

# SPRING VIEWS

Spring International Language Center, Littleton, Colorado,  
December 2021

## The Courage to Speak Out

### *The Stigma of Mental Illness*

Depression has been a mental prison in my life, which has prevented me from regaining my freedom due to a lack of self-esteem. Fortunately, I was finally diagnosed two years ago. Since then, I have been receiving help from the Mental Health Center. While being treated, I met other people who are dealing with mental health issues. One of the cases that I encountered was a teenager whose parents sent her to this center as their last hope because they did not know how to deal with it. This is the result of the scarcity of information about mental health issues. Currently, society has a stigma and people do not talk openly about these issues. According to the American Psychiatric Association, the search for treatment is hampered by their fear of discrimination at work and in society. (Stigma, 2020). This seems ironic because these same people surf the Internet, exposing themselves to the judgment and ridicule of their peers. Although the stigma of mental health issues is a huge problem, there are solutions that will empower individuals to fight these obstacles and at the same time allow them to help others. **(Rosa Sanchez -Mexico)**

Education and raising awareness can reverse the stigma of mental illness. According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) in the U.S. in 2019, 51.5 million U.S. adults lived with a mental illness. That is nearly one in five. Raised awareness can help people find early detection, early treatment, and earlier recovery. First psychologists, social workers, teachers, and parents should talk about mental health more openly. Do not let it be a secret any longer. This can solve the problem for some people who do not want to see a doctor. Another good way is not to leave children out of the conversation. Children are curious, and they ask their parents about everything. Parents should not hide it; let children access knowledge about mental health as well as physical health from an early age. If a child has enough understanding, it will be of great help in solving mental problems in adulthood. Of course, earlier treatment leads to earlier recovery.

**(Zhen Yang - China)**

In addition, the issue of not talking about mental health is the issue of society in general, including every human being. By getting rid of the silence surrounding mental health topics and comparing it to other physical illnesses, society will accept it as normal. Normalizing mental health means treating it as if it's something everyone should expect to go through, or seeing it as an unchangeable part of society. It is ironic how nowadays people are used to visiting a doctor in case of physical illness, such as flu, poisoning, fever, etc., but they avoid a visit to the doctor in case of a potentially deadly mental problem. Studies mention that mental and physical health are equally important components of overall health (Mental Health Basics). For example, depression increases the risk for many types of physical health problems, particularly long-lasting conditions like diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. For those suffering from psychical issues brought on by mental illness, there often seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel. However, normalizing this topic could bring that light into view. That is why it is so important to normalize speaking about mental health issues and empower people to get the help they need. According to Mass.gov, by not talking about mental health, we add to the stigma that surrounds it, which can bring harmful effects (Why Do We Need to Talk about Mental Health?). Let's start ruining the stigma and normalizing caring about mental health!

**(Kate Ruzhytska - Ukraine)**

It is also important to consider the government's responsibility in this war against this issue that mentally imprisons many individuals in the nation. As it is known, in 2013 president Barack Obama asked both the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Education to work on a plan to start a national conversation on this issue. The main plan was to reduce the negative image that society has regarding mental health. Also, it encouraged those struggling to seek help, and it gave families more efficient tools to deal with mental illness. This shows that the government has had some awareness in the past, but recently this issue has been affecting people left and right like a giant avalanche that needs to be stopped.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), "two-thirds of the 45 million U.S. adults over 18 years old with any mental health illnesses didn't get treatment." SAMHSA has had a lot of pressure and work because of the 2020 pandemic, the Covid-19 virus has caused cases of mental health to skyrocket. Instances of both anxiety and depression increased to 93% and 62% respectively, according to Mental Health America.

These rates show that there is more work to be done with this issue. The ironic part of this story is that the funds and willingness to work are there, but society seems passive. Consequently, the solution requires joint work from both the government and the society. Therefore the government has to create programs to stimulate young adults to enter the mental health field. There should also be more scholarships and financial aid, awarded to those students who are willing to enroll in universities to pursue careers in mental health. In the end, we will have a stronger nation where government and society work together for a better and healthier future. **(Oscar Viasus Carrasquilla, Colombia)**

Ultimately, as Zig Ziglar, the American author states, "The first step in solving a problem is recognizing there is one. "Mental health is a serious issue that is cloaked in stigmatization. Stereotypes or the reactions of people who are uninformed add to the harm done. Because people don't realize that words matter, the silence and the resulting damage are perpetuated (cont. p. 2)



It seems ironic that while some families have a mental health issue, they lose their own minds trying to hide it because of the stigma. However, once this problem is recognized. Some basic solutions can be implemented. Educating the persons themselves and others, encouraging equality between physical and mental illness, and developing the mental health fields by the governments and the academic role are viable solutions that can move society forward. This will help those suffering from mental illness and their communities to live in peace and live normal and productive lives. (*Maha Othman - Saudi Arabia*)

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Loving ourselves  
through the process of  
owning our story is the  
bravest thing we will  
ever do.

Brené Brown

Hello Lovely Studio

## The problem with Low Self-Esteem

By Oscar Viasus Carrasquilla, Colombia



There are many points of view on mental illnesses and many go unnoticed. Humanity has gotten to the point of making them taboo, but mental health is just as normal as any other illness. One of these issues is low self-esteem which affects many people in the world. Mental illness is more difficult to deal with now that technology presents "perfect" examples of how people should act or look. The problem begins when an individual sees a negative image of themselves. From there, there grows a sense that the body doesn't meet the standards, life is just hell, love isn't enough, and so on. There is a feeling that a hole is eating them from the inside out. Many would think that it's pointless to fight this, or that it's something that they must live with for the rest of their lives. Is that true? The answer is no! Although it's a tough road there are many tools that would help fight these feelings of self-loathing and this essay would suggest three of them.

Communication is a highly effective solution that is plain and simple. However, as simple as it sounds, when an individual is capable of sharing with others it makes their burden lighter. They can be more confident because the more they talk about low self-esteem, the stronger they become. Communication could lift their weight because it would help them see with different eyes that everyone has imperfections, yet they are perfect in their own way.

Another solution that goes hand in hand with communication is to seek help from professionals. When individuals suffering from low self-esteem start to speak about it and add the help of these professionals, the combination turns out to be powerful. Many find that these counselors can show them a better path and equip them with a stronger mind to fight this issue. Seeking help is not a sign of weakness.

Rather, it could be the beginning of a better and healthier self-image.

Moreover, there is a third solution that seems even simpler; simpler but also powerful. It's the realization that many people are struggling with the same issue. Ironically, low self-esteem attacks everyone at some point and makes them feel alone, but the reality is that working as a team, many can overcome this monster together. The fight becomes easier when there is a group supporting and shielding one another.

In the end, society has to be more sensitive. We can help others and we can ease their despair, but we have to spread the word that there is no need for perfect bodies or perfect lives, because everyone has their own fight. Those fights are already won when the person realizes that there are no standards of perfection to meet; when they see that perfection has been there within them from the beginning. Let's remind them that they are not walking alone.

## How to improve your Self-Esteem

By Rosa, Sanchez, Mexico

Improving self-esteem can be difficult for everybody, especially when they do not have support from their peers or family. Low self-esteem has been part of my life since I was a teenager. In my experience, people can impact others without noticing it. They are not aware that words are powerful. Although what others say is not always the reason that people have low self-esteem, it plays its part. However, there are three solutions that will support people dealing with low self-esteem.

Doing a variety of entertaining activities would help people to solve this issue. By doing new things that they are not accustomed to, people can discover that they are great at something. For instance, practicing extreme sports, learning to play chess, enrolling in dance classes, or taking swimming classes to get out of the routine may open a new door. Consequently, this discovery will have a huge impact on their lives, solving their low self-esteem, and increasing self-confidence.

If doing new activities does not help, talking with friends is another alternative. Friends have always been part of our lives. Therefore, it is one of the strongest relationships we will ever have. It seems ironic that we only look for our friends to hang out and have fun, but not to open our hearts to them and speak the truth about how we feel. This is due to the fact that people believe that friends will judge them. If our friends are reliable and loyal, they can be trusted.

Working on your appearance is another way to deal with low self-esteem. This is more important for women, but it does not mean that it may not be effective for men. Consider this. People keep an old car because they appreciate it. In fact, people may give each car a name, such as "The Black Diamond," "Mr. Fantastic," or "Ghost Buster", and they make a connection with it. They keep it clean, fix it if it's broken, or add accessories. Whatever people immensely love, they will spend numerous hours or even money on that project. Imagine that you are your own project. The same effort could be put into taking care of yourself, and it will make a difference.

Clearly, there are amazing solutions that will help you to deal with low self-esteem; all you need is a start. Changing the routine and lifestyle, trusting in friends, and working on appearance are excellent strategies. After you improve yourself, and you make all those changes, you will see that not everything is against you.

# Romance or Love?

By Zhen Yang, China

Many people think romantic love is a strong basis for a successful marriage. However, when people have longer relationships maybe they should change that idea because romance does not equal love or marriage. Although some disagree, romance is not a good reason to get married.

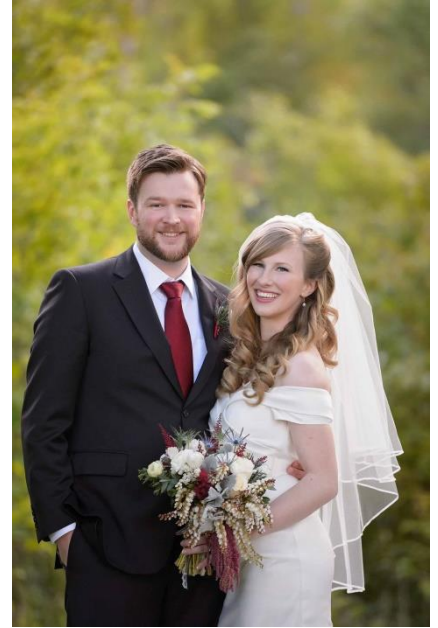
Weakening relationships is one reason why romance is not the most important aspect of marriage. Sometimes romance can help people find love fast. However, it does not mean romance can deepen relationships. For example, according to the "Institute for Family Studies", for every 1000 marriages, 14.9 are ended in divorce (Wang). That number is the same as it was 50 years ago. It seems ironic that some couples who are eager to marry, within a few years, cannot wait to get a divorce.

Another reason why marrying for romance is not sufficient is the need for money. Of course, marriage needs romance, but it is not the most important thing. In fact, Americans who are college-educated and financially stable are more likely to stay married. 64% of Americans in the top third income bracket are still in their first marriage. On the other hand, in the lower third income bracket, only 24% of Americans are still in their first marriage (Wang).

Others might say that romance is all you need for marriage and if they are not romantic, they should not get married. However, that is incorrect. Dating is a short-term romantic relationship and people do not need to think about responsibility too much. On the other hand, marriage is like growing a tree. It is a life-long process of taking responsibility, working, and investing care and money. During which a strong relationship and even a family are nurtured.

No matter how you think about it, romance does not equal love. When considering marriage because of romantic attraction, people should think about it again. Is there enough money? Are they ready for the responsibility? Can they depend on one another? These are the considerations that can help lower the divorce rate and experience a wonderful life!

Wang, Wendy "The U.S. Divorce Rate Has Hit a 50-year Low." *Institute for Family Studies*, 10. Nov.2020. <https://ifstudies.org/blog/the-us-divorce-rate-has-hit-a-50-year-low>.



## Advice for Curing Insomnia



Nowadays humanity has a huge variety of problems with health, and insomnia is one of them. Inability to sleep may be caused by numerous factors and each of them is relevant and special. Finding the root of your own sleeping problem, and solving it will make your life easier and brighter.

Most of the problems which lead to insomnia are caused by having a lot of physical energy. Therefore, the first step is to get rid of any physical exercises late in the day. Going to the gym before bed is not a good idea. You may change gym training to a short walk around your house or to reading a book in a soft atmosphere. The calmer you are, the better you will sleep at night.

Another beneficial piece of advice for falling asleep faster and easier is trying meditation. Several platforms may be found nowadays for meditation practices, not only for professionals but also for beginners. To bring your meditation to a higher level, you may also try using aroma oils and calming bedding sprays. At first, meditation may seem challenging and unhelpful, but when you find the voice and the music that please you, you will definitely fall asleep without difficulty.

A very common thing that disturbs most people's sleep is using electronic devices until the last minute they close their eyes. Spending time on social media may not only irritate you but could also heighten your emotional state. It is ironic how people who are struggling with insomnia, usually don't apply strategies that would help themselves. Trying to get rid of your phone at least one hour before your sleep may drastically change your life. The better alternative for spending your time on social media is reading a book you like. It will bring you not only a good sleep but also a reading experience.

Most of this advice leads to calming yourself down as much as possible. As you calm down, in your mind, you should sense a calm lake or soft field with grass and flowers. That's how you will get to know that your brain and your body are ready to sleep. Now, enjoy your sweetest dreams, and don't forget to follow these simple instructions.

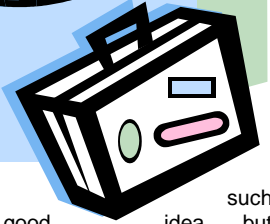
By **Kate Ruzhytska, Ukraine**

# The Courage to Travel Alone

Have you ever tried to travel alone? I always asked myself if I can travel alone. I made the decision to go to Europe a few years ago. For me, this trip had one of the most exciting things that I ever did, but traveling alone sometimes can be difficult.

While I was planning a trip to Europe with my friends, I decided to go to Italy for 10 days alone. I read about Italy, and I asked my friends what they recommended for my trip. My first destination was Rome, and I was there for 3 days. The first day was terrible. I arrived in Rome and I walked so fast around the city. I didn't find anything amazing to do. It was very stressed because I stayed for 9 days more and I didn't like being alone. At night, I went to a restaurant, and I thought about what activities I could enjoy. The second day was different. I did things that I really enjoy, for example went to museums, ate in a good restaurant, walked around the city, and went to a bar alone. After Rome, I traveled to Florence. I love this city, and I enjoy every minute in this city. I made new friends and loved staying alone in this beautiful place. Also, in Florence I learned that I prefer smaller cities to bigger one than big when I travel alone. Therefore, staying in other cities like Venice, Verona and Cinque Terre was easy because I knew what kind of activities I appreciate.

Traveling alone was one of the most interesting things that I have ever done. I learned a lot of things about myself as the places that I like, what my favorite activities are, and how much I enjoy time alone. Finally, travel alone always is a good idea, but the most important thing is that you know what kind of places and activities you enjoy most. **By Maria Teresa, Colombia**



such  
idea, but

## A Scary Night

My worst night was a very scary night in my bedroom, the worst experience I had in my house. I did not sleep in my room again because I was so scared. First of all, I was sleeping while I was dreaming. In my dream I was walking very fast outside my house in my village. I don't know why. At that moment, I was sleeping with my son in the same bed. Later, while I was dreaming, I was coming back to my house. I woke up from my dream because I heard a strange sound in my room.

Sometimes my son didn't like to sleep alone, and I didn't know the reason. All the time I asked why until I had lived this fear. I stayed in my bed while I was listening to a few steps. That sound was the same sound from my son's shoes. That was very confusing because at the same time I heard other sounds. I thought that maybe it was rats, but I listened to a few steps again. Also, I couldn't move my body, only my eyes, and I couldn't speak. Furthermore, I saw a little shadow to my left, and that shadow touched my face. I couldn't see the face, but it said, "MOMMY." Immediately I moved my right hand, and I touched my son. He was sleeping next to me. I started to despair because I wanted to scream, but I couldn't.

Finally, I started to say in my mind, "OUT, SATAN," and I could scream. I talked to my parents, and I was crying. I understood that I shouldn't leave my son alone. This story is real, and I will never forget that terrible night. **By Janeth Sanchez, Mexico**



## Zombie Birthday



Life is full of happy and sad situations. Usually, we forget the sad situations, and the happy moments remain stuck in our minds. Birthdays are one of those beautiful moments that are certainly unforgettable, but my birthday at the age of 12 was remarkable.

I returned from school in the afternoon, had my favorite meal of spaghetti, and went up to my room to do my homework. However, there were preparations in a large room on the first floor for my family birthday party, and more than ten people were working meticulously and quickly to finish the work. When the sun went down about six o'clock, people began to come, all in complete silence. The moment of surprise came when my mother knocked on the door. "Are you going to be late doing your homework?" she said. I told her I hadn't finished it. She said someone downstairs says he is your classmate, and he wants to meet you. I said I'd be there right away.

Finally, I got dressed and went down to the first floor. My mother said my class mate was in the guest room. I approached the room, but I could tell from looking under the door that the lights were off. Therefore, I was afraid. I decided to get a flashlight and try to see under the door. "There are zombies in the guest room," I told my mother. She mother laughed a lot and said, "Come with me." She opened the door and turned on the lights, and I saw guests screaming and singing, "Happy Birthday to You."

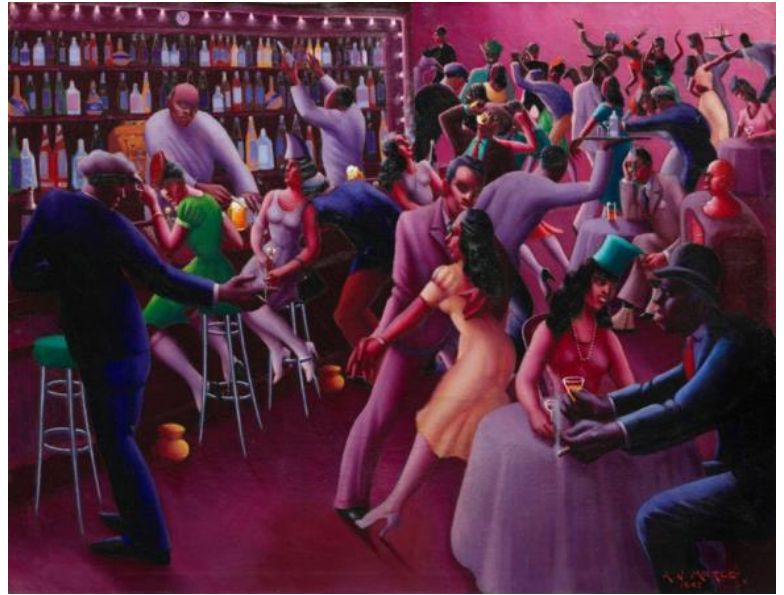
It was somewhat embarrassing and beautiful at the same time. It affected me. Therefore, I no longer like surprises. Because of the severity of the situation, I learned to consider the extent of surprises on a person's age, which has affected me throughout my life.

**By Hesham AlBeshr, Saudi Arabia**

## ***Deep Purple: Creative Response to a Picture\****

A number of people are sitting  
celebrating at the bar.  
There is a band that plays  
entertaining music  
Everyone dances  
to the Latin music.  
People are very happy  
it seems  
like they've just left a huge conference  
a wedding  
a special gathering  
because everyone is wearing  
festive attire.  
The party is crowded  
noisy.

*The picture shows many people dancing to music.  
Even though the viewer doesn't hear any music,  
the picture gives the idea of listening to music.*



It seems like a jazz bar sometime in the past.  
The bar is full of black people  
their African heritage running through their bodies,  
making them more festive,  
more sensitive to the rhythms,  
making the viewer realize that emotions come from within.

*Purple flows  
Hair flows  
Music flows  
Raise the spirits?  
Raise the arms  
Raise the glass  
Dresses flow  
Bodies flow  
Wishes flow*

*Odd  
Color purple  
Eye contact  
Odd*

*It reminds me of another era - so elegant!  
the way they dance  
the dresses, hats, suits  
But if I pay attention!  
The woman who is dancing has stepped on his shoe  
A man at the table looks disappointed too*

*The mix of dancing and cheering in one cocktail.  
Colors make you feel some sort of worry with the music.  
People begin to seem like animals  
either because of the amount of alcohol in their blood  
or because of the spectrum of emotions they feel while dancing.*

*\*Writing Level 6 is happy to contribute a creative writing piece.  
Contributors are Maha Othman (Saudi Arabia), Kate Ruzhytska (Ukraine), Rosa, Sanchez (Mexico), Oscar Viasus Carrasquilla (Colombia),  
Zhen Yang (China), and Carol Kok.*

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM THE SPRING INTERNATIONAL FAMILY**  
*STUDENTS, TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS, STAFF, HOMESTAY FAMILIES,*  
*AND CONVERSATION PARTNERS*



**MAY THE NEW YEAR BRING YOU THE COURAGE  
TO BE YOUR BEST SELVES!**



Spring Views is published each term to give students a showcase for their writing.  
Connie Shoemaker, editor