

THE MENTAL HEALTH MINUTE

IT'S OK TO NOT BE OK

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF MHPHC

A Letter from the Editors

Dear MHPHC community,

Welcome to the first Mental Health Public Health Connections newsletter of the Fall 2022 semester. Some contributions to this newsletter include a brief introduction to the Fall 2022 E-board, a Halloween-themed Op/Ed, and a creative submission reflecting on mental health.

We hope that you find the content of this edition to be insightful, interesting, and informative. We appreciate your continued support and interest in our organization and encourage you to get involved by reaching out to the member – or members – of our Executive Board that you feel best suits your interest.

The middle of the semester is a cluster of projects, papers, and, some may argue, one-too-many exams. Please be mindful of this for yourself and others; take care of yourself (physically and mentally) and seek support as needed.

As the leaves float to the ground and your favorite flannels find their way to the front of your closet once again, we hope this newsletter refreshes your mind, challenges your viewpoints, and welcomes – or reacquaints – you to our community.

*What's in this
month's issue:*

MENTAL ILLNESS
AND HALLOWEEN

EXPOSURE: BODY

NEW YEAR,
NEW E-BOARD

INHALE...
EXHALE...



Thank you,
Alexis Pinchuk and Ali Rivera
Co-Editors

The Scary Impacts of Mental Health Costumes

PRACTICING MINDFULNESS TO COMBAT STIGMATIZING MENTAL ILLNESS

BY ALEXIS PINCHUK

Once the night falls and the moon rises on Oct. 31, vampires, witches, and zombies will creep and crawl through the streets of Boston. While werewolves and princesses are welcome at your favorite South End bar or lurking on Commonwealth Avenue on Halloween, some costumes need to be left in their Party City packaging.

It is clear that wearing another group's culture as a costume – such as dressing as a Native American or a member of a Mariachi band when one does not identify with these traditions – is a form of cultural appropriation. However, it is important that one does not replace his, her, or their sombrero with another stigmatizing costume, such as a straight jacket.

Mental health costumes further marginalize, dehumanize, and stigmatize a group of individuals who need support. These costumes lead many individuals with mental health issues to feel isolated, ashamed, and more.

Those with mental health issues are not beady-eyed, foaming-at-the-mouth caricatures. They are teachers, parents, and lawyers. They are baristas, friends, and engineers. They are people. “Hobo” and “psycho killer” costumes mock people with mental health issues for being multifaceted human beings who face valid, clinical, and important mental health struggles. As a result of these costumes and the narrative they perpetuate, those with mental health issues are further isolated and less likely to seek support. These stigmatizing and isolating impacts are the only scary thing about costumes depicting mental health.



Exposure

The Mental Health Public Health Connections invites you to share your artistic abilities with the larger community! Art is a form of free expression, and a method of reflection and releasing tension. We wanted to create a space for our members to learn from each other and showcase their hard work.

Our first *Exposure* piece comes from our own Alexis Pinchuk, co-editor of the newsletter.

Body

By: Alexis Pinchuk

I am a body. A vessel of Feeling and Freedom and Love and chains made in the form of veins.	large grin. A body made of a loud voice On mute, cracked knuckles from walls and disputes.
I am a body. I am a roadmap of scars on wrists, tattoo on hip, bloody nose and stubbed toes.	I am a body of stitched back, from the lack of marrow on my right, helping others fight. Bottled with hope and hate,
A body with running feet, long hair, white teeth, and talking eyes.	a body I use as personal bait.
I am a body Stuck in my brain, Using my heartbeat to entertain.	I am a body of Respect, bruises tracing neck, dry tongue, moist lips, catching tears as they drip.
Consumed in thin thighs, thick skin, quiet laugh,	I am a body. A body Owned by you and lived in by me. I am a body.

Alexis's Reflection:

Oftentimes, I find myself fascinated by the idea of learning to love one's body. We were born in this binding of skin and bones. It is all we know. So, why do we tear away at our flesh like the pages of an old book no one reads? It may be cliché to learn how to love oneself, but in a world of social media, fast diet culture, and dating apps, the noise sometimes finds its way into our heads.

As a woman, I find this to be especially frustrating. My mother taught me how to hold my keys, I was not allowed to show my shoulders on hot Florida days in my middle school, and, in many ways, I learned to see the world as a place that demanded my submission. I have never been one to submit. But, in a world where *Roe v. Wade* has been overturned and men yell at me on the street, I find myself loving my body, but hating the external ownership many feel they have over it.

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