



**COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS:
YOUTH PERSPECTIVES
ON MENTAL HEALTH
FOR ENGLISH-SPEAKERS
ACROSS QUÉBEC**

**Community Liaisons Program
Periodical
Second Edition**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

About Y4Y	4
ABOUT Y4Y'S COMMUNITY LIAISONS PROGRAM	5
FOMO IS [INSERT YOUR ADJECTIVE HERE]	6
EMBRACING UNCERTAINTY	8
I MISSED CHRISTMAS. HERE'S WHAT I LEARNED	11
SURVIVOR GUIDE TO A NEW CHAPTER IN LIFE	16

Y4Y Québec

Y4Y Québec is a nonprofit organisation 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 nonprofit 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



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This zine is a feature of the Community Liaisons Program.

Funded by Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN), the Community Liaisons Program functions as an ear to the ground for Y4Y Québec to hear from a diverse variety of regions about what matters to youth, about their communities, and how we can better support their mental health. This program is unique because it reaches a variety of regions, including the Bas-Saint-Laurent, the Laurentians, the Mauricie, Québec City, and of course, Montréal.

Community Liaisons publish two blog posts per 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 two events in their communities, one artistic and one outdoors, to provide an opportunity for community members to connect while doing activities that are positive for their well-being. Part of liaising of course includes the French-speaking majority. Our Community Liaisons conduct outreach to Francophone community organisations and attend Francophone events.

Finally, Community Liaisons will leave a lasting legacy of their work by installing a community exchange box (for example, a Little Free Library or a Community Pantry). As an outcome, community members in various regions of Québec will feel more connected to the French majority, and to other English-speakers, which will improve the collective well-being.

Funded by





REMINDER: FOMO IS [INSERT YOUR ADJECTIVE HERE]

BY SAVANNAH LEROUX

 Nicolet, Mauricie, Québec

Recently I had the opportunity to meet up with some friends for some outdoor skating. I was very excited to go and spend time with them. They car-pooled together and met prior for brunch, and I was not invited to that part. I only found out when I arrived on time, and I got a message that they were late since they were paying for their brunch then would be on their way. This is not the first time I have felt over-looked, and it will not be the last.

Unfortunately, this is an experience we all know. Social media is both a blessing and a curse for us. While it does allow us to be easily connected with friends from all over the world, it has introduced FOMO (the fear of missing out) and jealousy. FOMO comes from anxiety when you are either left out or not invited to an event that other people you know are going to. Instagram is a prime example for this. Among so many other social medias, Instagram is full of

picture-perfect events of everything amazing and normal life seems inadequate since a normal life won't get likes. We only share the best of the best, not the real day to day stuff. Since it's just the fun stuff, each of these moments we share and see on social media can have the effect of feeling left out.

"I wish there was a way to really get rid of FOMO, but unfortunately, we need to learn to accept our feelings and be honest since social media definitely won't be going anywhere."

Snapchat is interesting when you consider "snap-maps", where you can share your location with your friends at all times. This is a great feature when you are meeting a new date, but not so much if you see many of your friends get together without you. There's usually a good explanation like they are working on a school project or knew that you were busy, but we always want to feel included.

Whether we are overlooked, not invited, or unable to make it, the feeling of being left out is monumental. I wish there was a way to really get rid of FOMO, but unfortunately, we need to learn to accept our feelings and be honest since social media definitely won't be going anywhere. In all reality, it's important to let your friends know if you are feeling left out and would love to join in the next time to create healthy and honest relationships.



(Photo Credit: Sara Kurfeß)



EMBRACING UNCERTAINTY

BY CHLOE MERRITT

 *Montréal, Québec*

This time of the year is about planning, goal setting, and ambition. Everyone has a new year's resolution. Don't worry if you don't have one; there's always someone with advice on how to start the new year, and a plan to help you achieve it.

I'm not above it all. One of my favourite parts of the new year is getting my agenda. I love planning out my days and weeks, and I know goal setting is incredibly valuable. At the same time, sometimes it feels like there's a lot of pressure to have a plan, a goal and be ambitious for the next chapter.

Maybe it's the new year. Maybe it's my annual trip home to Vancouver for the holidays. In the most loving way possible, the way my family checks in with my life in Montréal involves a pretty standard interview process. It's like an annual

report for all my aunties and uncles, but I'm reviewing your personal life, your school, work, and social life. How did it go? What's going on right now? What are your plans? Maybe it's also that I just graduated from university, and I'm figuring out where I go from here. I want to have an A+ interview answer prepared when my grandma asks me what's next because I want to look ambitious and accomplished, and most of all, I want to reassure her that I am on top of my game.

Whatever the reason, I am feeling the pressure to be confident in the face of personal uncertainty. With graduating, applying to law schools, and possibly moving, there's a lot about my future that I haven't mapped out yet. Stressing myself out over plans I can't make doesn't help anyone, much less me. If you're in the same boat this year, I'm reminding us all: *it's okay not to know.*

9

"It's like an annual report for all my aunties and uncles, but I'm reviewing your personal life, your school, work, and social life. How did it go? What's going on right now? What are your plans?"



My ultimate team swimming in a lake after a tournament (Photo Credit: Chloe Merritt)



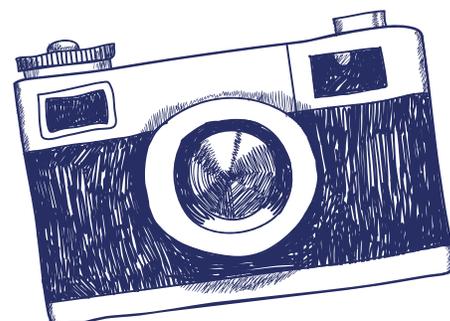
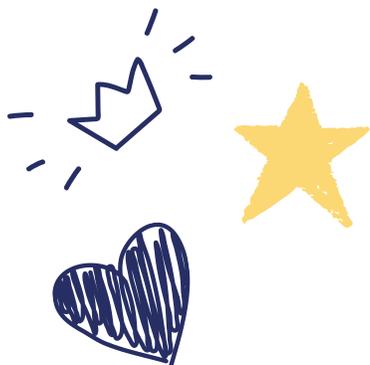


So, this year my plan is not to plan—no new year's resolution for me and no big plans. I mean, I guess choosing not to plan is a plan in itself. But alas, a tiger can't change its stripes. At the end of the day, I love productivity and planning, and it can feel uncomfortable to go without one. Choosing not to plan is an intentional way to step back from obsessively stressing over the future. Framing my new year as a choice to embrace uncertainty allows me to enjoy the journey.

10 *My friend Sophia and I with our beloved film cameras (Photo Credit: Chloe Merritt)*

This year I have really enjoyed taking photos; I've been able to catalogue my experiences and build stronger memories. Taking pictures of time spent with friends, on solo adventures in Montréal, and trips away from the city is my way of slowing down. Photography is the opposite of obsessively planning; it reminds me to stop and appreciate my current moment. Later, I also look back and can appreciate all that I've done in a month or a year and can take a moment to be proud of what I've accomplished and experienced.

If you're also a young person living in limbo, if you've also just run the gauntlet of annual reporting to friends and family, if you also feel pressure to have a plan, know that you're not alone. It's not a unique experience (at least from the TikToks I've seen), so I'm at least trying to embrace uncertainty as part of my current moment.





I MISSED CHRISTMAS. HERE'S WHAT I LEARNED.

BY NADINE STEINLEY

 *Amqui, Bas-Saint-Laurent, Québec*

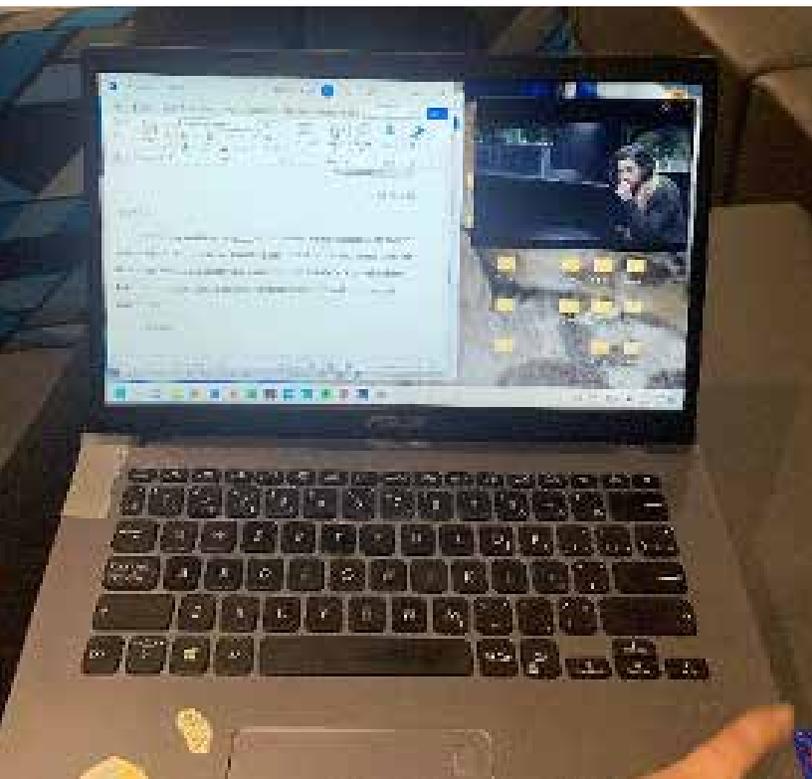
For the first time in my 22 years, I missed Christmas. I was all alone on Christmas eve, Christmas day, and arrived home 4 days late. I was supposed to arrive in Saskatoon at around noon on December 23rd. I didn't arrive in Regina until 8:30 pm on December 26th and arrived in Swift Current at 10:30 pm. My destination changed, and I spent way too long in the Québec City airport.

My trip started out normal, everything according to plan. I left Amqui, QC at around 2 pm. I said Merry Christmas to my students and went home. I grabbed my bags, said goodbye to my rabbits, and left. During the 4 hour drive to Québec City, I called my friends, listened to a podcast, and finally arrived at the airport. I checked in, checked my bag, and went through security. I'm privileged to have travelled through airports alone before, so I wasn't too worried.

Unfortunately, my flight was not until 5 am the next day. I was, in fact, 8 hours early, so I made myself a little bed and tried to sleep. I was excited to see my friends and to be home for a few weeks.

I was in and out of sleep till about 3:30 am, as I wanted some time to wake up and to get food before my flight. To my surprise, I woke up to a full airport and a blizzard outside. It was blowing winds up to 110 km/hr, which isn't great for flying. 4:30 am rolls around and I got a text from Air Canada, which read something along the lines of, "your flight has been delayed until 6 am". There I sat, nervous, waiting for 6 am to come. 6 am came, and I received another message, "your flight has been delayed until 6:30 am". So, there I go, nervously waiting, again. This process continued. I got delayed, waiting nervously and anxiously, a few more times. Soon it was 10 am, and all the other flights in the airport had been cancelled. At this point, I was fairly stressed, assuming I was just going to be cancelled; it was just a matter of time. I called my best friend crying and talked to my mom to update her. Eventually, I got the message I was dreading, "your flight has been cancelled, you will be rebooked. Details coming shortly". We were instructed to leave the secure part of the airport. Along with many other disappointed passengers, I made my way to the baggage claim. At this point I was so tired, and I had so many emotions, I just began to bawl uncontrollably. I wasn't the only one. There were several other passengers who were also sobbing uncontrollably.

12

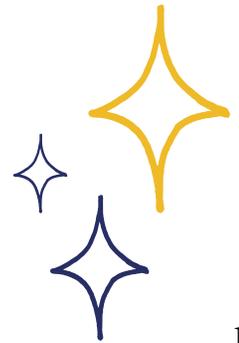


After searching and searching for my baggage, I couldn't find it. I asked a worker, and they said to look again. Eventually I was able to get them to scan my bag's barcode... somehow my bag made it to Saskatoon, but I did not. While this was happening, I was on the phone with my parents, trying to figure out when or how I could get home for Christmas. Then I received a text from Air Canada. I'd been rebooked... for December 26th. I was devastated. I was going to miss Christmas.

Me getting some work done the first night in the airport (Photo Credit: Nadine Steinley)

Once accepting that I was going to miss Christmas, and some minor deliberation with my parents, we decided flying on the 26th was my best option. But now I had 1.5 days to kill. I made my way back to my car to drive back to Amqui so I could at least be with my rabbits on Christmas. I made the 4-hour drive back, but I definitely should not have, I was probably not safe. I was determined to not spend Christmas alone in a hotel. I made it home around 6 pm on the 23rd and proceeded to pass out for the next 16 hours.

Over the next 36 hours, I watched some Netflix and did some knitting. I had plans to go to my coworker's for Christmas, but they had no power due to the storm, so I stayed home. So, on Christmas day, the 25th, I left around 2 pm to Québec City. I arrived, checked in, went through security, and found a place to sleep for the night as my flight was at 5 am. I'm in the airport, feeling good about my flights, when I get a text: "your flight to Toronto has been cancelled due to aircraft availability". What on earth?? What is my luck?? I tried to talk to someone to rebook me. They couldn't do anything. They even suggested I fly to Vancouver then back to Saskatoon. Absolutely not. I thanked him for their time, and then left to get a hotel for the night. I got an Uber to the hotel, checked into my hotel, ordered some food, and called my parents. At that point, I had cried so much and had basically given up. I was just going to take a vacation in Québec City myself. But at around 11:30 pm I received a text from Air Canada saying I'd been rebooked. It was about my flights, they were uncanceled! So, I booked an Uber for 3 am and went to sleep.



13



My alarm went off, I dragged myself out of bed, and into the Uber at 3 am. While I was in the Uber, I got a text from Air Canada. My flights had been cancelled again. But I was still on the way to the airport so I hoped they could help me. They couldn't get me to Saskatoon that day, but they could get me to Regina! So, I had the last seat on the flight to Toronto then a flight from Toronto to Regina. The flight was at 10:30 am. I was so stressed and nervous I couldn't eat.

13

It was 4 am and I had several hours to kill. I napped and woke up to several delays. My flight kept getting delayed, and I kept crying and being anxious. But there were many older people in the airport, and I felt like I could make friends with some of them for support. I surveyed the gate and sat next to a group of older ladies. Two were playing a card game, Quidler. They finished their round and I asked, "can I play?". They happily said yes, so I began to introduce myself. I tried to tell them that I'd been trying to get home since the 23rd, but I started crying. They comforted me, I attempted to stop crying, we played Quidler, and chatted. They were very kind. They made the long wait bearable, and they even got me to eat! I am so grateful to them. I helped one book a hotel and another figured out some technology. I'm not sure I could have continued without them. I was worried about my connecting flight in Toronto, but I looked, and it was actually the same plane! So, I was never going to miss my connecting flight! Thank goodness! Eventually, I saw something through the window- our plane!

14



*The charcuterie plate I was offered
(Photo Credit: Nadine Steinley)*

We had been delayed from 10:30 am to 2:00 pm. So, we finally boarded, and we took off! I was upgraded to first class and was served a small charcuterie plate! I was surprised, I'd never flown first class before!

It was a short flight, about 1.5 hours. I was glad I made it to Toronto safely. We landed, I got off the plane, went to the washroom, turned around, and got back on the plane. I asked if I could just stay on the plane but unfortunately, I had to get off due to safety reasons. The flight from Toronto to Regina went just fine, though delayed

about 30 minutes due to baggage issues. I was so nervous that we were going to get stuck in Toronto, but we successfully took off. I was in first class again and was served a chicken alfredo-like meal. I landed in Regina at about 8:30 pm. My siblings picked me up and we drove two hours home, so I made it back to Swift Current at 10:30 pm. We did our Christmas eve traditions then, and celebrated Christmas on December 27th.

"Christmas is just a day. It is simply just a day that we have chosen to have importance."

My travels back to Amqui were not so long or difficult, there were no issues, major or minor, and I got my bag from the Saskatoon airport later that week. I'm definitely a little traumatised from my trip. I spent 2 separate nights in the airport, drove 8 extra hours, and did a lot of extra crying. But, throughout it all, I learned that Christmas is just a day. We have simply chosen to give it importance. If you miss it, who cares! Just celebrate when you can! Missing Christmas for the first time in my life was an unexpected experience, I knew it was going to happen someday, just not this year. I also learned that travelling alone sucks, especially when you have so many delays. I'm really lucky to have met those ladies.

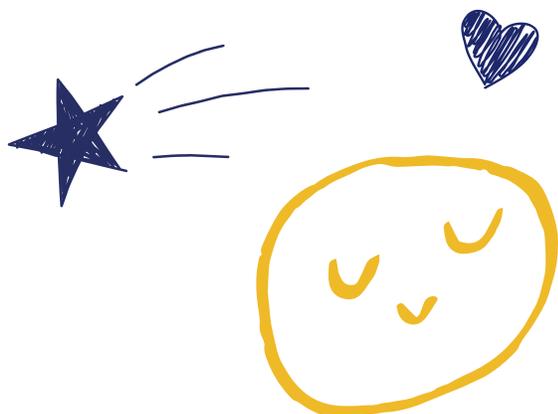
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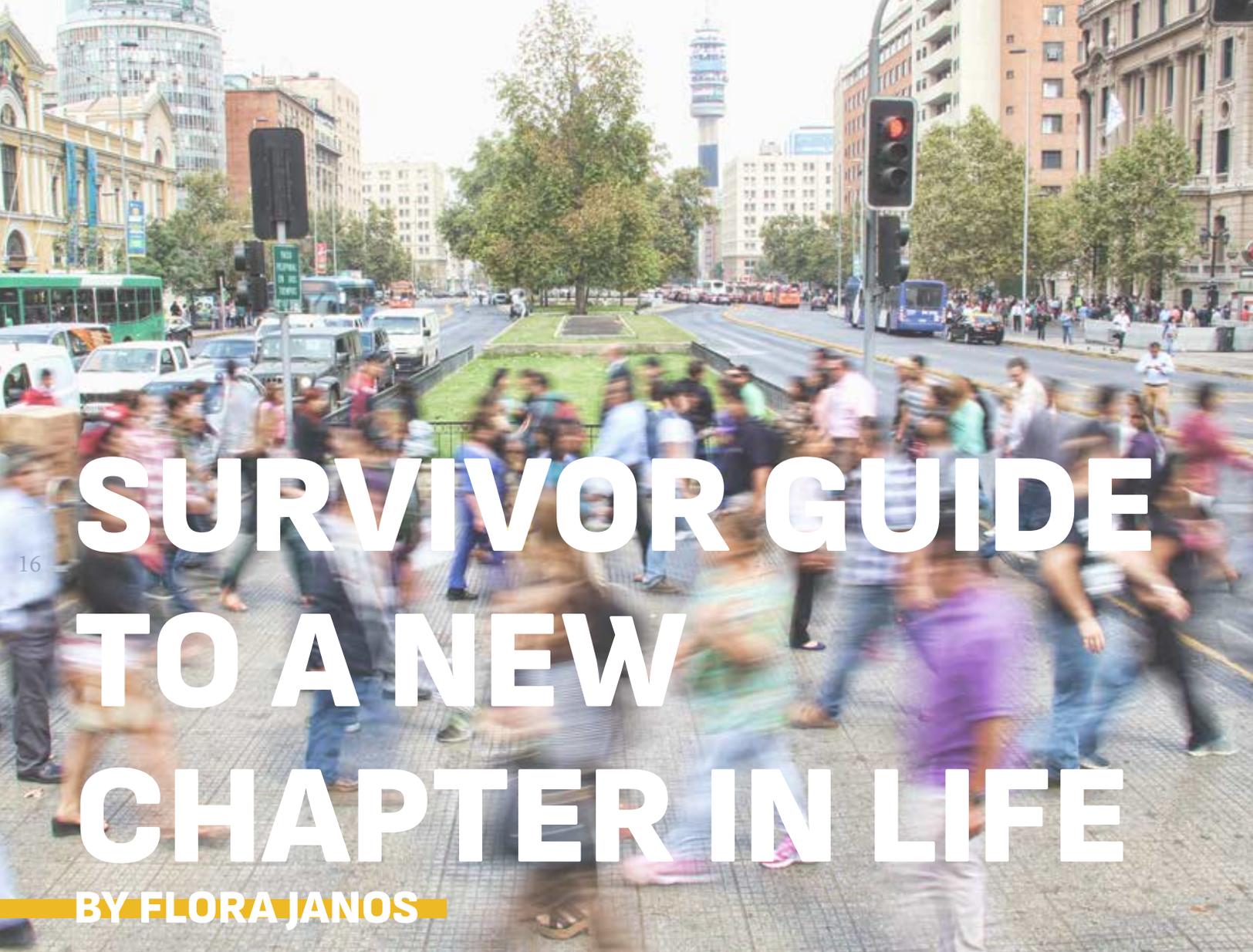
I was happy to return to Saskatchewan to see my friends, and to catch up, I missed them lots! I was able to even cook them a nice dinner!

While I am having fun in Amqui, I do wish I could see them more! I am incredibly grateful and privileged to be able to afford to return home for Christmas, even with all the changes and last-minute expenses. Missing Christmas isn't the end of the world, it just gives you stories to tell for the rest of your life. I met some amazing people along the way as well. The world might be okay after all. Take care folks.



*The dinner I made for my friends
(Photo Credit: Nadine Steinley)*





SURVIVOR GUIDE TO A NEW CHAPTER IN LIFE

BY FLORA JANOS

📍 *Québec City, Capitale-Nationale, Québec*

It has been almost a month since I moved to Québec City from Ottawa and the experience has been at times both exhilarating and overwhelming.

Before moving, I brainstormed all the possible feelings, challenges, opportunities that I could think of to minimise my anxiety over the transition. However, the growing pains of adapting to a new environment and workplace sometimes made me feel anxious to the point where I even considered going back to Ottawa or looking for another job. Ultimately, these considerations are just the way I was trying to cope with anxiety and homesickness.

If you ever struggled or you are currently struggling with a transition (moving, changing jobs, going to school etc.), here are some tips that helped me overcome feeling overwhelmed when navigating a new chapter of my life:

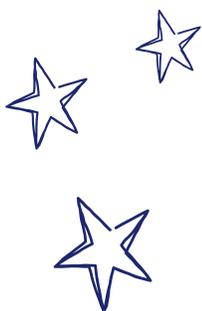
1- Let yourself feel your feelings. Anxiety is normal during transitions, so don't beat yourself up about it. Let yourself cry if you need to. It helps relieve stress.

2- Journaling and brainstorming helps. Sometimes, when I feel overwhelmed, writing out my thoughts helps me to face my fears or challenges by writing out why I feel overwhelmed and then brainstorming ways to overcome them. Also, writing about why you are excited for a new experience can help you stay committed when you feel discouraged.

3- Find community. Reach out to people who are (or were) in the same boat as you. This helps so much! It can be easy to feel isolated in a new environment but having people who I could relate to made me feel like I am not alone. Knowing that they had similar struggles made my feelings seem normal and that it is just part of the process. Their enthusiasm and experiences helped me to look forward to new experiences and share a passion for adventure. We also have been exploring Québec City together. Finding English-speakers in my area who I can talk to and hang out with in my free time made me less homesick. Check out upcoming Y4Y Québec community events! Attending these events is a great way to meet others and find your local community.

17

Transitions can affect mental health. It is more than ok to ask for help when healthy coping mechanisms are not enough."



(Photo Credit: Genessa Panainte)



4- Discover your new environment.

Researching what your new city, workplace or school has to offer is exciting and helps you to stay motivated through the early struggles of transition. I love art and museums, so I was very excited to research the museums and art galleries in Québec City.



(Photo Credit: Flora Janos)

5- Take care of your physical health. It is important to maintain a healthy immune system by getting enough sleep and eating well. Finding ways to exercise in your new area is a great way to stay healthy and get to know your city as well.

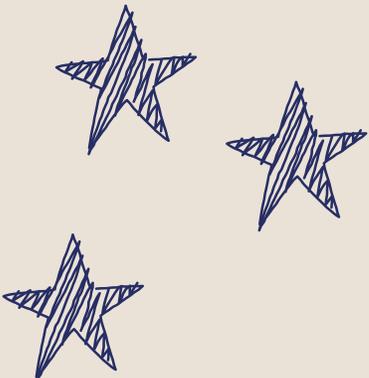
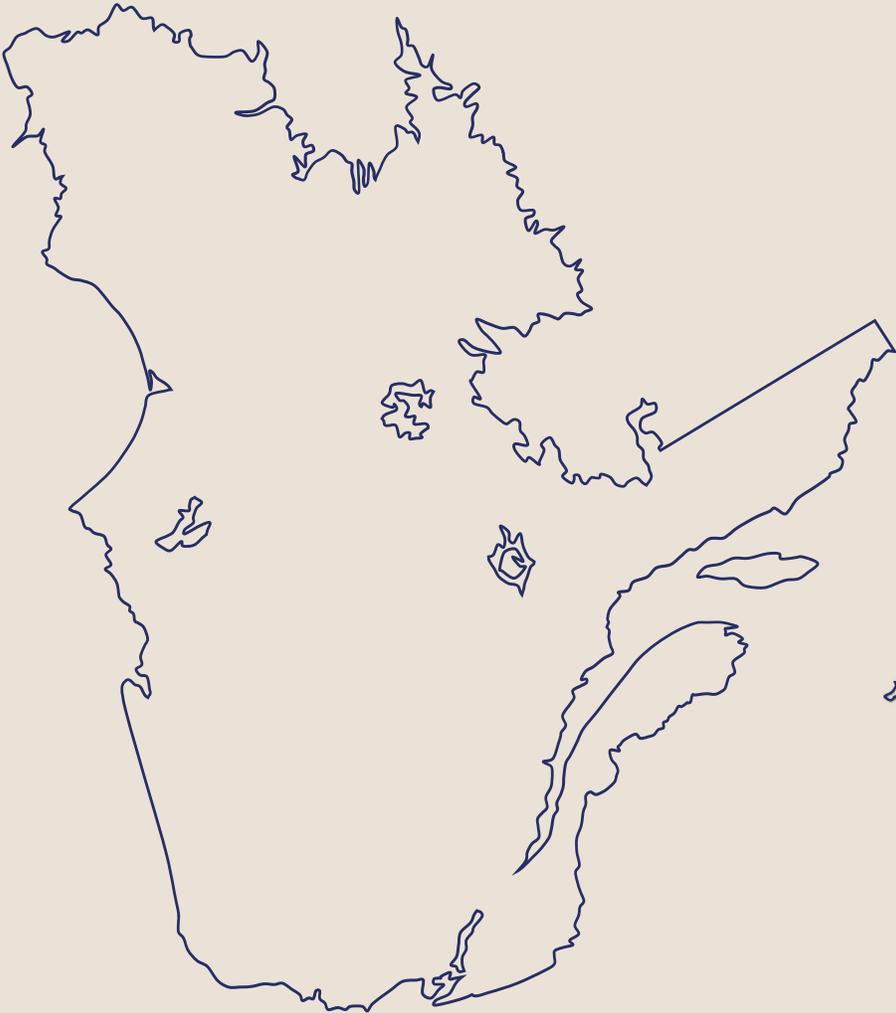
6- Mental health is important. Transitions can affect mental health. It is more than ok to ask for help when healthy coping mechanisms are not enough.

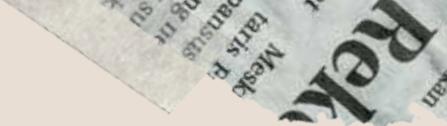
 **Y4Y has compiled a list of English-language mental health resource in Québec.**

To take a look and find the right resource for you, visit:

<https://www.y4yquebec.org/english-language-mental-health-resources-in-quebec> 

I hope these tips that helped me will be helpful for you too. I applaud your courage for taking on a new adventure and I wish you the best going forward.





Y4Y Québec