



BROOKLYN'S BOOK BATTLES BULLYING

DPeer relationships often define a student's school experience.

What do you do when a peer relationship goes south? This was the case for one student who turned her experiences into what she hopes can be a resource that could help others.

"I experienced bullying and thought that if I put my experience into a book or just some words to paper it may help someone else," says Brooklyn Doucette who recently completed her Grade 9 year.

Brooklyn wrote her book "Navigating Life" while completing elementary school. In the book she writes about

how to deal with bullying.

"The book uses a lot of metaphors to compare bullying to stages of driving.

Like using fuel is like pumping you up and giving you the confidence to deal with bullies," says Crystal Doucette Brooklyn's mom.

"She received positive feedback from teachers at her elementary school as they saw her come into her own in understanding and overcoming this situation," says Crystal proudly as she describes what the process had done for her daughter.

"It made me proud as a parent to see how far she has come and has developed," says Crystal.

It was a struggle during COVID-19 to get the book published but they were able to get back on track. In all, it took almost a year to complete with help from family and others. Brooklyn describes the book as something for everyone who would like more strategies on dealing with bullying.

"I was really excited, when my family members and friends asked if they could have the book," says Brooklyn. "My Vice Principal cried when she read the book. I knew it was a good cry and people were happy for me."

"Brooklyn is an empathetic and kind young person who is using her own experiences

with social conflict to help others," says Lauren McPhee, a Psychometrist with the DDSB who worked with Brooklyn to overcome of the challenges she encountered.

"She hopes to send the message that students are not alone and that they too can get through difficult times. The analogy she uses in her book is relatable and hopeful," says McPhee.

Since publishing the book Brooklyn moved on to high school and has enjoyed relationships that are more positive and uplifting, but it wasn't the move to high school that changed her current and future relationships. Brooklyn implemented the strategies

she worked on with her counsellors and others to better cope and succeed in managing her relationships.

All students within the DDSB are encouraged to reach out to someone at their school if they are struggling with the experiences of bullying or if it feels like they may be working through a mental health issue. A guidance counsellor, student success teacher, special education teacher or classroom teacher can help. We also have a team of psychological services and social work staff, someone like Lauren McPhee, who can provide professional support, along with mental health and addiction nurses and community-based mental health

workers. Reaching out is easy and confidential, through this form:

<https://forms.ddsb.ca/Mental-Health/School-Based-Mental-Health-Support>

The Durham District School Board (DDSB) is responsible for public education in the rural settings of Uxbridge, Brock and Scugog Townships and the urban settings of Ajax, Whitby, Pickering, and Oshawa. The DDSB employs 10,000 teaching and educational services staff. With 136 elementary and secondary schools and learning centres, the DDSB accommodates more than 76,000 regular day students and thousands more who take advantage of a wide variety of continuing education and adult credit courses.

NEW ALCOHOL GUIDELINES HARD TO SWALLOW

By Sylvain Charlebois

Looks like we all need to drink less alcohol. Last fall, the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA), a national organization that provides information and advice on substance use and addiction, shared recommendations that we should all drink no more than one or two drinks a week. We just learned that these are now Canada's official guidelines.

Since 2011, in Canada, moderate drinking has been defined as up to two standard drinks per day for women and up to three standard drinks per day for men, with no more than 10 standard drinks per week for women and 15 standard drinks per week for men. So, a limit of one or two drinks a week is a complete departure from the public recommendations we had been given before. Furthermore, the CCSA also recommends adding warning labels on bottles, stating that alcohol can cause cancer.

It's unclear whether Canadians would appreciate such labels, but when looking at the scientific literature and the links between alcohol consumption and cancer, the findings in recent years are overwhelming. The evidence that alcohol causes seven types of cancer is now incredibly

strong. Numerous studies from all over the world can easily be found; many of them aren't cited by the CCSA. Some articles claim that current estimates suggest that alcohol-attributable cancers make up 5.8 per cent of all cancer deaths globally.

These studies, coupled with the CCSA's recommendations, will likely be received by many Canadians with great skepticism. After all, we are living longer, and many seniors drink regularly and responsibly without experiencing any health issues.

Alcohol has been around for a very, very long time. Historians claim that fermented beverages existed in ancient Egypt. Some archives also suggest alcohol was drunk by the Chinese over 9,000 years ago. Intuitively, it's hard to understand why anyone would put alcohol in the penalty box, as we did with cigarettes or other such harmful products in our lives. According to multiple studies, other substances and factors can cause cancer. But the risks have now been demonstrated scientifically.

But the CCSA's scientific evaluation is far from perfect. For one, a number of studies still show the benefits of moderate consumption when considering all the causes of mortality



in determining health risks. In other words, drinking may not be the main cause of death, even for a regular consumer of alcohol. These studies are mentioned in the report but barely in passing.

Another of the CCSA's most significant oversights is its evaluation of the social and cultural aspects of drinking. Alcohol is very much part of many celebrations, leisure events, holidays, vacations, end-of-day routines, and

more. The CCSA dismissed all research which looked at the social value of alcohol, believing none of it was worthy of scientific consideration. Perhaps overlooking such an important piece of behavioural science will only make more Canadians unconvinced. This research area requires more attention, and many Canadians would likely concur.

Socializing alcohol doesn't just have its bright side,

though. Undesirable social problems are also obvious, including mental and physical ailments, incidences of abuse, sexual and domestic violence, harassment, and so forth. Alcohol is often part of our society's darker side.

The CCSA's recommendations point to an opportunity for Canadians to have a deeper, better understanding of our relationship with alcohol. We need to be open and honest with ourselves while appreci-

ating the fact that enjoying our favourite alcoholic beverage responsibly, in moderation, remains the most balanced policy.

But there is hope. If we can make chicken meat in the laboratory, we can certainly make synthetic, non-cancer-causing alcohol. In fact, GABA Labs, based in the U.K., has already launched a product called Sentia, which mimics the effects of alcohol, but doesn't cause a hangover or long-term health consequences. Many expect the science to be perfected and commercially available in many outlets within five years. Quite promising.

Still, our beverage industry has done wonders for Canadians and will undoubtedly continue to innovate and offer great products for all to enjoy.

Food science can come to the rescue and help many Canadians lead better, healthier lifestyles. But in the meantime, the CCSA's report is likely a difficult message for Canadians to swallow.

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