

Making Them Whole: International Students, Mental Health and Membership

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Dr. Daniel To

&

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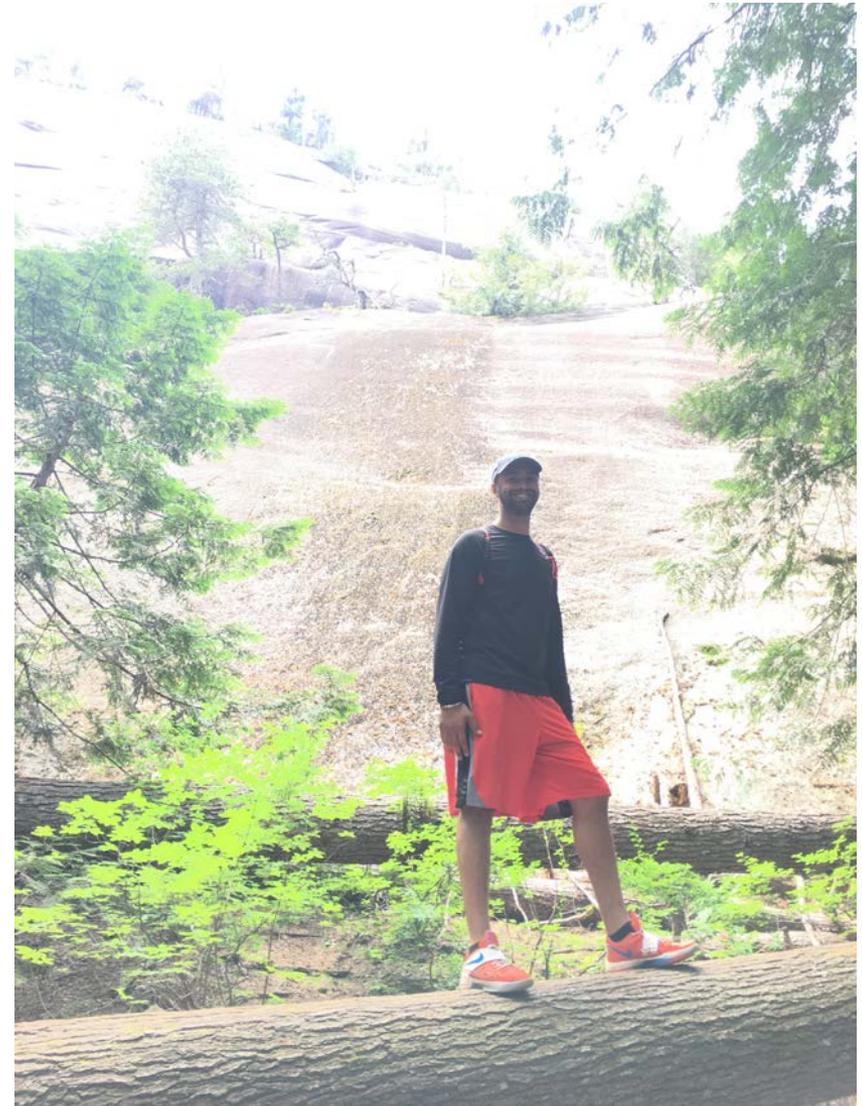
#betheonewhobelieves

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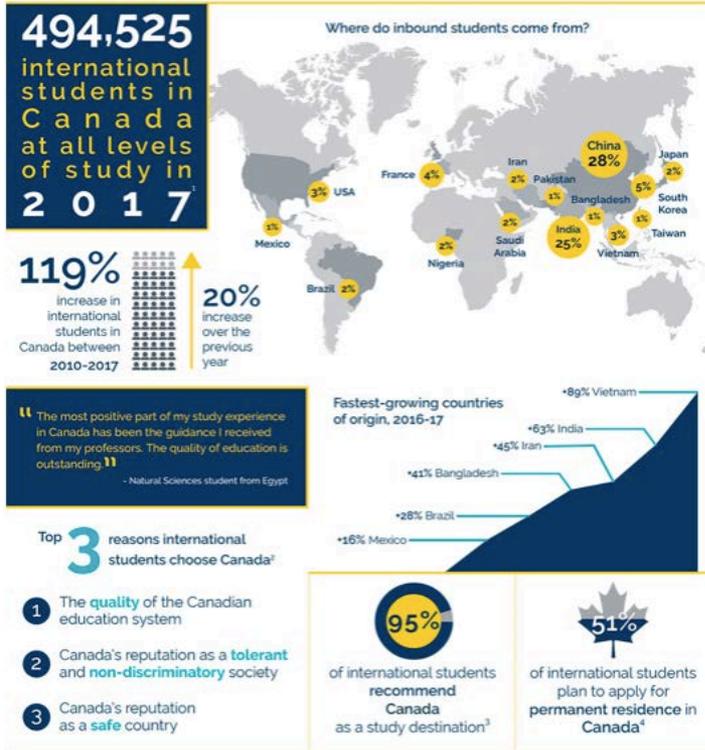
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Why are we here?

Canada's Performance and Potential in International Education International Students in Canada 2018



Why are they here



What we sometimes forget

- These are **kids**
- These are kids **who have left home**
- These are kids who have left home, **and come to a country they barely know**
- These are kids, who have left home, come to a country they barely know, **don't speak the language (for the most part)**
- These are kids, who have left home, come to a country they barely know, don't speak the language and....

What we
sometimes forget

Are all alone...

What we sometimes forget

Even with

- A great home stay
- A welcoming school district
- A supportive school
- A fantastic agent/custodian
- Kids will still sometimes feel

What we
sometimes forget

All alone...

And this loneliness

- Lower Self Esteem
- Depression
- Unhealthy social connections
- Unhealthy eating habits
- Mood changes
- Anxiety



Mental Health Challenges

Mental Health Issues

- Silent
- Intense
- Persist over a long period of time
- Different from physical ailments
- Confused for physical ailments
- Issues can compound
- Example: Ear Ache vs. Psych Ache

Dr. Ian Manion, Ph.D, Canadian Psychiatric
Institute for Mental Health Research



"Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. [More specifically] mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community" (World Health Organization)

Maslow's Hierarchy Of Needs



Unique Stressors Faced By International Students

- Stress (i.e. personal, school)
- Moving to new country
- Moving away from support network of family and friends
- Language Barriers
- Unfamiliar culture
- Adjusting to an entirely new culture
- Unrealistic Expectations



Warning Signs

- Intense feelings of Hopelessness and Helplessness
- Mood Swings
- Sad and Lonely for an extended period of time
- Low Energy for an extended period of time
- Changes in Appearance, Eating, Appetite
- Using or excessively using Alcohol or Tobacco or other Drugs
- Hearing or Seeing Things
- Wanting to harm self or other



Why Don't Students Get Support?

- Awareness of Supports
- Myths



What Can You Do?

- Checking In
- Warning Signs
- Educate About Misconceptions
- Connect with Supports
- If there is a crisis, contact crisis line
 - Kids Help Phone (1-800-668-6868)
 - START (1-844-782-7811)
 - Crisis Centre (1-800-784-2433)
 - If immediate risk/danger call 9-1-1



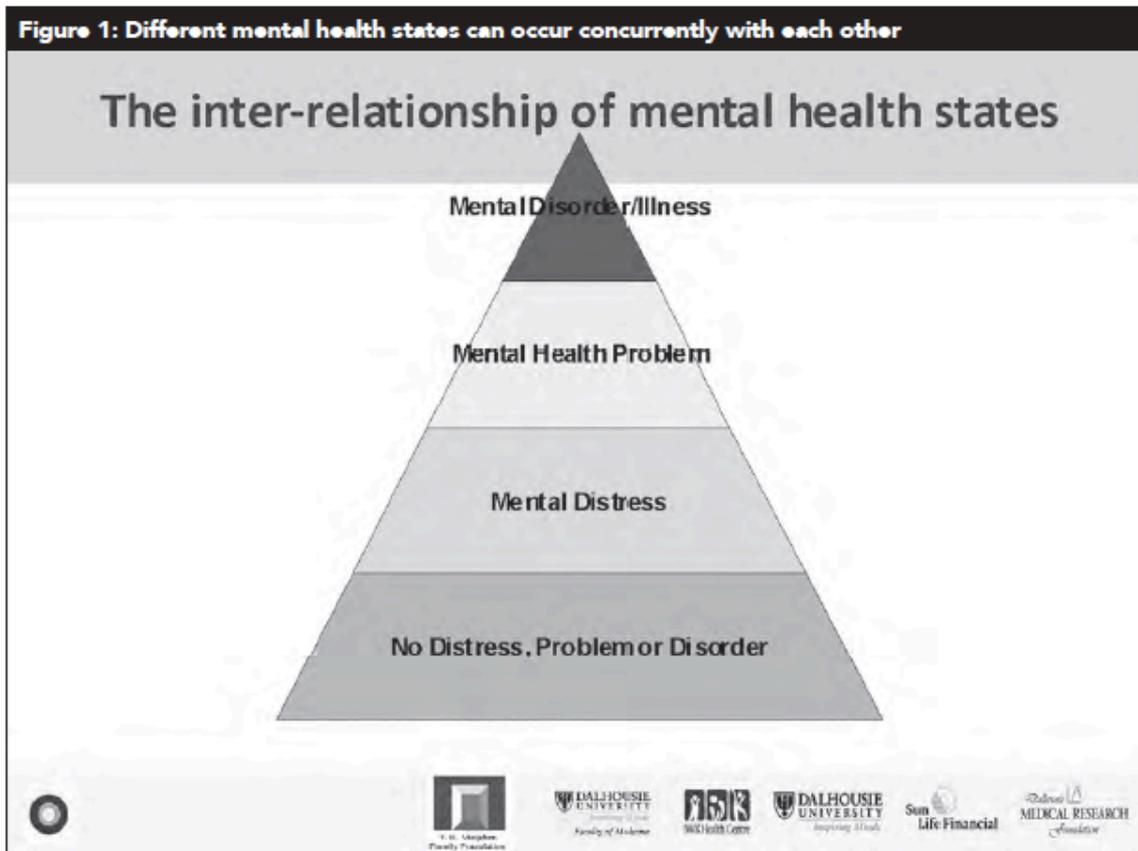
Wait a minute, how did you get there?

- Ages 14-17 is when anxiety hits the most in people
- Often mental health issues go unnoticed – come out as physical symptoms, and doctor gives good bill of health when finds no physical issues
- We socialize our kids (and therefore inadvertently some of our international kids to “suck it up” because it’s just a teenage “phase”).
- Immigrants have a higher percentage of health and mental health problems after being in Canada over a 7 year period
- Part of the reason for this is that immigrants don’t understand our medical system.
- Kids separated from at least 1 parent for more than a year, 300% increased chance of developing psychosis.
- If kid is moved into foster care – more than 300% chance of developing psychosis

Dr. Ian Manion

Dr. Kwame McKenzie, Wellesley Institute

Wait a minute,
how did you
get there?

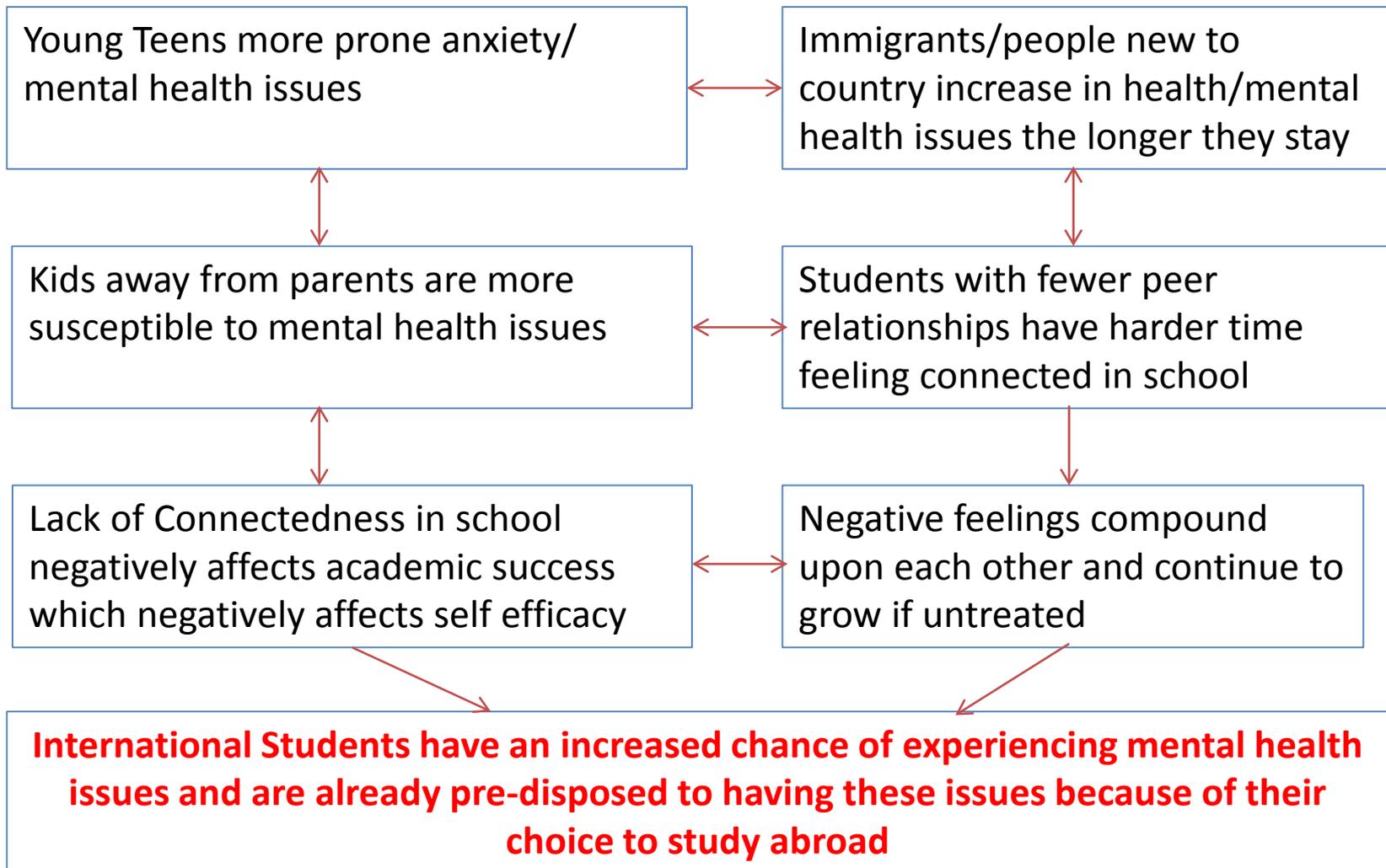


Dr. Stan Kutcher

Wait a minute, how did you get there?

- Students who have very few peer relationships have a decreased chance of experiencing a feeling of connectedness affecting their self-efficacy and academic success
- At the age when many students come over, they are also at the crucial age where they are transferring their feeling of membership (belonging) from family to social networks.
- Academic success is affected negatively when students do not feel a sense of membership within a school system.
- Engagement in school and social activities within a school is limited if students do not feel a sense of membership.
- Lack of Academic success and engagement and, an overall lack of feeling of membership leads to lower self-efficacy (self esteem)

Let's Connect The Dots



The Solution?

Don't Change your Practice

Change your Perspective!

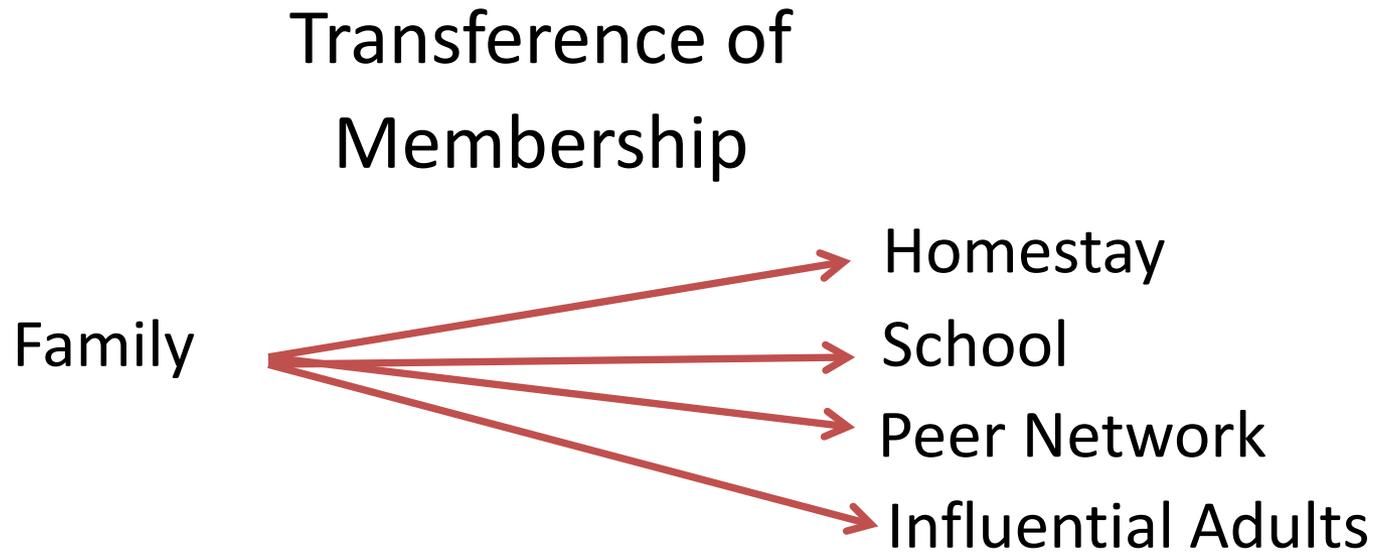
Alas...

Without membership, the engagement in any sort of learning is temporary, as the social constructs that surround membership, which is crucially important to student success, would be lacking.

But what is the...



The Key is



Transferring and Creating Sense of Membership

1. Help student stay connected to their home family
2. The Homestay needs to build a relationship with the student's home family to build the transference of trust into the new home (Gordon Neufeld)
3. The Homestay family and Custodian need to encourage the student to take membership in the school community

4. The School needs to give International Student opportunities for true membership.
5. The School needs to set up purposeful peer groups/ membership opportunities for International Students.
6. International Students need trusted adults in their lives AND maintain a connection with their families at home.

Summary and Conclusion

1. International Students, by virtue of their very nature – are **more prone** to mental health issues: in particular anxiety and psychosis
2. We need to be **intentional and thoughtful** in how we work with international students in order to give them a chance at increased self-efficacy and academic success.
3. People working with International Students can take **purposeful steps** to lessen mental health issues in this population through setting up and maintaining specific relationships with them.
4. We need to **empower them** to seek out opportunities to seek out avenues for creating and increasing their sense of membership in their new community.

Additional Resources

As chosen by my District Counsellor Tajinder Rai

- 5 Unique Mental Health Stressors Faced by International Students
- <https://www.eaie.org/blog/5-mental-health-stressors-international-students.html>
- Mental Health: What it Means for International Students and How you can help
- <https://blog.ingleinternational.com/mental-health-what-it-means-for-international-students-and-how-you-can-help/>
- Ontario Mental Health – Promoting Mental Health Awareness and Support for International Students
- <http://ontario.cmha.ca/news/promoting-mental-health-awareness-and-support-for-international-students/>

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Slides and Resources at:

<https://www.surreyschools.ca/schools/EducationServices/NewsEvents/Newsletters/Pages/default.aspx>