

Shalom Updates:

Shalom's Continuing Services

In the time of COVID-19 Shalom has transitioned to providing services through telephone and online video counselling. We appreciate your continued support as we respond to requests for counselling and support our community during this unprecedented time.

Spring Event

Shalom will be hosting a spring event on:

**Sunday,
June 6, 2021**

This will be an event to mark a farewell for outgoing Executive Director Wanda Wagler-Martin, and to meet Shalom's incoming Executive Director. More details will follow in the spring.

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Executive Director Wanda Wagler-Martin announces resignation



Wanda Wagler-Martin, long-term Executive Director of Shalom Counselling Services, has announced her intention to leave Shalom at the end of June 2021, following 24 years of leadership.

This is not retirement for Wanda. In her words, she will be "leaning into the unknown," discerning her next horizons as a very experienced counsellor, administrator and advocate. It will, however, be the end of a remarkable era of growth and development for Shalom under her leadership.

Wanda joined Shalom in 1997 as the Executive Director, embracing its founding commitment to make high calibre counselling affordable and accessible to all. Over the years, Wanda has ushered in new strategic directions; growing the organization, building a caring community of support for Shalom, and working closely with staff to deliver the excellent services and programs now offered to the community.

Wanda has also broadened the reach of Shalom into the wider community with educational sessions and preaching in local churches, developing support groups for local pastors, and lending her expertise for other church related events focused on mental health. She has been a wise and insightful leader and advocate for mental health services throughout the Region of Waterloo.

In a recent letter, Wanda shared, "my focus remains on the work of Shalom and bringing to a close this wonderful chapter of my life. Shalom is in a good place. I'm excited about the possibilities that new leadership will bring as Shalom continues to grow and thrive."

The Board has appointed a Search Committee to find a new Executive Director for Shalom. We are committed to building on the remarkable foundation that Wanda has shaped, and a smooth transition to a new Executive Director.

Wanda's leadership and many contributions to Shalom have left the organization in a strong position for continued success in delivering affordable and accessible counselling services to the community.

Kaye Rempel, Shalom Board Chair

Loneliness During COVID

By Rod Miller, MSW, RSW

Loneliness is defined as, “social pain, a lack of connection with others when you want or need it”. The COVID pandemic has changed our lives on many levels, changing routines, needs and ways of functioning. It has required us to be creative in addressing our needs. While it has changed us, it has also highlighted some things that may have already existed within our lives. Loneliness is one of those things.

Studies and articles about the effects of the COVID pandemic on our mental health, and experiences of loneliness and isolation, have been written by academics, government agencies, mental health services and practitioners/experts. In reviewing a selection of these studies and articles, there are some consistent themes that outline both the impacts and recommendations of ways to mitigate those effects.

First, the lack of natural and usual social connections during the pandemic is real, as is the resulting loneliness. For people who were lonely before the pandemic, these last months will likely have increased that feeling. For others, the last months, with needed restrictions, will have created loneliness in their lives in ways that are new, due to limited social interactions and gatherings. It is important to acknowledge that it is normal to feel this way in these times. You are not alone in feeling lonely. Further, try not to deny, minimize or push this feeling away. It is helpful to be aware of the effects of loneliness and to recognize when we are experiencing them.

The research has named some common themes in terms of the impacts of loneliness, as well as shared recommendations to help reduce or address the loneliness of these times. They all note that “social connection” is the best remedy, in whatever form that can take. During a pandemic this means being socially creative, to address the need for connection with others, while acting in responsible and safe ways. Rather than withdrawing, make relationships a priority, and find either distanced or electronic/video ways to connect. Good physical, emotional and mental health habits are always important, especially in these ongoing, challenging times. Prioritize sleep, eat healthily, get outside and enjoy nature and be physically active. Practice relaxation deliberately and intentionally. Be productive with your time in work and non work activities. Cultivate gratitude whenever and wherever possible.



While there are many actions and activities that can help, no one of these things is “the” answer to loneliness. There will still be struggles, good days and bad days. Recognizing and acknowledging the effects of loneliness, and being deliberate about identifying, seeking, practicing and implementing a variety of strategies and solutions is the best we can do. And lastly, find a sense of purpose, guided by a resilience mindset. Understanding that we are all impacted can help us recognize that we are not alone but are indeed moving through this pandemic within the concentric circles of our lives, our families, our social circles, our cities, our provinces, our country and our world.

Coping with Uncertainty in the Pandemic

By Melody Leclair, MA, Registered Psychotherapist

John Allen Paulos was quoted as saying, “uncertainty is the only certainty there is.” This can be an uncomfortable reality; especially when we pride ourselves on having answers and preferring certainty and control. Yet we have never had it. I have never met a single person whose life plans have gone exactly how they wanted them to. Right now it feels like everything is changing, and we are often experiencing loss. Loss of loved ones, jobs, dreams and the “normal” way we did things. A year ago a person wearing a mask in a store would have been very unusual, maybe even concerning to us. Now it is a part of our everyday lives.

So how do we cope with uncertainty? A good starting point is acknowledging it exists, and recognizing our emotional reaction to it. Each person responds to uncertainty in their own way. When uncertainty makes us feel threatened, it may increase stress, fear, worry and, anxiety. When we can see uncertainty and view it as a potential opportunity, it can invite curiosity, reflection, creativity, and innovation. Think of some of the ways businesses and entrepreneurs have adapted or created new products and services; like local distilleries making hand sanitizers to address the shortage at the beginning of the pandemic.

Uncertainty invites each of us to dig deep and build up our inner resilience and our outer resources. It is important to maintain the basics: diet, sleep and exercise. Do not underestimate the value of daily routines, and focusing on the here and now. Day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute. Invest in yourself by finding ways to nourish yourself spiritually, emotionally, physically, mentally and socially. Find new ways of doing old things. For example, replace a commute with a walk to decompress, do a home work-out, or arrange a porch visit with a friend (when appropriate to do so). Focus on what is within your control. You have the opportunity to choose your attitudes, mindset, and how you react or respond in any given situation. Resist the urge to cope in unhealthy ways. For some people, especially where there is a history of addiction or difficulty dealing with stress constructively; alcohol, drugs and even gambling may be used to escape from the difficult emotions of stressful situations. Although the goal of these behaviours is to make us feel better, they usually make people feel worse and can lead to cycles of negativity. If you don't know how to stop engaging in these behaviors and need support, reach out. Counselling can help.

The best way to start becoming more tolerant of uncertainty is to start acting as if you already are. The ways we think, feel and act are all interconnected and influence change. Adjust your mindset and practice flexible thinking; get comfortable being uncomfortable, expect the unexpected, delays, disruptions and inconveniences amidst the day to day. Although we cannot ever be completely certain, we can do the best we can, for who we are. Be your best self and look for the same in others even when it is hard to do so. I encourage us all to set an intention of how we want to be work toward it. Practice virtues of patience, compassion, generosity, kindness and humility. May our life challenge be to learn how to cope with uncertainty without being paralyzed by fear.



Seedlings

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Peace and Wholeness

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United Way
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Communities

Shalom Board Updates

New Board Members



Dena Moitoso, Board Member

Dena joined the Shalom board in September 2020. Dena has retired from her clinical practice at People Needing People Bereavement Counselling after 24 years of partnership with the Erb & Good Family Funeral Home. She currently serves as a consultant with the Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention council as well as an instructor for Wilfrid Laurier University's Professional Development certificates. Dena and her husband live in Roseville and enjoy frequent visits from their three grandchildren.

Ending Board Members

David Gingerich has completed his time as a Board Member at Shalom, following 9 years of service. Dave held many roles in the Board, including Secretary, Chair of the Policy & Professional Practice Committee, and member of the Executive Committee. Many thanks to Dave for his time serving on the Board.

Thank You!

Thank you to all of Shalom's supporters for providing support as we seek to provide need counselling services.

You Can Help

Shalom clients come from all walks of life, and many require a fee subsidy to be able to afford counselling. Every donation supports Shalom in providing services now and into the future. This mutual aid, supporting others in a time of need, is central to Shalom's mission, "Helping People Grow Toward Peace and Wholeness."

Shalom is grateful for every gift that is received, and this reminds us of the community of care that surrounds our work. Thank you!

If you are interested in donating to the ongoing work of Shalom Counselling, you can donate in the following ways:

Cheque

Cheques can be made payable to:
Shalom Counselling Services Inc.

Credit Card

Credit card donations can be made online or by phone:
shalomcounselling.org/donate
(519) 886-9690

Legacy Gifts

Legacy gifts (estates and wills) can be made through Abundance Canada