. This online conversation will help people feel they are being heard and understood when they speak with a health professional. Our guests will include Dr. Carole-Anne Tremblay from McGill University’s Psychiatry Residency Program. Bring your questions and ask them live online.

September 5

SCHIZOPHRENIA

Our second Hot Topic of the season is on schizophrenia. Schizophrenia affects mental processes such as thinking and judgment, sensory perception, and the ability to appropriately interpret and respond to situations. We will be joined by Dr. David Benrimoh from McGill University’s Psychiatry Residency Program. A community organization member will join us as well. This is rare opportunity to speak live online with healthcare professionals on an often misunderstood disorder.

October 24

COUNSELLING

Should you need a personalized one-on-one for a particular problem or situation where a family member with mental illness is concerned, we’re here for you. If you’re a resident of Montreal, call our office to book an appointment with SOS-Famille. For those who live outside the city or in a remote area, who are housebound or having difficulty accessing English-language services, there’s help by telephone or Skype. For further information, visit amiquébec.org/SOS or call 514-486-1448 or 1-877-303-0264 (outside Montreal, toll-free).
POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY: AN IN-DEPTH LOOK

Can “thinking happy thoughts” actually make a difference?

In recent years, there has been an increase in interest in positive psychology. But what is positive psychology? Should you practice it? Can it cure mental illness?

What is Positive Psychology?
In simple terms, positive psychology is the science of happiness. Christopher Peterson and Nansook Park explain that there has always been a negative viewpoint of psychology and mental health (i.e. people are fragile and need fixing). Positive psychology instead focuses on an individual’s strengths. The American Psychological Association further explains that positive psychology focuses on “psychological states (e.g., contentment, joy), individual traits or character strengths (e.g., intimacy, integrity, altruism, wisdom), and social institutions that enhance subjective well-being and make life most worth living”.

According to The Canadian Positive Psychology Association, Abraham Maslow first used the term in his 1954 book “Motivation and Personality”. Although there was some interest in the topic, it didn’t really stick. It was in 1998 when positive psychology would come back to the stage. Martin Seligman reintroduced the term, and the field has been growing ever since.

The PERMA Model
Martin Seligman proposed the PERMA Model to explain what makes up happiness:

P - Positive Emotions: This focuses on positive emotions that come from feeling gratitude, savouring pleasures in the present, and optimism.

E - Engagement: When you engage in a task or challenge where you use your strengths and skills.

R - Relationships: Keeping close relationships contribute to well-being. This can also include acts of kindness towards others.

M - Meaning: Revolves around activities that fulfill a sense of meaning, like practicing religion or volunteering at community organizations.

A - Accomplishments: Can be gained from hobbies, games, or sports, to name a few.

How can I practice positive psychology?
There are many ways in which you can exercise positive psychology habits in your everyday life. Peggy Kern, Senior Lecturer in Positive Psychology at the University of Melbourne, gives a few suggestions for those interested in practicing positive psychology:

1) Know your strengths: By knowing your strengths, you can use them to your advantage. Being aware of them and subsequently using them is related to a greater well-being.

2) Change your thinking: The more you shift your perspective in a positive way, the more chances there are that you will counteract negative thoughts and biases. It does not cure negative thinking completely, but it allows you to focus on the good rather than the bad.

3) Add more positive emotions to your life: Doing things that make you happy contribute to your happiness, so do things you love! Go take a walk by the canal. Read a chapter of your favourite book. Participate in activities that bring you joy.

4) Nurture positive relationships: It is important to foster positive and healthy relationships in our lives. Removing toxic people from our environment aids in maintaining positive emotions and diminishes negativity. This includes relationships with family members, friends, and coworkers.

5) Do something nice for someone else: Acts of kindness not only make someone else happy, they make you feel good.

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Positive Psychology ... continued from page 6

too! No act is too small. Help a neighbour with their gardening. Call a family member. Smile at a stranger. There are plenty of ways to make someone happy.

Criticism of Positive Psychology

Although many people believe in positive psychology, there are those who have some critiques about it. Some describe it as an “over-simplified pursuit of happiness”, and others would say that life is complex and can’t be broken down into just “think happy thoughts”. There is also the fact that a lot of research findings are misleading. Another criticism suggests that positive psychology does not necessarily take into consideration different social groups like minorities and disadvantaged groups that might have different socio-economic environments and living situations that make it difficult to practice positive psychology.

Is positive psychology a cure for mental illness?

It is important to note that positive psychology is not a miracle cure for illness. As Christopher Peterson wrote in Psychology Today, “nowhere does it say or imply that the rest of psychology needs to be discarded or replaced”. In other words, positive psychology is not the ultimate strategy for recovery; it is rather a way of thinking that can benefit and improve your mental and overall well-being.

– Gabrielle Lesage

If you are interested in reading more about positive psychology, here are some suggested reads:

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Montreal Walks for Mental Health—Reinvented!

After walking towards a world without stigma for ten years, Montreal Walks for Mental Health has been reborn as a gathering called Celebrating Mental Health. Now under the umbrella of the Canadian Mental Health Association, this fun event aims to promote mental health and to bring a message of hope about living with mental health problems.

On the program: “The Flight of the Soap Bubbles”, musical performances, creative activities focused on mental health, kiosks, and various games.

This event is free, bilingual, family-friendly, and accessible to all. Join us!

September 14, 2019 at 1pm, Olympic Park, 4115 av. Pierre-de Coubertin
Visit acsmmontreal.qc.ca for details.

FALL 2019

SUPPORT GROUPS
For family, friends and people with mental illness unless otherwise indicated.
For details visit amiquebec.org/support
Mondays 6:30pm 4333 Cote Ste-Catherine Road (near Cote-Sainte-Catherine metro) unless otherwise indicated. No registration necessary.

FAMILY for relatives and friends
September 9, 16, 23; October 7, 21, 28; November 4, 18, 25; December 2, 9, 16

BPD for relatives and friends
September 9; October 7; November 4; December 2

ANXIETY
September 9; October 7; November 4; December 2

BIPOlar DISORDER
September 16; October 21; November 18; December 9

DEPRESSION
September 16; October 21; November 18; December 9

HOARDING
September 23; October 28; November 25; December 16

OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER
September 9; October 7; November 4; December 2

KALEIDOSCOPE for people living with mental illness
September 23; October 28; November 25; December 16

SOUTH SHORE for relatives
September 3; October 7 (Monday); November 5; December 3

See pages 4 and 5 for information about our fall workshops or visit amiquebec.org/workshops
Positive Psychology ... continued from page 7

“Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life” by Martin Seligman (available in AMI-Québec’s Library)

“Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment” by Martin Seligman

“The Happiness Advantage: The Seven Principles of Positive Psychology That Fuel Success and Performance at Work” by Shawn Achor

“The How of Happiness: A New Approach to Getting the Life You Want” by Sonja Lyubomirsky

Please visit amiquebec.org/newsletter-sources for references.