

A message from Dr. Janet Morrison



In support of your wellness

October 23, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

As we near the mid-way point of the Fall term, I'm mindful of the significant workload and stress levels we're all bearing. As we manage the adverse health effects of less daylight, many of us are working feverishly to re-invent operations and processes while simultaneously delivering them to learners whose traditional conception of post-secondary education has been upended.

Against that backdrop – and in the face of a pandemic that is unrelenting - it's imperative that each of us make self-care a priority. This must include setting aside time to focus on mental, emotional and physical wellness. I'll start. Despite my best intention to stick to routine and send this email out on Thursday this week, I decided late yesterday to be flexible and trust that you'd permit me this small allowance.

In today's email, I'd like to cover:

- Trust and Belonging
- Mindset and Values
- Small Steps

Trust and Belonging

Juggling personal and professional demands, particularly in the face of the pandemic, is taxing. Supporting each other through this unprecedented time demands empathy, respect and trust. We trust that you are a committed and responsible member of the Sheridan community and respect your need to make personal decisions that support holistic wellness. My expectation is that every supervisor is facilitating conversations to understand their colleagues' personal circumstances, and inform strategies for making reasonable accommodations. Our First Principles espouse empathy, inclusiveness, awareness, fairness, and awareness of the consequences of our actions. These attributes are fundamental to building and sustaining a sense of belonging, which fuels wellbeing.

Mindset and Values

Like many of you, I love my work because I believe that higher education is transformational; it also satisfies my personal thirst for learning and reflection. What I do informs my most important roles as partner, parent, and daughter.

Research conducted earlier this summer showed that the values associated with family, inter-personal relationships, and self-sufficiency (including simplicity, honesty) became more important in the face of the pandemic. Audiences – including Generation Z – are moving away from materialism and self-centered ambition toward thrift/frugality and duty. A values shift of this magnitude hasn't been seen since the Great Depression.

Arthur Brooks, a professor of the practice of public leadership at the Harvard Kennedy School, writes frequently on the topic of meaning and happiness. His writing in The Atlantic argues that the true sources of happiness are faith, family and friendships and work. He writes that, "anything that substitutes for close human relationships in your life is a bad trade."

Clearly, the pandemic is affecting us deeply. In the face of this massive disruption, I think it's worth remembering what matters most.

Small Steps

While none of the initiatives below provide a one-stop solution, I encourage you to take advantage of these free resources to support your well-being:

- The employee and family assistance plan is available 24/7 by calling 1-844-880-9142 or visiting workhealthlife.com
- Sheridan employees can register for the mindfulness app Headspace for free by visiting [here](#)
- AbilitiCBT is an internet-based cognitive behavioral therapy program to address anxiety symptoms related to the uniquely challenging aspects of pandemics: uncertainty, isolation, caring for family and community members, information overload and stress management. [Sign up here](#).
- WellCan offers free well-being resources to help Canadians develop coping strategies and build resilience. Explore the offering [here](#).
- Togetherall is an online, peer-to-peer support community for mental health. [Join here](#).
- Teaching faculty have access to a Teach Well module on Thriving Online, which encompasses a wellness component. [Visit here](#).

Without question, these are highly complex and challenging times. Thank you for all that you continue to do for Sheridan and our learners. We stated at the outset of the pandemic that we'd navigate it together, with kindness. The spirit and intentionality that you continue to demonstrate remains my source of energy, hope and optimism.

Warmly,

Janet Morrison, PhD
President and Vice Chancellor

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