

Ask Questions. Get Answers. "Ask the Professionals"
E-mail your questions to: features@independentfreepress.com

Ask The Professionals

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Q: It is a new year and my self-esteem needs a boost. How do I begin?

A: Low self-esteem can negatively impact every part of your life so good for you for making these changes. Cognitive behaviour therapy identifies 5 steps in working towards a healthy sense of self.

- 1. Recognizing 'trouble' spots:** Think about what situations in your life make you feel down or troubled. It may be a relationship that causes you to feel insecure, a task that you must perform that you fear or emotional situations that cause you anger, depression or sadness.
- 2. Become 'mindful' of your beliefs and thoughts:** Once you recognize the trouble spots pay attention to your thoughts related to them. Especially note your self-talk—the negative messages you give yourself and how you interpret the situations that cause you problems.
- 3. Identify negative or inaccurate thinking:** Note the physical, emotional and behavioural responses that result from your 'wrong' thinking and beliefs.
- 4. Challenge your thinking and correct 'wrong' messages:** If you tell yourself that you can't do anything right, remember all the things you do well, and acknowledge that no one can do everything perfectly. Change negatives into positives; things are never all good or all bad; do not mistake feelings for facts and do not put yourself down.
- 5. Change thoughts and beliefs:** Replace the negative and inaccurate thinking with accurate and positive thoughts. Encourage, forgive and give positive messages to yourself. No 'should' or 'must's. Become your own best friend.

Following these steps may need professional support but however you go about doing it, you will feel happier and more confident and will find that others around you will respond more positively too! Have a Happy New Year!

"HELPING YOU HELP YOURSELF."



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Cyndi Olsen
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Q: It's happened to us all before. You are in an important meeting. Someone is giving a presentation. A power point presentation starts, then, the next thing you know, everyone is getting up and leaving. You haven't heard a word that's been said. You were staring out the window, not paying attention. You were distracted.

A: Kids deal with this sort of thing everyday in the classroom. Why did your mind start wandering? Why did you not even notice that you were thinking about... oh I don't know, organizing your sock drawer when you should have been taking notes on the quarterly profit losses? Metacognitive Awareness is the solution to this problem. It sounds really technical, something that you might hear in a doctor's office, but it's really just fancy talk for paying attention to what the mind is doing. With a little training and some practice everyone can master metacognitive awareness—even kids. Here's how it works:

- 1. Recognize when you are off-topic.**
 - * As soon as you notice that you are off-track stop yourself.
 - * Now think back to when you started to get off track. What happened? Did you hear some noise in the background?
- 2. Identify the distraction.**
 - * The ringing cell phone distracted me. Now that you know the source, you are more likely to recognize it when it happens again, and more likely to stay on track.
 - * It may go something like this: A cell phone rings somewhere behind you. You stop focusing on the speaker and...WAIT. That's a cell phone, it rang, and it distracted me. I should re-focus on the presentation. Or ask that co-worker to shut off his phone.
- 3. Thinking about thinking.**
 - * This is really what metacognitive awareness is all about—paying attention to what the mind is doing.
 - * If your mind is active in the classroom and not turned onto autopilot, it is easier to pay attention to what is going on around you. As you learn new things, be aware of your thought process—is this new thing like other things? Can I relate it to something else? Does this make sense?
- 4. An active brain is an on-topic brain.**
 - * As you learn new things, be aware of your thought process—is this new thing like other things?
 - * Can I relate it to something else? Does this make sense? Do I need to ask any questions? If you flip your mind's switch to "on" the likelihood of not paying attention diminishes.
- 5. Practice Makes Perfect.**
 - * Metacognitive Awareness, like so much else takes time to perfect. The more that you are aware of what your mind is doing; the easier it is to pay attention. And the less likely it will be that you'll spend entire meetings staring out the window.

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Q: I slid on some ice and hit a telephone pole due to poor road conditions. The police said I would not be charged as it was "not my fault". Why is my insurance company claiming it as an "At Fault" accident?

A: A traffic conviction does not have anything to do with an insurance claim. They are two separate issues. If you are operating a vehicle, the insurance companies consider you to be responsible. If you feel you are not at fault and can prove it, you have the right to dispute the claim with the body that documents insurance histories. These documents are called 'Auto Plus' records and generated by CGI. Once an accident is deemed 'at fault', it is difficult to reverse but should be addressed as soon as possible.

We represent many of the largest insurance companies in Canada. Contact us today for a no-obligation quote.



Remembering Aidan

Brampton youngster Makayla Pereira and her mother Janet (on right) arrive at the Rose Theatre in Brampton at the conclusion of their recent walk with friends to raise funds for the Canadian Cancer Society. The walk has been named Aidan's Walk in honor of Aidan Benoit, a Georgetown boy who recently died of cancer at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto. The walk was held on what would have been Aidan's fourth birthday. Makayla learned of Aidan through a mutual friend of the youths.

Photo by Bryon Johnson

Georgetown woman wins \$100,000 ENCORE jackpot

Maria Gibson of Georgetown recently checked her ENCORE ticket using an OLG ticket checker and was surprised to see she won an ENCORE second prize of \$100,000.

"I felt very happy! It was so unexpected," Gibson told Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation staff in Toronto when she collected her prize from the December 29, 2007 draw. Gibson, 62, is a retired retail employee from

Eaton's. She is married to Ian and they have three adult children and two grandchildren.

Her plans for the windfall include taking a vacation and sharing with family.

"If they behave themselves," added Gibson with a chuckle.

The winning ENCORE ticket was purchased at Delrex Variety on Guelph Street in Georgetown.

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