

WFWP Canada's Monthly Webinar: *Mental Health Matters*

Evelyn Stewart
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On Monday, November 25, 2024, the Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) Canada held its monthly webinar, "Mental Health Matters," attracting 35 attendees, including notable figures such as former police chief Armand LeBarge and former Member of Parliament Jean Augustine. The event, an initiative led by Lilly Tadin, President of WFWP Canada, brought together experts to discuss mental health challenges and strategies for fostering well-being.

The webinar featured three speakers: Pastor Catherine Biaya, a Community Health Facilitator; David Scarr, a registered social worker; and Dr. Lata Swarn, Director of the Sitar Darpan School of Music in Toronto.

Addressing Stigma and Social Determinants of Health

Pastor Catherine Biaya opened the discussion by highlighting the stigma surrounding mental health in many countries where new Canadians originate. She explained that mental health concerns are often misunderstood and stigmatized, creating additional challenges for immigrants and First Nations communities. Drawing on her work with these groups, she discussed the social determinants of health - factors such as housing, employment, education, and childhood experiences - and their impact on mental well-being.

Pastor Biaya emphasized the gap between immigrants' expectations and the realities they face in Canada, noting that this disconnect often adds a new layer of uncertainty to their struggles. She helps newcomers navigate available support systems, including public services, health networks, support groups, and faith communities, to bridge this gap.

The Importance of Holistic Well-Being

David Scarr shared insights from his experience as a social worker in the Canadian healthcare system, starting with the impactful statement, "Mental health doesn't discriminate." He emphasized the importance of paying attention to physical and emotional health, discussing how factors such as diet, exercise, sleep hygiene, and social activities influence mental well-being.

Scarr's practical advice resonated with attendees, highlighting that simple lifestyle changes can significantly improve mental health outcomes.

Building Self-Esteem and Embracing Self-Acceptance

Dr. Lata Swarn focused on self-esteem and overcoming self-criticism. She encouraged participants to shift from negative thoughts to affirmations of self-worth, such as, "I am strong, brave, and competent." Dr. Swarn also stressed the importance of maintaining a proper diet, practicing good sleep hygiene, and fostering a mindset of growth and discovery. By investing in creativity and embracing self-acceptance, individuals can build resilience and a positive outlook on life.

Interactive Q and A Session

The webinar concluded with an engaging Q and A session, providing attendees with opportunities to ask questions, share experiences, and gain practical tips from the speakers. The discussions fostered complementary exchanges and deepened the audience's understanding of mental health strategies.

WFWP Canada's "Mental Health Matters" webinar served as a valuable platform to address mental health stigma, promote self-care, and provide actionable advice for improving well-being, leaving attendees inspired and empowered to prioritize mental health in their communities.