



COMMUNITY
CONNECTIONS:

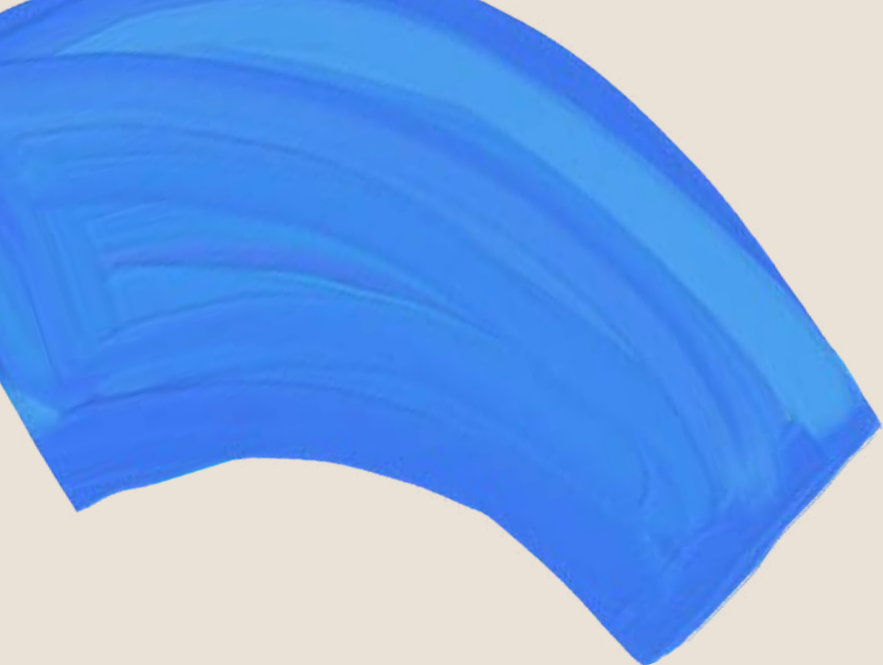
YOUTH PERSPECTIVES

ON MENTAL HEALTH FOR

ENGLISH-SPEAKERS

ACROSS QUÉBEC







CONTENTS



About Y4Y Québec



About Y4Y's Community
Liaisons Program



A Local Boardwalk to Bliss



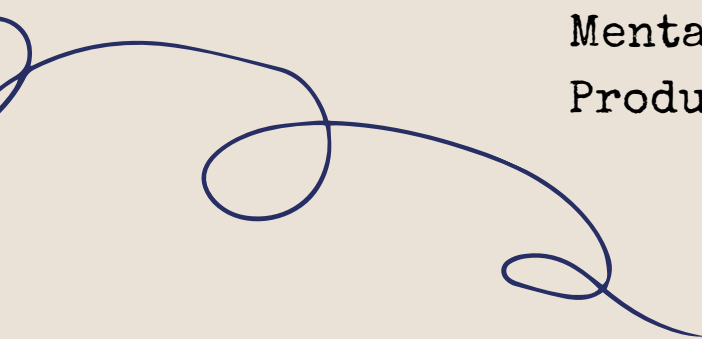
Being Queer in Your
Second Language



5 Ways to Boost Creativity



Got 10 Minutes?
Try Journaling for Your
Mental Well-being and
Productivity





Y4Y Québec is a non-profit organization committed to addressing the issues facing English-speaking youth (ages 16–30) across Québec.

Y4Y Québec is quickly becoming a credible force in the community; establishing an Advisory Board made up of qualified individuals with a track-record in the non-profit world; publishing multiple policy documents concerning the situation of English-speaking youth throughout the province; holding outreach events that strengthen community at the local level; bringing information to important stakeholders from the corporate sector and in government; empowering leadership locally through a growing regional ambassador program, and having fun while doing so!



y4yquebec.org



[Y4YQuebec](https://www.facebook.com/Y4YQuebec)



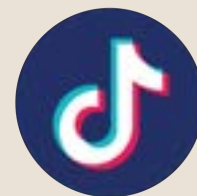
[@y4yquebec](https://www.instagram.com/y4yquebec)



[y4yquebec](https://www.linkedin.com/company/y4yquebec)



[@Y4YQuebec](https://twitter.com/Y4YQuebec)



[y4yquebec](https://www.tiktok.com/@y4yquebec)

This zine is a feature of the Community Liaisons Program.

Funded by the Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN), the Program functions as an ear to the ground for Y4Y Québec to hear from youth in various regions about what matters to them, about their communities, and how orgs like ours can better support youth mental health. Currently, youth from the following regions are participating in the CL Program: Bas-Saint-Laurent, the Laurentians, the Mauricie, Québec City, and of course, Montréal.

Community Liaisons publish multiple blog posts each month about mental health, their communities, and their experiences as English-speakers. Sharing these stories allows us to connect to the broader community of English-speaking Quebecers. Community Liaisons also host events in their communities, to provide opportunities for others to connect through wellness activities close to home. Another important function of CLs is to accompany their fellow English-speaking youth to activities and events with the local french-speaking community, with the goal of enhancing a sense of belonging to the province we all call home. Finally, Community Liaisons will leave a lasting legacy of their work by installing community exchange boxes in their hometowns (for example, a Little Free Library or a Community Pantry).

We are so proud of the Community Liaisons, who aspire to have a positive impact on others' sense of well-being and connection to their local community.

For more information, or to become a Community Liaison where you live, please write to info@y4yquebec.org.

Funded by

CHSSN





A LOCAL BOARD WALK
TO BLISS

Nicolet, Québec

When it comes to my mental health, I know that I need those 'do nothing, expect nothing of me' days, and I need at least one a week to function at my best. Sometimes even more if it's a particularly difficult time. As a person who has always worked at least two jobs and often fills as much time as possible with things that need to be done, I have learned my limits. This is mostly thanks to the movement to understand mental health during Covid. Honestly, I used to think it was normal to work every minute of my day until burn out. Thank goodness I learned otherwise and take time for myself to recharge. Sometimes this is doing absolutely nothing, but sometimes I enjoy some exercising. No matter what it is, I follow the dopamine and do things just for myself.

As the weather turns cold and the leaves change, it gets harder to get outside and easier to look out from a warm and cozy inside with a warm cup of hot chocolate and a good book. I mean, that's what I'm doing most days. Sweater weather means cozy and cozy means I am alone in my room with my hot drink and I am reading, writing, or watching something. Summer was meant for activities and seeing friends and we lose that during fall. With shorter days, going out means more preparation for the cold, but it also means that a sunset walk is easily achievable, while still leaving time to cozy up watching a movie.

"Between the walk, fresh air, and the complete contentment of nature, it's easy to come back to a normal level after feeling overwhelmed or upset."



I love the sunsets here. Back in British Columbia the sunset is blocked by mountains for the most part. With no big mountains here and sunsets that start early enough, my little walk down a nearby boardwalk becomes bliss. As a nature lover and eager explorer with good weather, I am always up to find local places to visit and what's better than a short 1.5 km boardwalk to the river? Very little for me.

My steps get lighter, and my smile always gets bigger as I go down the path, even stopping to feed the birds along the way. It is just gorgeous under the trees as you walk over the marsh. After that, the tree cover opens up and the river comes into view. I have gone here a few times during quieter times to help collect my thoughts, watch the sun set, or just to read on the benches. Between the walk, fresh air, and the complete contentment of nature, it's easy to come back to a normal level after feeling overwhelmed or upset.



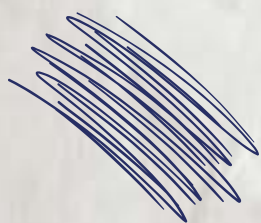
This spot in particular may not be close to you, but I implore you to find a spot or a thing that brings you that sense of fullness and peace. This could be a place, like a picnic bench at a local park, or maybe that feeling comes from listening to certain music. No matter what it is, follow your dopamine and find passion in your day to day life again. Living is more than just working. Looking towards the future all the time stops us from enjoying what is around us. I don't mean that you shouldn't have future goals, I just mean that we need to find more pleasure in the little things in life as we work towards our future ideals. Enjoy the drives, the smiles, and the normal moments we live through every day.



Author
Savannah Leroux
Community Liaison (Nicolet, Mauricie)
for Y4Y Québec



BEING QUEER in your second LANGUAGE



NADINE THIS SUMMER, JUST BEFORE
MOVING TO QUÉBEC ☆

Amqui, Bas-Saint-Laurent, Québec

Hi, I'm Nadine, and I'm Queer. I am Non-binary and I use they/them pronouns in English, and in French, my second language... I'm unsure. They/them pronouns don't exist in French. The whole language is binary, feminine or masculine, which for someone who is actively avoiding said binaries, is disappointing. As of now, I use Il/lui, the masculine pronoun in French, but that's not much better than elle, the feminine pronoun. Usually, when I'm teaching, my students know that I am non-binary, and may not use my correct pronouns but comprehend that I am not a girl nor a boy. This arrangement worked for me. I ignore the incorrect pronouns and let them be as they are children and I understand that it may not be possible for a 4-year-old to perfectly use they/them pronouns. However, here in Québec, I'm facing a difficult decision. My students are old enough to use they/them pronouns accurately, if English was their first language. Using they/them pronouns as I do may have adverse impacts on my students'

language skills. My resource teacher agrees. The concept of binary genders exists much more in French than in English, which in my case makes it very difficult to explain to my students that I, their teacher, am not really a girl nor really a boy. The use of a singular they or them is a fairly foreign concept to native English speakers, let alone English second language speakers. Usually, I can explain this no problem, but as my students are in their second language, I am uncertain. It is not a fear of transphobia, or a fear of it going badly, it is simply a fear of being misunderstood.

The whole language is binary, feminine or masculine, which for someone who is actively avoiding said binaries, is disappointing.

When I was in grade 12, I had come to terms with my non-binary identity, however I had not come out, and was very much in the closet. Despite this, I'd happened to come out to my core French teacher, as she was the teacher supervisor for the GSA at my high school (which I co-founded!) I was using They/Them in English, and up until then, elle in French. It was then that I decided to continue to use elle "for the sake of my learning", which may as well have been code for "I'm going to put this off till I can find a pronoun that fits". Turns out, putting off problems doesn't make them go away. Throughout my learning of French, I kept using elle, and even through university too.

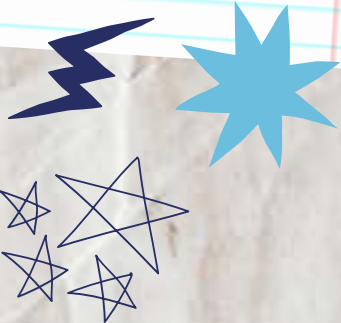


Usually, when I'm teaching, my students know that I am non-binary, and may not use my correct pronouns but comprehend that I am not a girl nor a boy.



Author

Nadine Steinley
Community Liaison (Amqui, Bas-Saint-Laurent)
for Y4Y Québec



There isn't a right answer for this unfortunately. In French, there are new 'gender neutral' pronouns, but they do not feel right for me. "Iel" is the new gender neutral pronoun in french. Some like it, some don't. I don't. I find it's too similar to the he/she concept that was and still is used to insult and hate on Queer people in the past. It also becomes the mix of feminine and masculine which to me signifies gender-fluid, which is not who I am. I am non-binary. Will I be the inventor of a new gender neutral pronoun in French? Likely not, but I am sure open to suggestions. Hopefully, within my lifetime I will find a pronoun for me in French that is a good fit for me.



5 WAYS TO BOOST creativity

Québec City, Québec

There are times when I need a boost to fuel my creativity. These times can be vexing especially because I rely on my creativity a lot in my life. These dry seasons of creativity can make me feel like a blank page and make me question my skills. Creativity cannot be forced but sometimes there are deadlines for creative work. If you ever felt or are currently feeling uninspired and having a creativity block, don't worry. The good news is that these are temporary. Here are some tips I learned over the years that can help inspire me when I feel stuck.



#1

Talk to a friend.

Many times what helped me to get out of a creativity slump is talking to someone about what I'm trying to do creatively or even venting to a friend about how I can't think of anything to do. Just talking about my task can help me see it in a different perspective and start to leave the thought patterns that I feel stuck in when I'm just ruminating on my own. The input and perspective of another person can be very helpful and their creative thinking can inspire mine as well and get the ball rolling.



2

Have some change of scenery.

When I feel stuck and uninspired, choosing a new location to do work helps a lot. The new location breaks the mundane atmosphere and makes me more curious of my surroundings. As a result it allows me to open up to inspiration. My favourite spots to go to for inspiration are libraries, parks and coffee shops. When I browse in libraries I find books that I would not think of reading otherwise. Parks are nice to be close to nature and in my experience nature can be very inspiring. Coffee shops are places where there is a lot of movement as people come by which gives a freshness to the place that can nurture creativity.

Creativity cannot be forced but sometimes there are deadlines for creative work.

3

Browse on Pinterest.

When I seem to already have a vague idea or direction I know I want to move forward with creatively, but I struggle with visualizing the details, I go on Pinterest. Pinterest is an app where you can search images and articles based on search words. By searching vague and broad categories Pinterest will show a lot of content related to the search. The content you like can be saved to board which makes it easy to save and collect all the content that seems useful and inspiring. Moreover, it allows you to look at all the saved content at once as a collage so it can help with visualizing the bigger picture from the small details.



#4

Create an idea map.

There are times when I have many ideas but I don't know which one to choose or which direction to take my project in. It may seem good to have lots of ideas but it can feel like I have none at all if I can't decide which one to choose. One of the things that helps me find direction is creating an idea map. You only need a pen and paper for this. Write all the ideas all over the paper as if it was a cluster of words. Then try to find connections between the ideas. Questions to ask during this exercise are: what do these ideas have in common? How can some of the ideas become integrated into each other? You can draw arrows to connect the ideas together by connecting them in some way. The best part of creating an idea map is that it allows you to work with the ideas you already have and not be tempted to create new ideas. As a result, the integration and inspiration to find a solution can be easier and then you can continue on your creative journey.

#5

Go for a run or a walk.

Going for a run or a walk is not only good to maintain physical health but also allows me to be alone with my thoughts without distractions. Most of my creative thoughts come to me when I have the time and space to be alone with my thoughts and not worry about anything else. The mind can roam free and surprise you with creative thoughts.

If you ever felt or are currently feeling uninspired and having a creativity block, don't worry. The good news is that these are temporary.

I hope that these tips are helpful if you're in need of sparking your creativity and I wish you the best on your creative journey.



Author
Flora Janos
Community Liaison
(Québec City, Capitale-Nationale)
for Y4Y Québec



Got 10 minutes?

Try Journaling

for your mental

well-being &

productivity



Montréal, Québec

I have become a recent convert to the practice of journaling. Over the course of my life, I have attempted several times to be the kind of person who keeps a journal. When I was really young, I had a sparkly diary with a heart lock on it. In high school, I had a super trendy bullet journal. I was drawn to the aesthetic of journaling, but never had a reason to return to the journal and so I never turned journaling into a habit. Recently, I've managed to keep up with my current journal over the course of several months. This time, I have felt both productivity and mental health windfalls that have me coming back.

These practices are not only reflective of my personal positive experience with journaling; Greater Good In Action at UC Berkeley outlines several journaling practices that can improve mental and physical wellbeing and that are backed by science. In a study out of UC Davis, researchers found that regular gratitude journaling helped participants, "[experience] more gratitude, positive moods, and optimism about the future, as well as better sleep, compared to those who journaled about hassles or their daily life." (The Greater Good Science Center, 2022).

It won't be surprising that journaling has great benefits for your mental health - it's the reason that I was encouraged to try journaling again. But when it comes to reaping rewards for your mental wellbeing, it matters what you write about. Rather than vaguely documenting my day, I use my journal to express gratitude, resolve emotional conflicts, catalogue intense feelings and practice optimism by noting positives.



In spite of these benefits, I know that it can be hard to set aside time for journaling. When you're overwhelmed and in emotional turmoil, journaling can sometimes seem like just another task to add to the endless list of to-dos. My friends often argue they simply don't have the time to begin journaling. I frame the habit a bit differently. Journaling is an "easy win" for productivity. Like warming up before a big game, I warm up by writing in my journal before tackling the rest of my work. By starting with a quick, 10-15 minute journaling exercise, I can foster a sense of accomplishment and success that drives me to complete the rest of my tasks for the day. It's much easier for me to find motivation to sit down for 10 minutes and write a journal entry than to address the complex and difficult projects I'm working on for work and school. If I'm stressed or anxious, I'm also often distracted from work by my emotions. By setting aside the time to process them and to give attention to gratitude and optimism, I can tackle the rest of my work more calmly and effectively. So, why have I been able to keep up with the habit? I love the "easy wins" it gives me - worth it both for my mental wellbeing and for my productivity.



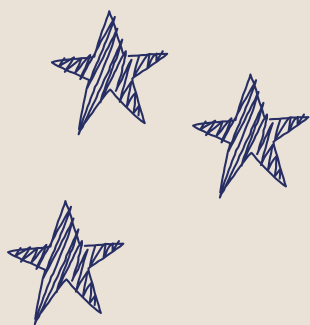
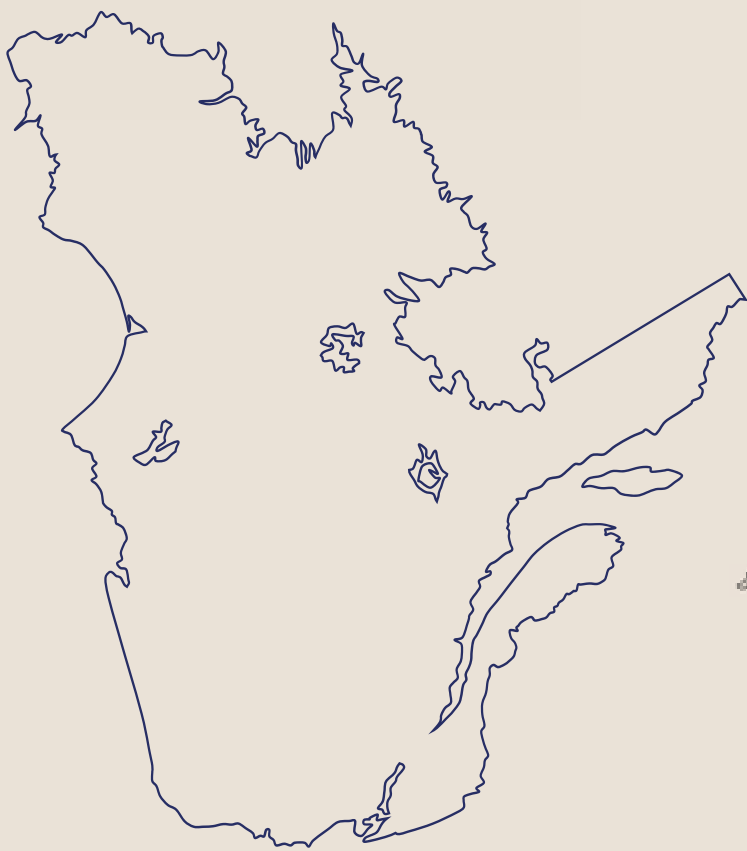
No, journaling is not the inspirational aesthetic I was always emulating, but it helps me take care of my mental health and actually helps my productivity. The benefits of practicing gratitude and optimism are reinforced not only by my own experience, but by studies that highlight improvements to mental and physical well-being. And journaling helps me stay productive by giving me an "easy win" that helps me feel accomplished and shifts my mindset towards feeling positive about tackling the rest of my day.



Author
Chloe Merritt
McGill student and Community Liaison
(Montréal)
for Y4Y Québec

Like warming up before a big game, I warm up by writing in my journal before tackling the rest of my work.







Y4Y Québec

