

# The SOLUTION source

Thunder Bay Counselling Newsletter  
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*For You & Your Family*

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## INFORMATION OVERLOAD

**WE LIVE IN AN INSTANT WORLD  
WITH CONTINUOUS NEWS,  
UPDATES, AND CONNECTION.**

Our access to information is convenient but can also be corrosive to our mental wellness. What happens when simple searches and nightly news turns into stressors on our wellbeing?

### IN THIS ISSUE:

Introduction .....	2
Overconsuming .....	3
Overcoming .....	4

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Information is more available than ever before and is expanding every day. There are countless positive reasons our connected way of living is beneficial. However, the negative impacts can be overlooked. Staying up to date and connected can become overwhelming at times. Searching symptoms, regularly getting notifications, or watching the world events in real-time through live streams have shown to have negative repercussions on our mental health and wellbeing by changing perspectives, moods, and triggering emotional stress.

We can all get lost on Google or following a story that intrigues us but it is our interpretation that determines how we are impacted by it. Are we clicking or watching because of general interest or is it triggering a strong emotion? If it's the latter, these messages can have a significant effect on our mood and stress levels. Being mindful of what we consume is important in supporting our wellness. ■

# OVERCONSUMING

Our brain is designed to take in information and perceive what is and isn't a threat based on the data it receives. What happens when a significant portion of that data is negative?

Events from around the world might not be happening directly to us but the direct and sometimes raw stories and information we receive can make it feel like it is.

It may seem simple to just stop taking in negative news but it's not that easy. We are instinctually drawn to the bad news. We use this as a form of protection to determine our safety. Our brains are designed to recognize and remember the negative experiences to stop us from doing it again. Our bodies can even experience physical reactions to negative news including increased heart rate and blood pressure. Author and Professor of Psychology at the University of Texas, Dr. Mary McNaughton-Cassill explains it as the primitive reaction that if berries make you sick you remember it as to not get sick again. The negative information we collect may not directly impact our lives but we are designed to remember it and interpret it so that it leaves an impression. This perceived threat to our safety can be distressing and affect our sense of wellbeing.

Perspectives can also change with overconsumption of negative information. There is a notion that there is only bad news in the world today. Messages are crafted to keep our interest, sometimes going as far as spinning slightly negative news into a disaster. With this, we rarely receive the full story or get to follow up to see how the problem was resolved and it distorts our perspective of what is truly happening in the world around us. It is difficult to escape the distressing information and messages that are constantly accessible and shared. Sometimes we see them without us even choosing to. Being bombarded with negative information consistently doesn't allow our minds a break from the worry and unsafe feelings.

There are stories and information that impact us directly but understanding the difference between just a story and something that we need to act upon is key and requires time to think to fully understand. It's like chewing our food rather than swallowing it whole. Taking even a few moments to think and process the information we receive and absorb throughout the day is crucial. Allowing this time to fully comprehend our thoughts will help us not to dwell on them or leave us feeling overwhelmed with data. ■

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At first you feel sad or shocked for the people and then very quickly you turn to yourself because it's that sort of a survival instinct, 'would this happen to me?'... That's normal. It's not being selfish it's basically survival.

– Dr. Peter Lin, CBC medical contributor.

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Good news doesn't want to kill us.

– Dr. Peter Lin.

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## OVERCOMING

Whether it happens often or occasionally, feeling overwhelmed by information is normal and important to acknowledge. To relieve the stress on our mental wellness, we need to work to better understand how these messages have impacted us. To find a solution to these troubling feelings, take time to think about exactly what is bothersome about the information received. Is it worrying to think about the future? Is there a dire question needing to be answered? Sometimes, there is more to just watching bad news or going on a search frenzy.

Caring for our wellness is personal. Recognizing what affects our wellness and how to improve it will take some time to explore. Here are some ways to improve and care for mental wellness when negative information becomes overwhelming:

- **Take time** - Allow time to process and understand what you see, read and hear every day. If you can, take a break for a few days or even weeks.
- **Time it** - View what you want to see in a controlled way. Try setting a 15-minute timer once a day to take in your news or do your searches. When time is up, step away from it until the next day.
- **Control** - It isn't always possible but try reading or watching only from a source you know to be reliable and where you can choose the piece you want to see and scroll or fast forward past the ones you don't.
- **Be mindful** - Choose what to consume with wellbeing in mind. Will it truly benefit you in any way?
- **Consult an expert** - If you are worried about something that will impact your life, talk to a professional. For example, if you're concerned about a medical issue, contact your doctor or attend a walk-in clinic.
- **Keep balance** - Make sure to keep a balance of the good and bad. There are amazing things that happen every day that we don't know about. Try looking for good news with sites like [www.goodnewsnetwork.org](http://www.goodnewsnetwork.org). Another great way to balance is to spend time with friends or family and connect without technology.

There will always be bad news but, there will also always be good news. We should take in all information in stride while remembering to care for our personal wellness. This includes being kind to ourselves and understanding that the weight of the world isn't on our shoulders alone. ■



THUNDER BAY  
**COUNSELLING**  
SOLUTIONS THAT CHANGE LIVES



**Counselling and psychotherapy are forms of “talk therapy”. Talk therapy provides you with a confidential, safe and supportive environment to share what is troubling you.**

**We can help when:**

- You're experiencing a high level of stress
- You experience mood swings or feel your emotions are out of control
- Your relationships are strained
- You have feelings of being disconnected
- Your day-to-day life is impacted (school, work, etc.)
- You feel like no one understands and you just need someone to listen

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