

**Learning to Fill My Own Shoes:
My Mental Health Journey in Trying to be
Everything for Everyone**

Society, today, places value on “authenticity” and beautifies the struggle to find one’s “authentic self”. What the hell does that even mean? Do I have to choose only one version of myself that is true? Does that mean all the other versions of me aren’t valuable or real? I don’t buy it!

I don’t know about you, but I change roles like others change shoes. In fact, I change shoes so often that I don’t even know which pairs belong to me anymore! Mom shoes, professional shoes, sporty shoes, sexy shoes, my proverbial closet is overflowing. I often feel as if I am wobbling unsteadily in a “real woman’s” heels, as I try to keep up with the façade of perfection society demands. I smile demurely, while I am falling apart on the inside. It’s exhausting!

In this emotional talk, I will share humorous and cringe-worthy stories about my own journey to find my “authentic self”. Who are you without all of the roles that you play? Who are you, when you step away from everyone who needs you, and stand alone? Trying to please and support everyone we love can take a toll on our sense of identity and our mental health. I know because I’ve been there.

This presentation is meant to spark a dialogue among women and caretakers. We need to take care of ourselves before we can take care of others. We need to spend time chasing our own dreams and living a fulfilled life, but in order to do that, we need to define what that life looks like. So, let’s strip away society’s need for perfection and own our struggles. Let’s walk away from our roles and look inward, searching for what brings us joy. Let’s learn to stand tall and proud in our own shoes.

Learning outcomes:

- Identify your core values and create a vision for *who* you want to be and the life you want to live.
- Set boundaries to protect your mental health.
- Develop a loving relationship with yourself

My Resilient Self: Being Okay with Not Being Okay

How many of you grew up with “The Game Face”? If you have parents who grew up in the 1950’s, you were most likely raised to suck it up, put on a stiff upper lip and essentially ignore all emotions that are ugly and uncomfortable. Sound familiar?

Society has perpetuated the necessity of The Game Face, placing incredible emphasis on happiness, gratitude and being “woke”. Social media projects images of perfect families, perfect relationships, perfect vacations. It’s hard not to be sucked into the vortex of social comparison. However, I am not perfect. In fact, I am far from it and I began to question if there was something wrong with me. Why is everyone else so happy, while I am a hot mess?

More and more people are starting to admit the pressure they feel to be constantly happy and live a seemingly perfect life. The result of this is that many of us are struggling to form meaningful, honest connections with others. After all, how can we be honest if we are all working to keep up the charade?

It’s time to remove the veil and have some real talk about life, relationships, and mental health. In this presentation, I will share my own journey in learning to cope with anxiety, stress and depression. I am willing to stand in a crowded room and own the fact that, sometimes, I am not okay, but that does not make me weak. Without fear, there is no bravery. Without struggle, there is no resilience. My challenges make me stronger, better. Yours can too.

Learning outcomes:

- Become aware of your self-talk and understand the power of our inner whispering
- Understand the importance of self-care and self-forgiveness
- Develop a healthy intelligence towards all emotions

Raising Resilient Children/Teens

The world is changing. Our pace is quickening. Our lives can be stressful, chaotic and overwhelming. Like it or not, these struggles are seeping into the psyches of our children. Childhood anxiety is on the rise, rocketing really. We all want to raise happy, confident children, yet this seems to be getting harder.

Parents are desperately seeking ways not only to support their children, but to cope with their own stress and feelings of failure. How many times have you asked yourself, “Am I doing enough? Am *I* enough?”

In this presentation, I will help you focus your attention on practical things we can implement into our daily lives, helping increase our own resilience and that of our children. You are already doing so many wonderful things and are undoubtedly raising fabulous children. My job is simply to help you remember what is already working and to broaden your horizons to some new ideas.

While this presentation is based in sound and current research on social emotional development, I will be the very first person in the room to admit my own parenting mistakes, to share my family’s struggles and to explore the lessons we have learned along the way.

Learning outcomes:

- Define resilience and understand the role of relationships
- Explore ideas to develop meaningful connection with our children
- Discuss the implications of fear of failure and identify factors which cultivate an environment that is safe to take risks
- (For teens) Redefine our role as parents as our children acquire freedom and responsibility

Raising Emotionally Resilient Children: Exploring Big Feelings

**This presentation can be done in tandem with the above mentioned or as a stand alone seminar*

As a teacher, I have heard countless colleagues and parents comment on our children's lack of emotional intelligence. They cannot seem to control their negative reactions in a socially appropriate way, and they only identify with 3 feeling words – happy, mad or sad. Could it be that we are raising a generation of emotionally stunted children?

To answer this question, I suggest that we first look at ourselves. We are all products of how we were raised – of our parents and of the culture we were born into. What implicit messages are we sending our children regarding emotions?

As a society, anxiety and depression are on the rise, even in children. I suggest that one of our stumbling blocks is the value that we place on happiness and our tendency to ignore uncomfortable emotions. Have we actually taught our children to value *all* of their feelings? Are we modelling positive coping mechanisms?

In this presentation, I will explore all of these questions with you and will provide practical tips that can be used at home (or at school) to increase our children's emotional intelligence and self-regulation. I hope you walk away with, not only a theoretical understanding of a child's emotional development, but with a pulse on your own emotional biases and a to-do list of tangible strategies that you can incorporate into your daily life.

Learning outcomes:

- Define emotional intelligence and explore our own personal biases towards comfortable and uncomfortable feelings
- Begin to develop an appreciation for all emotions
- Understand that all behaviour has an emotional need attached to it
- Develop strategies to strengthen a child's emotional intelligence
- Develop strategies for children to cope with uncomfortable feelings

