
Sitting in the dark: COVID-19 and mental well-being

Fiona Edwards

Abstract

COVID-19 has created a new reality for countries worldwide as leaders are tasked with the responsibility of enacting safety measures to stop the rate of infection. Social distancing is promoted as one of the main ways of curbing the spread of the virus. Such measures limit social interaction and the spaces people are free to occupy. The following poem, entitled “Sitting in the dark: COVID-19 and mental well-being” speaks to the mental health impacts of such closures on the youth population, highlighting that no one is immune from the virus. This poem also explores the interconnectedness of a person’s physical and mental health and the subsequent need to pay attention to both realities during times of global crisis. Despite the challenges the pandemic presents, it is imperative that youth find an outlet to cope, one that will help them develop resiliency and a sense of hope.

Keywords

COVID-19, youth, mental health, well-being, social distancing

I am youthful and untouchable

That's what I thought.

My age gives me security

That's what I thought.

But you proved no one is immune

From the youngest to the oldest.

You came into the world

Like an uninvited guest.

Traveling from country to country

Defying their borders,

Putting restrictions on human behaviour

Disrupting their very existence.

I am forced to barricade

Within the confines of my home

Limiting my social interaction

To protect my physical health

While mentally I am fading

With no way to cope

Sitting in the dark

Wondering if the walls are crashing in.

Never felt so alone in a time like this

Where I am searching for a moment,

When my life was not sequestered

By social distancing.

Sitting in the dark

My mind is racing from thought to thought

To occupy the space that is between me

And the outside world.

My life is being robbed by a pandemic

That's linked to a disruptive path

Sitting in the dark

Seems to be never-ending,

It feels like an inescapable reality.

However, holding on to the memories of what can be

I hope for a better future where being confined

Does not hinder my understanding of life.

Author biography

Fiona Edwards is a Ph.D. candidate in Social Work at York University, Toronto, Canada. She also received a Masters of Social Work from York University in the spring of 2012. Fiona has over eight years of professional experience in the field of child and youth mental health. This experience is the impetus for her doctoral research. Her current research explores the lived mental health experiences of Afro-Caribbean Canadian youth in Southern Ontario urban areas. Fiona's broader research interests include child and youth mental health, the racialization of mental illness, mental illness stigma, mental health and well-being, religiosity, spirituality, anti-oppressive social work, and race, racialization, and racism.