

BANA BE YOURSELF

A publication of the Bulimia Anorexia Nervosa Association

Spring/Summer 2024

A Mental Health and Wellness Magazine

Feature
Story

A View from
Across the Table:
My Journey from
Patient to Advocate

by Stephanie Johnston

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Publishers Note:

Hello Readers!

I am honored and delighted to welcome you to BANA BE YOURSELF- A Mental Health and Wellness magazine. Whether you're reading through these pages with your cup of morning coffee (tea), learning new tips about wellness, or just enjoying the beautiful positive messages, we are here for you.



A big thank you to all of the people who have contributed to this magazine, especially to our editing team and all of the contributing writers and photographers.

With so much uncertainty when it comes to mental health and wellness in the world today, our goal is to provide an accessible forum for education, discussion and acceptance for both the general public and professionals alike. We hope, that in some small way, this publication can help.

Thank you in advance for the support, we are looking forward to bringing you many more issues in the months to come.

We hope that you like this edition and we ask that you take forth the message to be kind to yourself, generous with others, and stay healthy.

Sincerely, Luciana Rosu-Sieja, Executive Director

DISCLAIMER*

Content within this publication may include details from the lived experience of the writer that could be triggering to some. Reader discretion is advised. Should you find yourself feeling distressed, please seek support.

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Please Note:
All contributions and editorials are provided on a volunteer basis.

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Meet BANA's 2024-25 Board of Directors

BANA is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. We are grateful for their unwavering support, talents and time and we look forward to working with them toward the betterment of services for the community we serve.



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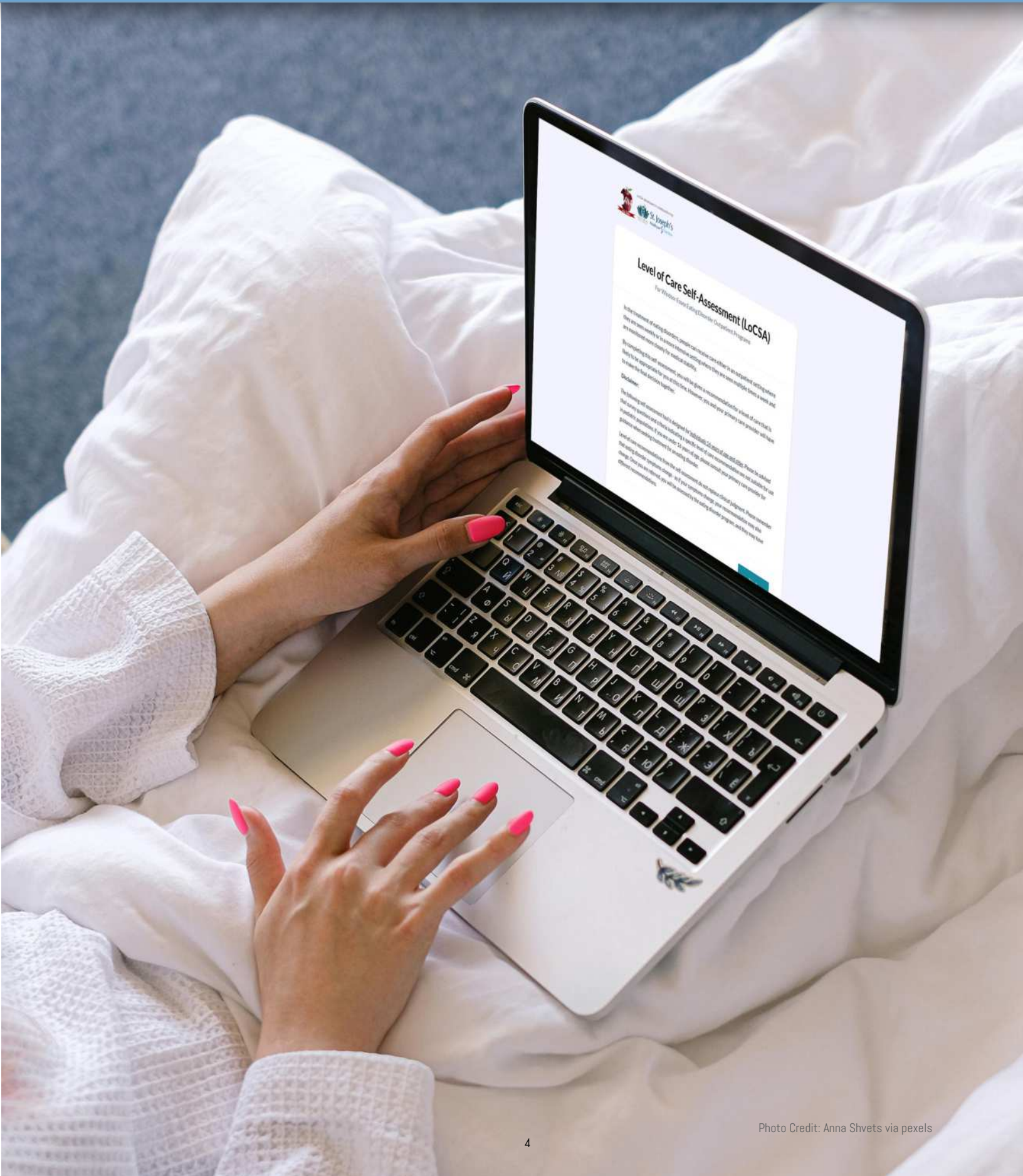


Leon Pilgram
Director



**BE
YOURSELF**

LoCSA (Level of Care Self Assessment)



Level of Care Self-Assessment (LoCSA) For Video Entry Entry/Discharge/Outpatient Programs

The Level of Care Self-Assessment (LoCSA) is a tool used to determine if you are eligible for a specific level of care. It is a self-assessment tool that you complete on your own. It is designed to help you understand your own needs and how they may change over time. The LoCSA is a key component of the Level of Care process and is used to determine if you are eligible for a specific level of care. It is a self-assessment tool that you complete on your own. It is designed to help you understand your own needs and how they may change over time. The LoCSA is a key component of the Level of Care process and is used to determine if you are eligible for a specific level of care.

Objectives:
The Level of Care Self-Assessment tool is designed to help you understand your own needs and how they may change over time. It is a self-assessment tool that you complete on your own. It is designed to help you understand your own needs and how they may change over time. The LoCSA is a key component of the Level of Care process and is used to determine if you are eligible for a specific level of care.

In partnership with Body Brave, BANA has recently launched the Level of Care Self-Assessment to help individuals find the right Level of Care for an Eating Disorder.

What are Levels of Care?

Levels of Care for eating disorder treatments include self-directed interventions, group therapy, individual therapy, outpatient, day treatment, live in treatment (residential treatment) and acute inpatient treatment programs.

Care can involve support from a multidisciplinary team made up of health professionals, such as registered social workers, registered dietitians, nurse practitioners and other allied health professionals.

BANA provides community outpatient services through our Outpatient Program and the Intensive Outpatient Program in partnership with weCHC Teen Health and Windsor Regional Hospital.

Why is this important?

The Quality Standards for Eating Disorder Care outlines the importance of first providing clients with the least intensive treatment that is likely to be effective and appropriate to the individual's needs.

"Least intensive" refers to components such as number of treatment hours, level of monitoring, and treatment disruption in everyday life.

Determining the appropriate "Level of Care" is guided by various factors including severity of symptoms, psychosocial context, accessibility of care, previous treatment history and medical presentation.

How does the LoCSA help?

The LoCSA functions to help clients identify the appropriate (and safest) level of care, BANA implemented the Primary Care Provider referral process in 2022 and in March 2024, they partnered with Body Brave to implement the Level of Care Self-Assessment (LoCSA). Potential clients are encouraged to complete this self-assessment prior to submitting a PCP referral.

In completing the LoCSA, clients are given a recommendation for the level of care that may be appropriate for them at this time.

Recovery Support Program (RSP)

In addition to the LoCSA, Body Brave has created a virtual Recovery Support Program (RSP) for clients awaiting outpatient or intensive outpatient services. The RSP is a self-led virtual program with 3 modules: Preparing for Treatment, Kick-Start Recovery, and Learn About Eating Disorders.



Rose Verzosa, RSW, MSW is the Centralized Clinical Intake Specialist for BANA and the Windsor Essex Intensive Outpatient Program

Looking to find out more?

Visit us at

www.bana.ca/centralized-intake-services



SPACE AND GRACE:

LEADERSHIP WITH COMPASSION POST-PANDEMIC

By Melissa Tar, B.A., R/TRO
Embrace Rec. Therapeutic Recreation Service

Photo Credit: Andrea Placquadro

Do you remember a teacher or a coach from your childhood that took that extra time to make you feel seen?

I had an incredible teacher in high school that had such a positive impact that I can still reflect and smile today. As an adult I've taken on many leadership roles in hopes to share that same kindness to others, hence why I believe it's so important to lead with compassion.

Wouldn't it be great if life were easy, or at least not as challenging as the Covid 19 Pandemic? The pandemic caused a global shift, and people are still grappling with the anger and frustration of how the pandemic changed us all. I hear how people are exhausted and not coping well, so I want to shed some humour and light on to how to manage during these overwhelming times.

Let's start by digging deep and discovering some core goals, which for many may be rooted in wanting happiness and joy to lead in their life. Here are a few ideas that I believe we need to start exploring as we continue to navigate and cope in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Leaders, teachers, therapists, counsellors and all helping professionals, this is for you too! Start by offering space and grace to everyone, including yourself, as we navigate the next few years of healing.

ABOUT SPACE

Let me give some context for what it means to hold space for a person. Allowing a safe space is without advice, judgment or opinion where a person can feel seen and heard for the feelings that are stirring within themselves.

Creating a safe space can be an in-person meeting or a phone call and requires an empathetic ear and allowing a person to be comfortable expressing themselves.

Listening without needing to interject is key to holding space so that a person feels safe to cry, scream, laugh or just be still in the company—this is giving space.

Space is about having no agenda or answers, but watching a person beautifully unfold their experiences. Also, I want to inspire YOU (the reader) to acknowledge your feelings, and bring you hope, compassion and joy for the beautiful future that awaits you.

ABOUT GRACE

Now let's talk about the beauty of grace. Regardless of your religious beliefs, spirituality is different, and offers another opportunity for grace in your life.

Grace is a powerful shift in the mindset to allow yourself a place of acceptance for where you are on your healing journey. You get to pick your tempo and speed for your own journey.

There is no competition in healing, and no need to compare with others on how you rate your journey. It's a beautiful acceptance that you can stumble through the tough parts, and as you heal the work gets lighter.

It's having control of the pain and not numbing, but instead nurturing the hurt and embracing the feelings with a personal level of compassion for yourself.

TRAUMA TRIGGER ALERT!

I need to talk about the ugly before we can get to the beauty. What is trauma?

Whether you are surviving on fight or flight mode or have found creative outlets to begin your personal healing journey (Hint: recreation therapy); as you continue to read, I want to give you permission to listen to yourself in retrospect, and allow whatever emotions to come to the surface.

Trauma is a "feelings experience", not an event. A car accident is an event, but the feelings you attached to the event are the feelings of trauma.

So, you may ask, how did the lockdowns become a trauma?

This global event caused flights to stop, countries to close borders, and constant fear mongering, which in turn created a selfish society. For many people the attached emotions erupted, and now many mental health professionals are grappling with resources and services to help the masses.

Humans are social beings and many desire connections and belonging, but I feel we are now more disconnected than ever before. Technology addiction is a culprit in this disconnected world, which has its own irony on the premise that we are ALL more connected (insert: eye roll).

It still hurts to think of how quickly that shift happened, and how fast the tension and confusion set in. I may never look at toilet paper the same again. How did we stoop so low as a superior species LOL?

Why is it important to heal from the trauma? Trauma is a place saver for fear, anxiety and depression. It takes a hold of your mental health, often relentlessly tormenting you like a wild roller-coaster.

Healing trauma equates to healing hearts, openness to joy, and excitement for the future. Healed trauma can lead to improved over-all health and well-being, including healthy emotional regulation, improved memory, better cardiovascular health and powerful mindfulness advantages such as self-awareness and happiness.

HEALING

The advantages of healing trauma are HUGE, but the big question is HOW do you start to heal? It's important to seek support from a professional that can hold space for you to feel the entirety of your emotions.

Find a leader that can help you understand how to give yourself grace, and make you feel safe. The healing journey is not easy. If you are new to healing, you will be uncomfortable.

Remember to take baby steps. Healing can be daunting and hard. All things worth doing should be fought with a tenacious amount of spite in the face of adversity, and you are 100% worth healing and being self-empowered.

Giving yourself permission to heal is another key component to holding space and grace and allowing yourself to have fun again. Often, I work with clients with a preoccupation of attaching to their feelings; mostly unhealthy, because of a traumatic experience.

People can form an identity to the resulting feelings and become regulated by unhealthy angst because they feel insecure without knowing how to heal or what to expect. Once we release the attached feelings, we can start building a new foundation of fun, self-love, assertiveness and joy.

Seek out professionals trained in the various trauma informed modalities – I personally apply the meta-psychology techniques of Traumatic Incident Reduction in my private practice, and I feel most people can benefit from the techniques.

Do the research to find what works for you. You're unique, and your healing will be unique too. Have patience because trauma is tricky but it's also freeing as you rediscover your truest vibrant self. It encourages you to be bold, brave and courageous in your pursuit to happiness.

SHIFTING

Lastly, let's start shifting from selfish to self-full! What does it mean to be self-full? As you begin to heal and recognize the pain that has been holding you back, I'm encouraging you to find a new healthier direction of being self-full.

Consider your overall well-being will need to be tweaked and rebuilt and I encourage you to be excited because you're worth it. Think of the car accident that cause the damaged on the inside and outside of your vehicle.

For convenience you can drop your car off at a mechanic and have the body work done, as well as have new brakes, and engine repair work done. If you're ambitious you can get a new colour too!

It takes time and money to get your car back to where you want it, but you can feel confident because you can leave the work to be done with a trusted expert.

Now imagine you are like the car, and you're hurting on the inside and outside. You may need therapy to heal your mind, your body, your emotions and your soul; might I suggest a recreation therapist as your trusted expert?

Start pouring into yourself to get back to a stronger self, healed and happy, and then pour out to others.

Lead with your heart and be a beacon of hope for others to start their healing journey.

- *Melissa*

Melissa is a survivor and thriver. She has taken her own adversity and spiced it up to find her authentic self. With a dash of humour and fun, she helps her clients and students EMBRACE their truest self. As a recreation therapist she likes to delve deep into the human condition to find the triggers that distort her clients self-view, and create individualized programs to ignite fun back into people's lives.

An educator and entrepreneur, focusing on holistic mental health and healing she is eager to help more clients equip themselves with tools to heal. She can be reached at Embrace Rec. (www.embracerec.com)



#YQG



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Did you know that the Windsor-Essex region is recognized as one of the most culturally diverse communities in Canada.

27% of the population is foreign born and over 100 cultures are represented.



Unfortunately, they, along with other minority groups such as LGBTQIA2S+ and Indigenous populations are often overlooked and under-served.

BANA has always tried to cultivated a culture of promoting self-acceptance. Wanting to address these communities, we partnered with the Rotary Club of Windsor WIDE (WIDE stands for We're Inclusive Diverse and Equitable) with a mission in mind.

After reaching out to the University of Windsor's new Office of People, Equity, and Inclusion and their Human Kinetics department, we joined in their commitment to transforming the University of Windsor into a truly safe, inclusive, equitable, and just learning and working environment.

... And **YQG Togetherfest** was born.

Quite simply, the idea was to host a one stop shop event where all local cultural, community groups and service agencies can come together to celebrate Windsor-Essex and its diverse tapestry.

With a wide range of over 60 exhibitors/vendors including community service agencies, 18 stage performances by multi-cultural groups and individuals, and diverse food options we created a truly unique and community-centric experience bringing together families and individuals of all ages and backgrounds for a weekend filled with fun activities, community engagement, and local cultural exchange.

We look forward to returning in April of 2025.

For more details or to join us in this event, visit www.bana.ca/yqgtogetherfest.



Patrick Kelly is the Public Relations and Communications Lead for BANA, Editor and Creative Director for the Be Yourself Magazine and Co-Chair of the #YQGTogetherfest.

A View From Across The Table: My journey from patient to advocate

By Stephanie Johnston

Photo Credit: Divinetechnygirl via pixels

I once was the person sitting in the chair getting help.

The team at BANA sitting across from me, trying to help me break free from ED. It was a scary seat to be in, but one I had come to terms with needing to be in. If you had told me I would jump from talks of hospitalization, to talks of recovery, followed by a remission diagnosis, I would have thought you were joking. Thankfully, that is the story I get to tell!

Although sitting in the patient chair was extremely hard, it brought me to the place I am in today and I can't imagine my life without this part of my story. I also want to offer transparency and say that everyone gets to different levels within their recovery.

Eating disorders are different for everyone, setbacks happen, circumstances change, and sometimes you forget how far you have come. I remember while I was in the IOP (Intensive Outpatient Program), there were many times I thought I wasn't getting better or was even getting worse.

I want to remind anyone who is in recovery that there is no perfect ending. I thought there was but as you will read from my time in IOP I thought I missed my "perfect" ending.

I want to acknowledge that this journey to freedom is not easy, requires hard work and trust, and the support of family, friends, and an amazing team.

I was lucky to have an amazing support system in my family and friends, and an amazing team at BANA that stood with me, fought for me, and ultimately were put into my life to give me the freedom I had always prayed for.

I want to thank BANA for the opportunity to share my story! If you are at the beginning of your journey, or haven't yet embarked, know that this is one of the hardest but best decisions you can make. I have been there, and remember thinking I would lose everything. I can confidently say I had lost everything already, and recovery is what gave me the freedom I had thought I would lose.

Growing up I was very active in different sports and activities. I enjoyed going outside every chance I could and loved the opportunity to help others. I loved spending time with my family, I worked hard in school, and knew what I wanted to achieve. I eventually found running, which led me to a scholarship to Ann Arbor, Michigan. From there I went on to Windsor to get my bachelor of education.

In my final semester of teachers college covid-19 hit and my world, along with everyone's, was shifted.

During this time I began to reach out for help for issues I had faced for a while, that seemed to be getting worse. I was struggling with anxiety, and an eating disorder I had since high school.

I remember sitting in the chair of my apartment across from my computer. The psychiatrist on one end, and me on the other. I remember the words slipping out of my mouth, "I think I might have an eating disorder". She told me to submit the application on BANA's website for intake, and from there they would help me. I remember the fear and shame that came with admitting there was something wrong.

Now I understand this was the best thing I could have done for many reasons.

I remember my first interaction at BANA. I was met with kindness and understanding. I was made to feel like I wasn't alone and that what I had suspected as a struggle, was in fact a struggle. This led to me being recommended for one of the first groups to join the WEIOP program.

I remember the difficulty that came with that decision. It would mean I would have to put work on hold, I would have to give up things to get better, and alter the life I had known. I was terrified, and sad, but I was tired from keeping my eating disorder.

I started the program and as time went on I met amazing dietitians, social workers, nurse practitioners, and people that always offered hope. As time went on I also struggled to get to the point where I would reach remission. I remember that is what I wanted, but the reality was beginning to sink in. I would have to go somewhere else to get better, because IOP was over for me.

I remember the shame I felt knowing I hadn't gotten better. I had failed, and ED only made me feel like more of a failure in that moment. I was grateful that while I waited to get into a different program BANA still worked with me to make sure I didn't give up.

I was grateful for all of the time they put into helping me get better, because I was ready to give up on me.

Here is where my story is abounded in blessings. As I waited for the next step, I needed to go for lots of testing. It was eventually discovered that I had Lyme disease. I was put on medication, and after five days I began to notice a huge difference.

All of the work I had put in while in IOP, all of the patience and care I had been shown by the staff just clicked. My mind was clear, and for the first time in over 10 years I didn't hear ED's lies.

My mind was clear, and I felt a new sense of freedom. I went back in for a routine check in while I waited for the next step in my care. I explained that all of my symptoms had gone and that I hadn't heard ED in a while. After three months of the exact same pattern I was given my diagnosis of complete remission. I did not need to go anywhere else for care, and I didn't need to go back to BANA anymore...but I couldn't stay away.

After getting the all clear I wanted to help make a change. I noticed a posting to join the board of directors at BANA and I knew this was a way to help. I submitted my application and was approved to join. I can see as someone who has gone through the different steps of getting care for an eating disorder, that these types of programs need to be encouraged and expanded.

There are a higher number of people in Ontario with an eating disorder than there are spaces in recovery programs.

This is the unfortunate reality, and is something I want to help make a change in. I may only be one person, but now I get to sit on the board with so many people who are passionate about helping an amazing organization.

Now I get to hear about the amazing things BANA is doing to support the growth of their staff, programs, and outreach. I get to be a part of sharing in the interest of what is happening behind the scenes. Everyone at BANA genuinely cares that the people who walk through the door get better and get the right help! If you are in the program now, know that you are cared for by the staff and the board.

I want to thank everyone who helped me to get to where I am today. I am grateful to all of the staff at BANA that always made sure the best decisions for me were made, even when they might not have been what I wanted to hear. Thank you to my family and friends that encouraged me in my lows, celebrated my wins with me, and listened to me and heard me.

If I had never sat across the table from the clinical intake specialist, I would have never sat across the table from the amazing team at BANA. If I had never sat across the table from the amazing team at BANA, I would have never sat across the table from my doctor who told me I had Lyme disease.

If I had of never sat across the table from my doctor, I would have never been able to make it to the other side of the table.

Now I get to sit on the other side of the table, and advocate for those who are in the same chair I was in.

If you are struggling with an eating disorder I want you to know that you are not alone. I remember what it felt like, but my advice is reach out to BANA.

I encourage you to keep fighting. Find people that will fight for you, and with you when you get tired. Losing ED may sound like one of the scariest things possible, but I promise you it only makes life more interesting. You are so much more than ED, and ED doesn't deserve to rule your mind!



Stephanie is a member of the board of directors at BANA. She is passionate about bringing awareness to mental health and ensuring that others feel like they are heard. She uses music to share her story, as well as poetry. She has published two poetry books, and recently released her first song titled "Own Your Story", which she wrote while in the WEIOP program at BANA.

In her spare time she is passionate about teaching and working towards making a change in different areas of the community. She just recently completed her masters of Education and was inducted into the hall of fame at Concordia University Ann Arbor for her running career.

**YOUR VOICE
MATTERS**

WOW!

DID YOU KNOW?

It is estimated that 2.7 million Canadians suffer from eating disorders with the second highest mortality rate of any mental illness.

The risk is most pronounced among females aged 15-24, and this issue has been heightened since the COVID-19 pandemic. If not treated early, eating disorders persist into adulthood.

Anorexia Nervosa (AN) is one of the deadliest psychiatric eating disorders. Among the deaths of individuals with AN, an estimated 1 in 5 were the result of suicide.

In Canada, it is estimated that approximately 1000 to 1500 individuals die from AN or Bulimia Nervosa each year. This is not considering other eating disorders, or deaths due to secondary complications of an eating disorder.

YOUR VOICE MATTERS! BY ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE AT EVERY LEVEL - FROM YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY TO NATIONAL POLICY - YOU HAVE THE POWER TO MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF THOSE AFFECTED BY EATING DISORDERS.

WAYS TO ADVOCATE

Speak Out, Act Now:

Advocate for better eating disorder resources

Reach out to Ontario Health, your local MPs, MPPs, or Ministers for support, advocacy material and relevant calls to action.

Join and cultivate connection

Engage with a supportive community like BANA, CMHA, The Looking Glass Foundation, NEDIC, etc

Take care of yourself

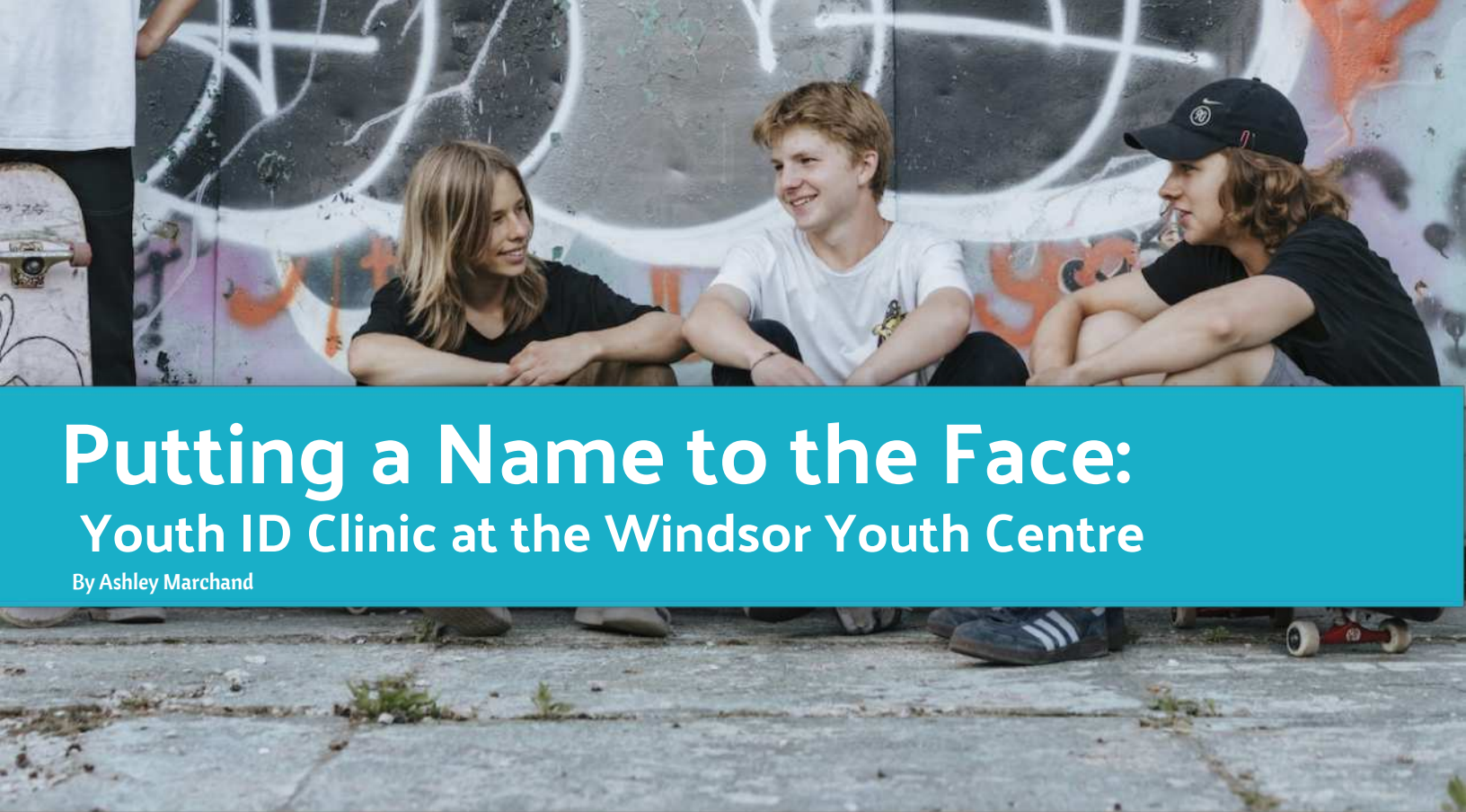
Prioritize self care and seek support when needed.
Connect with Local, Regional & Provincial Advocacy Organizations
Reach out to groups like NEDIC, NIED, CMHA, FEAST
... they are here for you!

Check out BANA's NEW Website Resources

BANA has partnered with the University of Windsor's Law Program and Pro-Bono Student Canada to develop free advocacy tools for you

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT

WWW.BANA.CA/ADVOCACY



Putting a Name to the Face: Youth ID Clinic at the Windsor Youth Centre

By Ashley Marchand

Have you ever tried to rent an apartment, apply for a job or buy a car?

What seems like normal steps for every growing teen or young adult, requires one common item; they all need identification.

Without this necessary documentation, you may find yourself at a standstill not sure what to do or where to start to resolve the issue.

For the at-risk and homeless youth we serve at the Windsor Youth Centre (WYC), a program of the Downtown Mission of Windsor, identification becomes another barrier they must overcome to move forward in bettering their lives. Many of our young people have either lost or had their identification stolen and are not sure where to begin to regain these documents.

To help overcome this barrier, the Windsor Youth Centre has partnered with Pro Bono Students Canada (PBSC) Windsor Chapter over the past couple of years to offer a Youth ID Clinic. The Clinic is available for youth age 16-29 looking for help applying for identification and in some cases cover associated costs.

The clinic primarily focuses on replacing birth certificates as this is the most important document needed when applying for other forms of identification, such as a health or photo card. The clinic can also assist with applications for other forms of identification including passports.

Our team of student lawyers, WYC staff and a voluntary supervising lawyer are present on-site to help complete the application process and write letters of support for those unable to find a valid guarantor.

Youth do not have to have been born in Ontario to be eligible for a replacement birth certificate. We can support residents born anywhere in Canada and the United States of America.

The Youth ID Clinic runs once a month from October until March to align with the University of Windsor's school schedule. There are no eligibility requirements to access the clinic aside from age. Clients are served on a first come, first served basis to allow the opportunity to serve more young people in need.

The Youth ID Clinic has made a tremendous difference for youth at-risk of or currently experiencing homelessness in beginning to break down barriers. Obtaining a new birth certificate has provided them with the opportunity to secure housing, find employment, seek government assistance and so much more.

If you or someone you know is in need of assistance and could benefit from our Youth ID Clinic, please contact us at 226-674-0006 or follow us on Facebook or Instagram for more information about our next clinic.



Ashley is a graduate of St. Clair College's Child and Youth Worker program with over 10 years of experience in the non-profit and homeless sector. As the Manager of Youth Services at the Windsor Youth Centre, a program of the Downtown Mission, Ashley has a passion for helping vulnerable youth overcome barriers to basic and immediate needs with a focus on housing rights.



I Don't See a Quitter ... I see YOU!

By Danny Gautama

There is a saying "Don't quit before the miracle happens."

This is so true. Some people throw in the towel, forfeit, and give up just when the miracle is not so far away. Quitting destroys those chances of grasping that miracle. You do not want to end up with "What if I could have done it? ... Do you?"

Let's be real for a moment ... nobody is saying life is easy. You and I both know that it can be pretty tough; but life has to have balance. We need a little bit of challenge to help us become stronger, overcome obstacles and adversity, so we can improve and evolve as human beings. Without challenges, life can be boring and average.

You have to surpass that average and challenge yourself to do great things. Even if you are going through the worst, you have to keep going. That is the measure of a person's strength.

So, what am I talking about?

Let's not forget February 5th, 2017. The New England Patriots were down 28-3 against the Atlanta Falcons in the second quarter of the Super bowl. Did they quit? Did they say we have no chance? Did they put in less effort? The answer to those questions ... NO!

They believed that they still had 2 more quarters to go and that miracles are possible. So, what did TOM BRADY and his team do? They scored 31 unanswered points from the 3rd quarter all the way through overtime to win the Super bowl 34-28, making it the greatest comeback in football history and Tom Brady's amazing and remarkable career. For me, this is by far one of the greatest examples to NEVER QUIT.

"I think sometimes in life the biggest challenges end up being the best thing that happen in your life." -Tom Brady

When you don't quit, your chances of winning and achieving anything you want are greater than if you just walk away. When you start something, plan to finish it, even if you just started.

Reward yourself for any accomplishments. If you are in the middle of it all, just know that you're doing great and you're half way there. You are in the zone and you are not too far away now.

Being known as person who never stops trying says a lot about you. It is an admirable and courageous trait to have. Every step is like earning a badge. Every journey is a testament to your potential and the great talents that you possess.

Just because sometimes you don't see the reward, does not mean it doesn't exist or can't come to fruition. Of course it does and of course it can.

If you are feeling tired, take a break. Do some meditation, read an inspirational book, do a hobby you enjoy, or yoga to ease your tension. Then get back in the game and continue. Just like Brady did.

I believe you are unbeatable and I am telling you from personal experiences, the stronger you become the more you will be able to adapt to the pressure and struggle you face.

If life gets tough on me, I look at my great heroes like John Cena. A man who has overcome so much adversity, and yet he rose above, never quit, and never stopped being himself. That is my motivation to succeed in anything I do and that is why I never quit. I crave challenges and I love working hard. My competition is myself and becoming my best by the day.

There is a reason you started on this journey. So, don't quit. Do not listen to the naysayers who say it can't be done. Anything is possible if you believe in yourself. If you feel you can do the impossible, then do it. Accept the challenge and do it. Anything that is valuable to you must be earned.

Being tenacious and having perseverance is always better than talent. Talent has its advantages, but talent alone can't reach you very far without the dedication and drive that come with it.

Remember this, the greater and harder your challenge is, the greater your victory will be. In the end, there is a lot of pride that comes with it knowing that you actually went through it and you made it.

Wow! What a great feeling that feels like just thinking about it. So, my dear friend, are you ready for this battle?

The world is full of challenges and I know you are ready...
...DON'T YOU QUIT.

Sincerely, *Danny Gautama*



Danny Gautama is an inspirational writer who writes for mental health organizations, CEOs, hospitals and police officers in Windsor.

In addition to helping many on social media, Danny is a blogger for "BizX magazine" and his quotes are published monthly inside their magazine titled "Motivational quotes with Danny."

Danny is also a 2-time award recipient from The LoveMakers Foundation for spreading love and kindness and he was awarded a "Mighty Leader" Badge for helping those struggling with mental health.

You can reach him by email at dannygautamawellness@gmail.com



Eat, Drink, Enjoy



The Essential Role of Food in Cultural Identity

Lebanese cuisine stands out for its rich diversity and wide-ranging flavours, which serve as a reflection of our heritage and history. Food acts as a powerful connector, bringing family and friends together to celebrate and demonstrate hospitality, serving as a unifying force.

Growing up, whenever my parents and grandparents welcomed friends and family into their homes, there was always an abundance of food to share. These social gatherings provided the perfect opportunity to gather around the dinner table and nurture a sense of togetherness. It's a tradition I've carried on with my own friends, using food to mark important moments in our lives.

The significance of food in our culture extends back thousands of years, even to ancient times. Despite countless cultural influences from civilizations that have held power over us, we have firmly maintained our deeply rooted culinary traditions.

Lebanon's geographic location and favourable climate offer a wealth of fresh ingredients. Our coastline along the Mediterranean Sea provides a bounty of seafood, while our fertile land yields a variety of native grains, fruits, and vegetables. Additionally, our mountainous terrain provides ideal conditions for raising livestock and producing high-quality meat and dairy products. Moreover, many families, both within and outside Lebanon's borders, cherish the value of cultivating their own food, passing down the tradition of farming, and maintaining bountiful gardens through generations.

When my father immigrated to Canada from Lebanon at the age of 16, the transition to a new country was challenging. However, preserving cultural dishes helped ease this transition, allowing him and his family to maintain a sense of community. In fact, my father and his brother opened a restaurant to share their love for food and cooking with their new community.

Sharing traditional dishes with both new and old loved ones serves as a tangible link to the past, connecting us to our roots while forging new bonds with others. These dishes embody continuity across generations, becoming part of shared experiences and memories, strengthening familial ties and fostering a sense of belonging.

Growing up, some of my fondest memories revolve around watching my father and grandmother cook in the kitchen. I absorbed invaluable lessons on which ingredients paired best together, the best way to cut veggies, how to pick the best fruit, and the transformative power of bringing people together through food.

I've created a collection of recipes that I learned from them, which I hope to one day pass on to my own children. But before that, I'd love to share them with you.

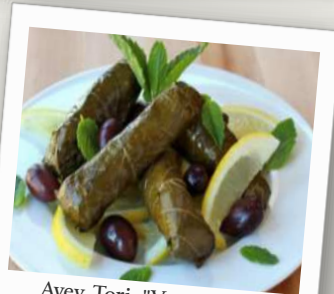
I invite you to check out the next few pages.

- Karissa Jeha



Stuffed grape leaves

100 medium grape vine leaves, stems removed
2 lbs. coarsely ground lamb or beef, raw
1 cup rice, washed and drained, uncooked
1 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. pepper
1/2 tsp. allspice
juice of 2 lemons
water
1/4 cup butter, cut into small slices
2 tsp. salt
1 clove garlic, chopped (optional)
lamb or beef bones (optional)



Avey, Tori. "Vegetarian Stuffed Grape Leaves." Tori Avey. 2022. toriavey.com/vegetarian-stuffed-grape-leaves/ Accessed 13 May 2024

Pour hot water over washed leaves to soften. Drain well and squeeze out excess water.

Combine meat, rice, 1 tsp. salt, seasonings and juice of one lemon. Place leaves, vein side up, on a flat surface.

Place 1 Tbsp. meat and rice mixture at stem end of each leaf and spread across. Fold end of leaf over filling, then fold both sides inward, and roll into shape of a small cigar.

Continue rolling leaves in this fashion until all meat mixture is used. Line bottom of deep pot with several remaining or broken leaves, adding bones if used.

Pack stuffed leaves tightly in layers, alternating direction of each row, and covering last row with extra leaves.

Add salt and butter, and, if desired, add garlic. Add water to completely cover rolls.

Place an inverted dish on top of rolled leaves to hold in place. Cover and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low and cook for 30 - 35 minutes. Carefully drain any remaining liquid. Add remaining lemon juice and let rest, covered, for 5 minutes.

Serve with yogurt (labneh) and fresh salad.
serves 8 - 10
can be prepared ahead
may freeze

Feuilles de vigne farcies

100 feuilles de vigne moyennes, sans tiges
2 livres d'agneau ou de bœuf haché, cru
1 tasse de riz, lavé et égoutté, cru
1 cuillère à thé de sel
1/4 de cuillère à thé de poivre
1/2 cuillère à thé de piment de la Jamaïque moulu
jus de 2 citrons
eau
1/4 de tasse de beurre, coupé en petites tranches
2 cuillères à café de sel
1 gousse d'ail hachée (facultatif)
os d'agneau ou de bœuf (facultatif)

Verser de l'eau chaude sur les feuilles lavées pour les ramollir. Bien égoutter et enlever l'excédent d'eau.

Mélanger la viande, le riz, 1 cuillère à café de sel, les assaisonnements et le jus d'un citron.

Placer les feuilles, côté veine vers le haut, sur une surface plane. Placer 1 cuillère à soupe de mélange de viande et de riz à la base de chaque feuille et l'étaler sur toute la surface. Replier l'extrémité de la feuille sur la garniture, puis replier les deux côtés vers l'intérieur et rouler en forme de petit cigare.

Continuer à rouler les feuilles de cette manière jusqu'à ce que tout le mélange de viande soit utilisé.

Tapisser le fond d'une marmite profonde avec plusieurs feuilles restantes ou brisées, en ajoutant les os s'il y en a.

Tasser les feuilles farcies en couches serrées, en alternant le sens de chaque rangée et en couvrant la dernière rangée avec des feuilles supplémentaires.

Ajouter le sel et le beurre et, si désiré, l'ail. Ajouter de l'eau pour couvrir complètement les rouleaux.

Placer un plat inversé sur les feuilles roulées pour les maintenir en place. Couvrir et porter à ébullition. Réduire le feu à doux et laisser cuire pendant 30 à 35 minutes.

Égoutter soigneusement le liquide restant. Ajouter le reste du jus de citron et laisser reposer à couvert pendant 5 minutes. Servir avec du yaourt (labneh) et une salade.

Pour 8 à 10 personnes
peut être préparé à l'avance
peut être congelé



Photo Credit: Quang Nguyen Vinh

Fattoush Salad

- 1.5 whole wheat pita bread rounds**
- 1 bunch parsley, chopped**
- 2 cups cucumber sliced and halved**
- 2 large red tomatoes, chopped**
- 1 small head of lettuce**
- 2 cups canned chickpeas, rinsed.**
- 1/4 tsp. garlic powder**
- 1/2 tsp. salt**
- 1/4 tsp. pepper**
- 1 tsp. dried mint**
- 1 tbsp. za'atar spice**
- 2 tbsp. lime juice**
- 1/2 cup olive oil**

Place bread on broiler rack.

Broil until golden brown.

Cool. Break into bite-size pieces.

Set aside

Place chopped vegetables and bread in a large bowl.

To make dressing, combine garlic, salt, pepper, mint, za'atar, lime, and oil.

Mix well

Add dressing to vegetables or on the side if desired.

Serve



Marzia. "Lebanese Fattoush Salad." Little Spice Jar. 2022. littlespicejar.com/lebanese-fattoush-salad/. Accessed 13 May 2024.

Salade Fattoush

- 1.5 pain pita de blé entier
- 1 bouquet de persil, haché
- 2 tasses de concombre tranché et coupé en deux
- 2 grosses tomates rouges, coupées en morceaux
- 1 petite tête de laitue
- 2 tasses de pois chiches en conserve, rincés.
- 1/4 de cuillère à thé d'ail en poudre
- 1/2 cuillère à thé de sel
- 1/4 de cuillère à thé de poivre
- 1 cuillère à thé de menthe séchée
- 1 cuillère à soupe d'épices za'atar
- 2 cuillères à soupe de jus de citron vert
- 1/2 tasse d'huile d'olive

Placer le pain dans le four. Griller jusqu'à ce qu'il soit doré. Laisser refroidir. Casser en morceaux de la taille d'une bouchée.

Mettre de côté

Placer les légumes coupés et le pain dans un grand bol.

Pour préparer la vinaigrette, mélanger l'ail, le sel, le poivre, la menthe, le za'atar, le citron vert et l'huile. Bien mélanger

Ajouter la vinaigrette aux légumes ou à côté si désiré.

Servir



My name is Karissa Jeha. I am a nutrition student from the University of Ottawa. I was born and raised in Ottawa, Ontario, but I am of Lebanese descent. My heritage has allowed me to explore the world of flavour and culinary traditions, and my studies have given me the opportunity to share it with others.

Je m'appelle Karissa Jeha. Je suis étudiante en nutrition à l'université d'Ottawa. Je suis d'origine libanaise, par contre, je suis née et j'ai grandi à Ottawa, en Ontario. Mes descendants m'ont permis d'explorer le monde de saveurs et des traditions culinaires et mes études me permettent de partager mes connaissances dans diverse cadres.



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"Believe you can
and you're
halfway there."

— Theodore Roosevelt



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