

CILT's Peer Links

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The Joys of a Therapeutic Massage

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You're stressed out. Your shoulder muscles have turned to rocks. Or you feel so jumpy you could crawl out of your own skin. Wouldn't it be wonderful if someone could smooth away your tension with the touch of his or her hands? Someone probably can. Research shows that the simple kneading and stroking of a good massage can make a big difference in your mental and physical health. Just one session can reduce stress and help you get a good night's sleep. Regular sessions may ease chronic pain, speed recovery from many sports injuries, make your muscles more supple, and improve concentration. With more than a dozen types of therapeutic massage to choose from, chances are good that you'll find a rub that's right for you.

What does treatment involve?

It depends on the type of massage you've chosen. At the start of a Swedish massage--and most other types--your therapist will brief you on what to expect, ask about any particular problems you're having, and then leave you alone for a few minutes, so you can undress (you can usually keep your underwear on if you want to). Afterward, you'll lie face down on the massage table and drape yourself with a towel or sheet. After a few minutes, the therapist will knock on the door to see if you're ready. Many massage therapists use some type of oil or lotion to reduce the friction between your skin and their hands. They may also play soft music and turn down the lights or burn candles to help you relax. During the massage itself, don't be afraid to speak up if your therapist is using too much or too little pressure. It's his (or her) job to make you feel good. At the end of the session, the therapist will leave the room so you can get dressed.

How does it work?

Researchers believe that massage works in at least three ways. For starters, all that kneading and stroking allows your muscles to relax, which sends a message to your brain to produce fewer stress hormones; it also improves blood flow to the brain. The combination, studies show, results in a feeling of relaxed alertness. Massage may ease chronic pain as well, perhaps, researchers speculate, by triggering the release of enkephalins, the body's natural painkillers.

Massage isn't just for adults, either. A groundbreaking study showed that when trained parents gave their hospitalized, premature babies a firm, 15-minute massage three times a day, the babies gained weight more quickly and went home earlier than unrubbed preemies.

How safe is it?

Massage is generally quite safe, but be sure you let your therapist know if there are any areas of your body that are especially tense or tender. It's also a good idea to talk to your doctor about medical conditions that might rule out a massage, including high blood pressure (a massage can briefly cause your blood pressure to rise) and a history of blood clots (deep, high-pressure strokes could cause an embolism).

How can I find a qualified massage therapist?

Ask your friends and family for a recommendation. Many professional massage therapists are required to have a license, which entails 500 hours of training and a written exam.

You can also check out HealthyMatters.com for tips on what to look for in a massage therapist, an explanation of massage therapy credentials, and a database of qualified practitioners.

Trained therapists are best, of course, if you're looking to help certain conditions, but that doesn't mean you can't recruit willing hands from your own household. It's easy to learn the basics from a class or book, and even a simple, short massage from loving hands can feel great and do wonders for a relationship.

Independent Living Impact Book

By Anna Quon

Hi there!

My name is Anna Quon, and I am the consumer writer on CAILC's (Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres) IL (Independent Living) Impact book team. The book will document the history of the IL movement in Canada and its impact on individuals, their communities and Canadian society.

As the consumer writer, I will be collecting the stories of how the lives of individuals with disabilities have been impacted by the IL movement. My hope is to collect the stories that represent the diversity of consumers (including diversity of disability, ethnicity, age and gender) from across the country. I am particularly interested in stories that illustrate the IL themes of consumer control, peer

support, empowerment and skills development, and citizenship and inclusion.

I would like to hear from consumers and consumer-leaders of the IL movement who might be interested in sharing their stories for possible inclusion in the IL Impact book. I can interview these consumers or they can submit their stories to me. I can also help consumers who want my assistance with writing their own stories, by phone, fax and email. We will not be able to include all the stories we collect in the book, but will do our best to include as many as possible. For more information about the IL Impact project, go to

http://www.cailc.ca/CAILC/text/projects/ilimpact/intro_e.html.

And now a little about me. I am a mental health consumer and member of the Halifax Independent Living Resource Centre. I have been a freelance writer since 1998, and telling people's stories is a passion of mine. To find out more about me and my writing please check out my website at <http://www.annaquon.ca>.

Best,

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close to 4 million Canadians with disabilities urge all political parties to make disability an election issue

© News release produced by CAILC (Canadian Association of independent living centers), December 2005.

Ottawa, Ontario – Two hundred people, including persons with disabilities and the organizations that represent them gathered in Ottawa to celebrate the United Nations International Day of Disabled Persons at an event hosted by the Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres (CAILC), while several thousand nationally and internationally watched the day's events unfold via a live web cast. Welcoming prominent speakers from the disability and human rights communities, the day's events reflected on the social, political, cultural, and economic contributions of Canadians with disabilities as well as the need for real action and leadership in dismantling remaining barriers.

This year's event, under the United Nations stated theme for the day "*Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Action in Development*" is of particular importance to Canadians with disabilities. Persons with disabilities find they are facing another federal election without any clear indication from the major political parties that the status of persons with disabilities will finally be an election issue. This reality

is especially troubling given persistent evidence which indicates that persons with disabilities still cannot fully exercise their rights within Canadian society. For example, only 1 in 10 Canadians asked believe that persons with disabilities are fully included, as barriers to full inclusion persist throughout Canadian society. Advocates note significant barriers to fundamental activities like employment, political participation, transportation, and housing still exist.

The disability community is also disappointed that as Canada also celebrates the 20th anniversary of Section 15 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, a constitutional measure introduced to remedy the systematic discrimination faced by Canadians including those with disabilities, little progress has been made. "Canadians with disabilities continue to experience poverty, exclusion and lack of access to disability related supports. All political parties must during this election campaign commit to the creation of an Inclusive and Accessible Canada - a country where people with disabilities have the income, aids and devices, personal supports and accommodations needed to make social, economic, cultural and political citizenship accessible to all," stated Laurie Beachell, National Coordinator of the Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD).

With this reality in mind, in addition to celebrating the contributions of Canadians with disabilities, those at the event also took the opportunity to call on all politicians and those campaigning for office, that the needs of the disability community can no longer be ignored. "It's high time that the rights of Canadians with disabilities are achieved in this country. For far too long, politicians have fought for human rights protections on the international stage while here at home, their own citizens with disabilities are rendered second class citizens and lack the basic citizenship rights that able bodied people take for granted," stated Paul-Claude Bérubé, National Chairperson of the Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres.

"With polls suggesting a race too close to call, political parties cannot afford to ignore the voices of almost 4 million Canadians with disabilities, their families, and those concerned with equality rights in Canada. Every vote counts and our community should not be underestimated," Traci Walters, National Director of The Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres reminded the many people who attended the event in person and over a live web cast.

ARCH Launches Fact Sheets on Abuse and Persons with Disabilities

By Lana Kerzner, Staff Lawyer, ARCH

In response to a pressing need for information on abuse as it relates to the experience of persons with disabilities, ARCH recently released a series of fact sheets on abuse and persons with disabilities. They are intended to give legal information and resources, including contact information, to persons with disabilities and the general public.

The following fact sheets are now available:

Fact Sheet 1: What Can I Do If I Am Being Abused?

Fact Sheet 2: What Are My Legal Options For Dealing With Abuse?

Fact Sheet 3: What Happens When I Report Abuse To The Police?

Fact Sheet 4: What Happens When An Abuse Case Goes To Criminal Court?

Fact Sheet 5: How Can The Abuser Be Punished After The Criminal Trial?

Topics covered in the fact sheets include:

- What makes abuse a crime;
- Legal avenues that a person who has experienced abuse can pursue;
- An explanation of the victim/survivor's role in the criminal process;
- Accommodations and supports available to persons with disabilities during the criminal process.

You can read or download the fact sheets in either .pdf or .html format on our website at:http://www.archlegalclinic.ca/publications/crime/A73_2005_003240/index.asp. You also can call ARCH to get a copy of any fact sheet, either on paper or in an alternate format. The current versions of the fact sheets were produced in September 2005. These replace the versions that were distributed at the public education forum on addressing situations of abuse held at the Law Society of Upper Canada ("LSUC") on 31 May 2005, which was co-hosted by ARCH and the Equity Initiatives Department of the LSUC.

The fact sheets aim to give victims/survivors the information that they need to make informed decisions about the legal avenues which are available to them. Few people are aware that victims/survivors have a number of options from which to choose. Most people know of and use the criminal process, and do not pursue other possibilities, such as seeking compensation through the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, complaining to a human rights commission, or launching a civil action.

People who support or provide services to victims/survivors often believe that they must report abuse about which they become aware. However, the legal requirements for mandatory reporting of abuse are in fact limited to specific circumstances set out in various laws. In most cases, there is no mandatory duty to report and it is the victim/survivor's decision as to what steps, if any, he or she wishes to take in response to the abuse.

The fact sheets provide general information so it is important to get legal advice about your own situation. In order to make informed decisions it is important to know what choices are available to you and whether there are time limits that you need to meet to pursue them. Pursuing any legal avenue is often emotionally draining, time consuming and may be expensive. As well, there is the risk that someone may try to take action against you if you report abuse. It is important

for you to get legal advice on what laws can protect you from your abuser and from retaliatory behaviour.

You may wish to call ARCH's Summary Advice and Referral Service for free, confidential legal information and referrals regarding abuse. Another way to get legal advice is to contact a community legal clinic or a lawyer.

To find your local community legal clinic or to apply for free legal advice, you can contact Legal Aid Ontario ("LAO"). LAO gives free legal advice to some people who have low incomes. To reach LAO, call:

Telephone: 1.800.668.8258
TTY: 416.598.8867 (callers in Toronto) or
1.866.641.8867 (callers outside Toronto)

The Lawyer Referral Service ("LRS") can refer you to a lawyer. You can have a free half-hour of advice from that lawyer, but the service will charge \$6 to your phone bill. To reach the LRS, call 1.900.565.4577. People experiencing spousal abuse or child protection issues, or who are under 18 years old or in an institution, may telephone the LRS Crisis Line: 416.947.3330 (callers in Toronto) or 1.800.268.8326 (callers outside Toronto)

The fact sheets were developed as part of ARCH's ongoing initiative to address abuse as it specifically affects persons with disabilities, and to acknowledge that while there are similarities between their experiences and those of other victims/survivors, such as seniors and children, there are also significant differences. For this reason, ARCH put together an advisory committee including lawyers, persons with disabilities, service providers and advocates. In preparing the fact sheets we relied heavily on their knowledge, advice and insight, as well as on the feedback that we receive from the many persons who call our office.

D.O.O.R. 2 Adulthood

"D.O.O.R. 2 Adulthood" is a project that was started by a group of consumers (including youth and young adults with disabilities and parents) and service providers in Ontario. The goal of "D.O.O.R. 2 Adulthood" is to improve the process of transition to adulthood for youth with disabilities and their families in Ontario by providing information about services and resources related to transition and the opportunity to network and share ideas. Youth, parents, and service providers have participated in the development of the project to make sure that it meets their needs.

How is the project being paid for? So far the project has received money from Bloorview MacMillan Foundation, West Park Foundation, CanChild, and the

Ministry of Health and Long-term Care. Also, all organizations involved have helped by giving their time, expertise, resources and supplies.

The following organizations have contributed to the project:

- People with disabilities and their parents
- Ability Online
- Bloorview MacMillan Children's Centre
- CanChild Centre for Childhood Disability Research
- Centre for Independent Living Toronto
- Easter Seal Society
- Erinoak
- Family Net
- Gage Transition to Independent Living
- Toronto District School Board
- Ontario March of Dimes
- Ontario Association of Children's' Rehabilitation Centres
- West Park Healthcare Centre and many others.

Disability Ontario Online Resource (DOOR) 2 Adulthood is a website being developed by a partnership of consumers and service providers. It is hosted by *Ability Online* as an in-kind contribution. The objective of the website (www.door2adulthood.com) is to improve the process of transition to adulthood for youth with disabilities and their families by providing access to quality information about transition services and resources in Ontario. Some components of the website include a database, personal blogs and stories, and online conferences.

In order for people to search the database for information about transition services and resources in their geographic region, a simple and accessible search strategy is needed. In addition, an online method of collecting information about how the website is used is needed. This information will contribute to the evaluation of DOOR 2 Adulthood.

Activate your Winter at Birchmount Bluffs Neighbourhood Centre

Birchmount's Active and Able program offers access to a broad range of inclusive programs and services for persons of diverse abilities and backgrounds.

Active Living Programs:

Chair Tai Chi: enjoy the practice of low impact movements in this gentle class, January 9th to March 27th, Mondays 11:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. Cost is \$12.00.

Subsidies are available.

Barrier Free Access to Swimming Project: this program offers 9 weeks of attendant-supported access to an integrated lane swim. It runs from January 10th to the end of May, Tuesdays 12 noon to 3 p.m. For information, call Constantine at (416) 690-8804. There is no cost to join.

Fitness and Wellness Classes: access to integrated and adapted fitness/wellness classes, including Aqua Fitness, yoga in the hot tub and low impact fitness classes that can be enjoyed while seated. Subsidies are available.

Workshops: enjoy monthly workshops/presentations on topics related to health/wellness, self advocacy, community services, etc. Every third Tuesday of the month, 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Future workshop topics include:

- Information and Referral Services
- Informal Counseling and Advocacy
- Community Consultation Events
Annual Abilities Fair (April, 2006).

Annual membership is \$5.00 and they offer full subsidies to offset program fees for those who face financial barriers.

All programs are held at Birchmount Community Centre, 93 Birchmount Road, Scarborough (at Kingston Road).

For more information and to register, please contact David at (416) 396-7606 or email david@bbnc.ca.

Youth Weekend Retreat

A Life Skills Weekend Retreat Program offered in partnership with the Ontario March of Dimes, Recreation and Integration Services, York Region Brain Injury Services, and Bloorview MacMillan Children's Centre.

The retreat takes place at the Salvation Army Jackson's Point Conference (in Jackson's Point near Lake Simcoe), from Friday March 3rd to Sunday March 5th, 2006. The weekend is for youth with physical disabilities and/or acquired brain injuries, ages 16 to 25 years. The cost to attend is \$150.00 per person. For more

information, please contact one of the following people:

Julie Osbelt, Bloorview MacMillan Children's Centre, (416) 425-6220, ext. 3298

Susan Jones, Ontario March of Dimes, (905) 773-7758, ext. 225

Donna MacKay, Ontario March of Dimes, (416) 425-3463, ext. 298

Self Help 101—A Fact Sheet from the Self Help Resource Centre

Self-help/mutual aid: the basics

Self-help/mutual aid groups are informal networks who share a common experience or issue. Members get together to share support. The primary focus of self-help is emotional support, practical support and information exchange. Self-help is quite similar to peer support.

Ongoing groups from A to Z

People come together in groups around any common experience. A listing in your community might include the following types of groups: Abuse, Addictions, Bereavement, Body Image, Cancer, Caregiving, Disability, Employment-related, Ethnocultural, Family/Parenting, HIV/AIDS, Men, Mental Health, Physical Health, Relationships, Seniors, Sexuality, Women, Youth, and more...

What about quality of care?

Just like there are good professionals and bad professionals, there are good self-help groups and bad self-help groups. The level of care which a self-help/mutual aid group provides its members is based on qualities such as shared leadership, open communications, respect, clear boundaries and confidentiality. It is also important to recognize that each group is unique and a good group for one individual may not be right for another.

10 Steps to Starting a Group:

1. Find out about existing groups.
2. Visit and talk to other group leaders.
3. Collect printed information.
4. Hunt for 2-3 people to work with you.
5. Do the planning: develop a group plan—discuss the topics below and write your group plan:
 - Goals and boundaries
 - Group activities
 - How to share the work
 - Group guidelines
 - External supports
 - Ways to maintain momentum

6. Organize your first meeting.
7. Have your first meeting.
8. Maintain momentum.
9. Evaluate, learn and change.
10. Celebrate what you have achieved.

A Unique Kind of Support:

Self-Help/Mutual Aid initiatives develop social support networks—a key ingredient to health for people and communities. Hopefully, when an individual faces challenges, he or she can turn to a variety of supports in the community. Self-help is unique because it is informal and involves sharing experiential knowledge and support with others who are “in the same shoes”.

CILT's Peer Support Program Update

CILT has a great lineup of peer activities this winter. We hope that you will come and join us and get the scoop on what other neat things are happening in the community. The following is a list of events that are being planned for your enjoyment:

Mid Winter Get Together:

Got the winter blues? Come join us for an afternoon of refreshments and live music by the dynamic duo “Melody Mist”. The Prime Timers and PDN meet every February for their annual Mid Winter Gathering. If you are a member of the Prime Timers or the PDN and would like to come and join us, please call (416) 599-2458, and ask to speak to Nancy (x27) or Kimberly (x34). If you are not a member of either group, but would like to be, please call us. We would love to hear from you.

Breast Health Workshop for Women with Disabilities:

On Thursday March 23, 2006, CILT is hosting a workshop for women with disabilities on breast health awareness. We are very pleased to be able to welcome, once again, Linda Muraca, from the Breast Health Program at Mount Sinai Hospital. Linda facilitated a similar workshop for us last year it was very successful. Breast Health starts with you knowing your own breasts, just like you know your face or hands. Most breast problems can be treated if they are discovered early enough. This workshop will dispel some of the common myths about breast cancer, and provide you with the information you need to take control of your health! Please expect a flyer in your mailboxes toward the end of February with more details.

Aging with a Disability:

In the spring CILT is planning to host a workshop on the effects that the aging process has on people with disabilities. As much as we don't want to admit it, aging is a natural human process that we all have to go through. However, when you already have a disability, the process can be more difficult. We would like to bring in an expert in the field who can offer us some advice and tips on how to make the process a little easier on all of us. Stay tuned for more details!

Yoga in High Park:

In July the Prime Timers will join the PDN for their annual picnic in High Park. This year we will be learning how to relax and be kind to ourselves by practicing yoga. Details to come!

Diner's Club:

The Diner's Club continues to meet monthly, enjoying the enticing cuisines of different restaurants in Toronto. Each month, a different member volunteers to host the event. The host is responsible for choosing a restaurant that they know to be accessible, providing details to the coordinator so that a flyer may be circulated to all Diner's Club members, and also making the reservations with the restaurant. It's that simple! We would like to be able to plan Diner's Club events at least three months in advance so that we may be able to save on mailing costs. We need hosts for February, March and April. If you are at all interested in hosting an event for either of those months, please call Nancy as soon as possible—remember, if there's no host, there can't be an event.

News You Can Use

Government of Canada Provides \$1,000,000+ to Nine Projects

On August 22, Ken Dryden, Minister of Social Development, announced funding for nine projects with disability organizations to help persons with disabilities become employed through services such as skills enhancement, work experience and career counselling. The government supports these projects through the Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities, which supports a broad array of employment projects for people with disabilities who are unemployed and who are not normally eligible for employment benefits under the Employment Insurance Act.

Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation invites you to participate in a consultation session for Torontonians with disabilities. To fill in a survey and see

a list of upcoming sessions, visit
<http://www.toronto.ca/parks/survey/index.htm>.

Respiteservices.com, which coordinates a network of agencies and organizations providing respite services to individuals with all kinds of disabilities and their families, will now be available across Ontario. Building on the success of the Toronto model of www.respiteservices.com, this expansion will take place over the next three years.

PLAN was founded 16 years ago to help parents answer the question, "What will happen to our son or daughter with a disability when we die?" It has assisted many families since. PLAN's informative new website has been designed to assist people as they plan for the safety, security and well-being of a relative with a disability. For more information, visit <http://www.plan.ca>

Ageing and Developmental Disabilities Project - Transition Guide Now Online
the Transition Guide developed by the OPADD Transition Task Group is now available online at www.opadd.on.ca. Go to the home page and click on the link to the right of the screen. The guide contains information to help caregivers plan with the person who is aging with a developmental disability. Developing a personal history, health care issues, substitute decision-making, finances and principles for transition planning are some of the topics covered.

HAO's New Province-Wide EOL Website

HAO will soon be launching its new province-wide, comprehensive website on end-of-life care. This site builds on our original Toronto-area website supported by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Toronto Region. By leveraging our Government funding, we were able to gain the commitment of three other major funders (RBC Financial Group, The Order of St. Lazarus, Toronto Region, and the Order of St. John) in order to build a province-wide site. So, if you are interested in available services in Cape Croker, Ear Falls, Hope, Nepean, Pethericks Corners, Snug Harbour and Watrington, not to mention large urban centres such as Toronto, London, Ottawa etc, please go to www.hospicelifeline.com, hit "Programs and Services" and then go to "Search Programs by Community."

WANTED!! CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

We are looking for people to submit articles to be printed in future issues of "Peer Links". Personal stories are always a big hit! If you don't want your name printed in the newsletter, you can always choose to remain anonymous. A big part of

peer support is being able to share your ideas and thoughts on a topic with those who find themselves to be in a similar situation.

The topic should be disability-related, it can be on an experience that you have had and think that others could learn from your experience, a poem, an anecdote, or it can simply be some words of wisdom you wish to share with others.

Please call Nancy at CILT if you would like to make a submission. Articles are welcome as soon as RIGHT NOW. Thanks.

WEBSITES YOU CAN USE

www.diversityworld.com

Diversity World is a website on employment issues for people with disabilities! Whether you are a person with a disability, an employer, or an employment services professional, you are likely to find some exciting information, concepts and ideas. The resources they have gathered are intended to help people with disabilities to improve their job search strategies and career development. They are intended to help employers improve their outreach recruiting, job accommodation, and employment practices. They are intended to help providers of education and employment services to be more effective at supporting people with disabilities in job and career development.

www.archdisabilitylaw.ca

ARCH has a new website. This website should be easy to remember because its name is part of their new name, ARCH Disability Law Centre. Right now their new website looks a lot like the old one. But changes are being made so that the new website will be more helpful and easier to use. If you have suggestions or comments on how to make the website better, please email them to Lishanthi Caldera at calderl@lao.on.ca.

www.whispers4u.com

Whispers4u is a [disabled dating](#) site for [disabled singles](#), men, women their friends and their partners who may be handicapped. Able-bodied members and devotee's are more than welcome, however the requirement is a readiness to meet adult people with disabilities, handicapped or amputees, and to respect the feelings of our disabled members.

Whispers4u was founded in 2002 when all the major [dating sites](#) seemed to ignore the needs of disabled people - We started as a small business and have really grown into something unique that others are now trying to emulate. The website covers people with disabilities globally, including Canada. They now

have 17440 registered men and women looking for love, the majority of which have some form of disability. Their user base is growing rapidly day by day, and we are established as the Internet's number one dating service for persons with a disability. Hundreds of people have found new friends or started relationships through their site, just by chatting in the live webcam chatroom.