



.Better begins today

Our Campaign to Transform Mental Health
Care at Southlake Regional Health Centre

An aerial photograph of a large, multi-story hospital building. The building has a curved section on the left with the word "EMERGENCY" visible. There are several parking lots in front of the building, with some cars parked. The entire image is covered with a semi-transparent yellow overlay. Overlaid on the image is the text ".We don't just get better" in a large, white, sans-serif font. The text is arranged in four lines: ".We", "don't", "just get", and "better".

**.We
don't
just get
better**



We build it.

From better moments, better environments, and better care. With every improvement, no matter how small it may seem, we move forward.

Better isn't a destination, it's the progress we make every day. Today, for mental health, it's beginning at Southlake.

We know that recovery is a journey made one step at a time. This is true for any illness, from cancer to heart disease, but nowhere it is clearer than in the struggle with mental health that so many of us face. In communities across Canada, people are sharing conversations about mental health and the barriers of stigma are coming down. As progress continues through research and understanding of this invisible illness, more and more people are seeking care here at Southlake.

Join us in a new beginning. Where we heal determines how we heal. At a time of unprecedented need, amplified by COVID-19 — along with conditions we would never accept for cancer or cardiac patients — Southlake cannot wait any longer. We must transform the way we care, and our hospital must catch up to the modern standards of mental health care that our current space cannot accommodate. Now is the time to build a better place to heal.

A hidden crisis closer than you think.

The university student with **bipolar disorder.**

The professional with paralyzing **anxiety.**

The new mother coping with **post-partum depression.**

The senior struggling with **dementia.**

The paramedic with **post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).**

The middle-aged woman living with **schizophrenia.**

The resident from a nearby group home experiencing **psychosis.**

The single father facing **depression and suicidal thoughts.**



Photo credit: Anne-Marie Jackson/Toronto Star

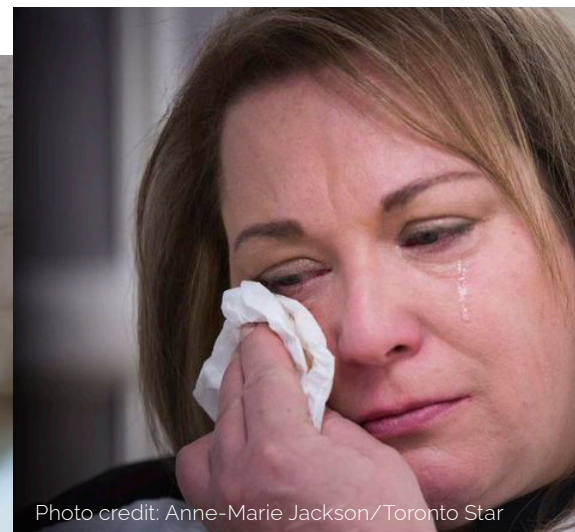




Photo credit: Anne-Marie Jackson/Toronto Star



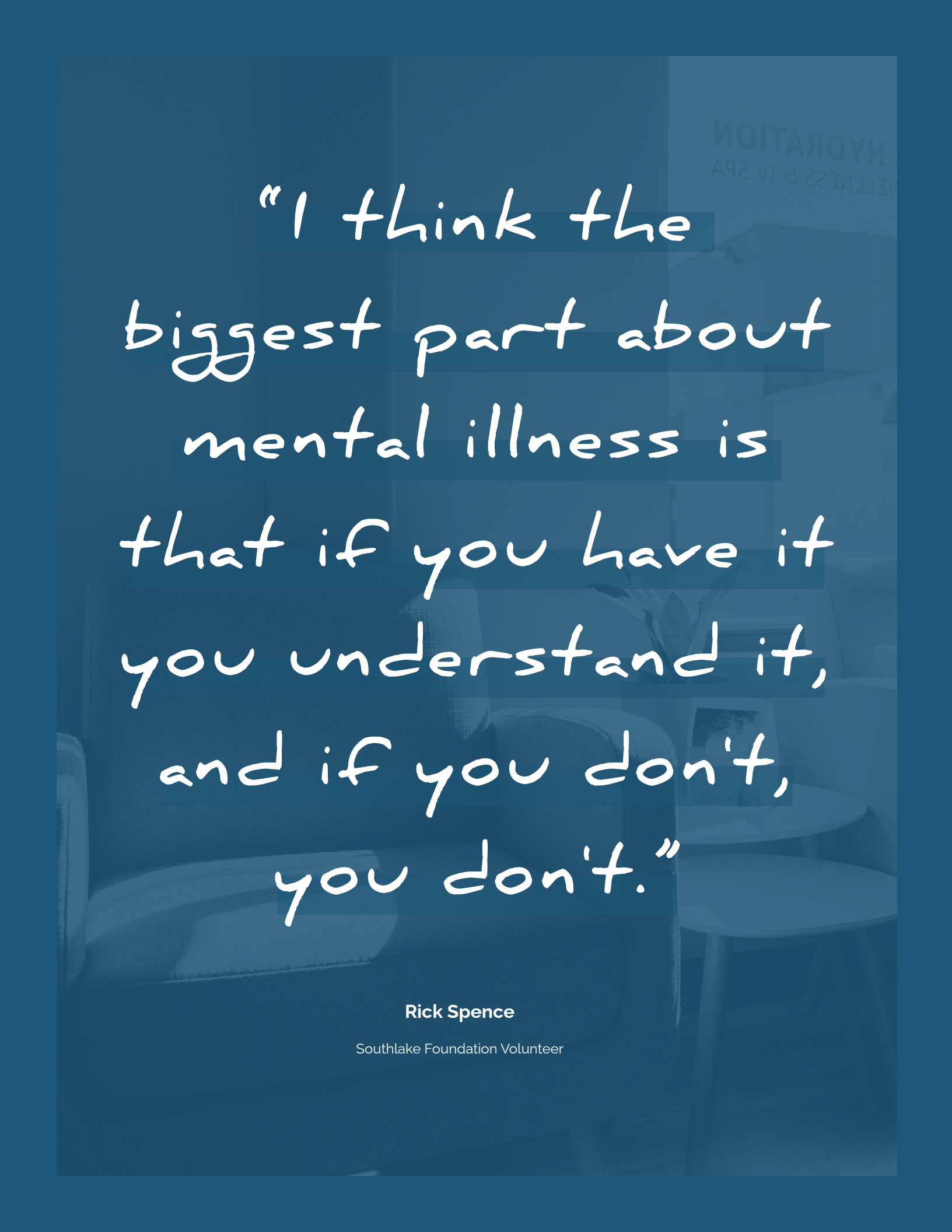
One in two Canadians will experience mental illness before age 40.

These are our neighbours, our colleagues, our friends, our family. Ourselves. The mental health crisis is close to home. Care should be too.



The estimated cost of mental illness in Canada is **\$51 billion** annually for health care, lost productivity, and reductions in quality of life. The disease burden in Ontario alone for mental illness and addiction is **1.5 times higher than all cancers combined**, and more than **7 times that of all infectious diseases**.

Last year, Southlake's Mental Health Program saw **1,074 adult inpatient admissions and more than 33,500 outpatient treatment visits**.



"I think the
biggest part about
mental illness is
that if you have it
you understand it,
and if you don't,
you don't."

Rick Spence

Southlake Foundation Volunteer



Rick's Story

More than grief.

Rick Spence's anxiety began at the age of 50, after the sudden loss of his brother to mental illness. At first, he just thought he was grieving – until one day, during a presentation to a group of doctors on financial planning, he actually felt something come loose inside him. He has no memory of what happened next. At home later that night, things only got worse. He couldn't breathe, couldn't stop pacing. It was an anxiety attack, though he didn't recognize it yet. He was restless and unable to sleep through the night for weeks. He took a leave of absence from work, grateful for the supportive colleagues that made it possible to do so.

It was months before Rick understood that what he was suffering from wasn't just grief. Not knowing where to begin, he searched online for help, and even reached out to his adult son, who had been diagnosed with anxiety as a teenager.

"I think the biggest part about mental illness is that if you have it you understand it, and if you don't, you don't," said Rick. "You can sympathize, but unless you experience it firsthand, you can't ever

truly understand what it's like. It's like my wife having a baby. I know she was in pain, but I'll never fully know what she went through."

For Rick, the most eye-opening part of his journey with anxiety and depression has been realizing how many people go through mental illness alone, keeping it hidden from those they love. It was true of his older brother, who he knew intimately enough to consider a best friend, a hero. And the same is true of every colleague and family friend that has opened up to him since he began talking about his mental illness who, until then, had been suffering in silence.

Southlake's mental health team is filled with people who have devoted their careers to helping patients like Rick. But imagine trying to treat anxiety in a cramped, overcrowded space with no privacy, with other patients experiencing their own crises only feet away.

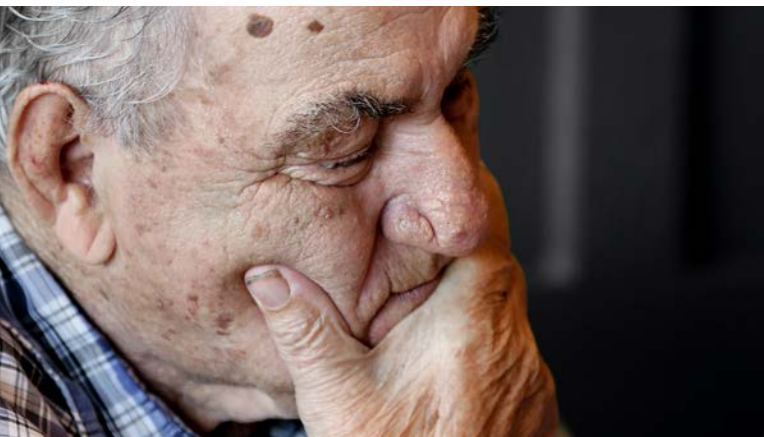
Facing the perfect storm.

Today, our capacity challenges are made worse by critical factors close to home.

- We're one of Canada's fastest growing communities. Between 2010 and 2015, the population in our region grew by 8%. From 2015 to 2025, that growth is expected to be 17%.



Photo credit: Anne-Marie Jackson/Toronto Star



- Our region has a rapidly aging population, with the highest number of seniors in Ontario. By 2035, 23% of our region's population, nearly 570,000 people, will be over 65 years of age.
- We're seeing rising rates of dementia, addiction and mental illness.
- The communities we serve have 17 group homes, eight within walking distance of Southlake.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has caused isolation and economic turmoil. The effects on our mental health will be felt long after the pandemic is over.



The reality is that our Mental Health Program simply cannot face this storm without your help. While the population in our communities continues to grow, and the need for mental health care along with it, the space for treatment has not. Our environment isn't just outdated and substandard: it's an unacceptable barrier to providing the best possible care and support for patients and their families. Southlake's current adult mental health spaces are small, overcrowded and lack the necessities that allow optimal healing and recovery.

On average, 17 patients come into our Emergency Department every day experiencing a mental health crisis. And while we treat just as many patients as any hospital across the GTA, our Mental Health Program has the smallest footprint. **As a result, our occupancy is at times as high as 180%.**

But volume is only one piece of the challenge. The conditions those patients experience when they arrive are just as unacceptable.



Photo credit: Anne-Marie Jackson/Toronto Star

Falling behind when it matters the most.



Photo credit: Anne-Marie Jackson/Toronto Star

When your family member comes to our Emergency Department experiencing a mental health crisis, the first stop in their journey is the Mental Health and Wellness Area. This space once provided a quiet and isolated environment for patients waiting to be assessed by a physician. But with dramatically increasing numbers of patients, it is crowded, offering no private areas for psychiatric consultations and little space for even a single family member to accompany their loved one. For patients unsure of what to expect, those with physical challenges, and those requiring additional support such as seniors with dementia, this only adds to an already overwhelming situation.

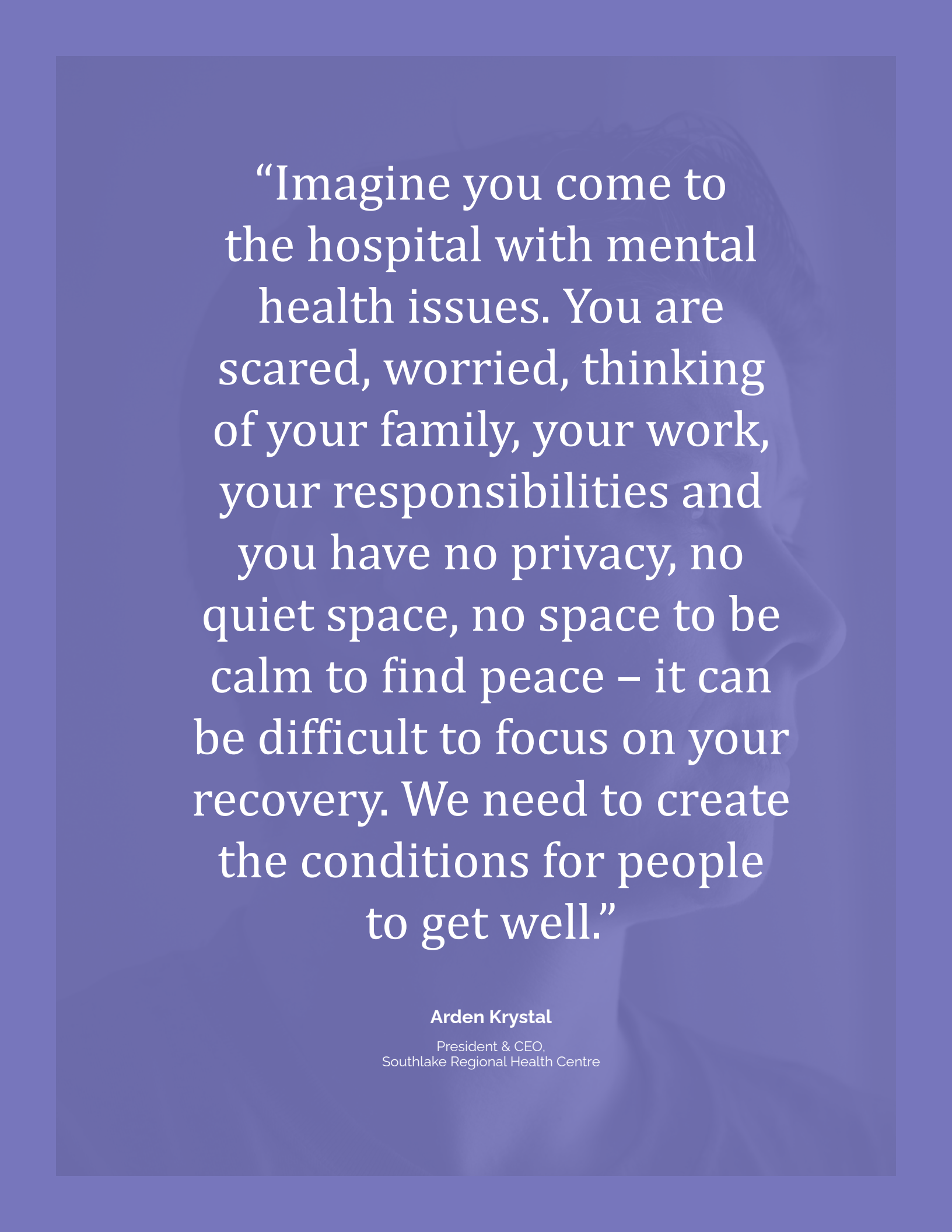
Incoming patients often wait two to five days before even being admitted from the Emergency Department to the Inpatient Mental Health Unit due to our bed shortage. It's an unacceptable delay made worse by other issues: no windows to provide natural light, no privacy, and no showers. At a time when every moment of peace and comfort

can be the difference between downward spiral and the beginning of recovery, they are getting the minimum.

When the Mental Health and Wellness Area is full – which is most of the time – patients spill out into the Emergency Department. A security guard is then often posted at the foot of the patient's bed. Seeing more than 300 patients daily, we have the fourth-busiest Emergency Department in Ontario. That's nearly 112,000 patients annually in a space designed for only 70,000.

The current Adult Inpatient Mental Health Unit is also inadequate. Chronically overcrowded, many of our double rooms are forced to house three patients, while the best practice is a private room. The average length of stay for patients in these conditions is 14.5 days.

How can anyone expect to get better if their journey is disrupted as soon as it begins?



“Imagine you come to the hospital with mental health issues. You are scared, worried, thinking of your family, your work, your responsibilities and you have no privacy, no quiet space, no space to be calm to find peace – it can be difficult to focus on your recovery. We need to create the conditions for people to get well.”

Arden Krystal

President & CEO,
Southlake Regional Health Centre

No room to heal.

Mental health care doesn't require the same tools or equipment needed for cancer or cardiac patients. But this invisible illness has a visible need: space. It's a tool as critical to mental health patients as an isolette for premature infants, as vital as an MRI is to screen for tumors. Where we heal determines how we heal. While the population in our communities continues to grow, and the need for mental health care along with it, treatment space in our hospital has not kept pace.



We need to be providing families with as much education on coping techniques as the patients, but if we don't have the space for them to be here we are essentially eliminating a support for our patient, meaning they will most likely end up back with us.

Aga Dojczewska, RN

Manager, Adult Inpatient Mental Health Unit



Imagine coming to the Emergency Department and waiting in a crowded room for **five days** with **no windows**, **no privacy**, and **no showers** before being admitted for mental health care.

Imagine sharing a double room with two other people **also experiencing mental health crises**.

Imagine not being able to have more than one loved one visit you at a time, simply because **there isn't enough space**.

Imagine sharing two showers with **more than twenty strangers**.

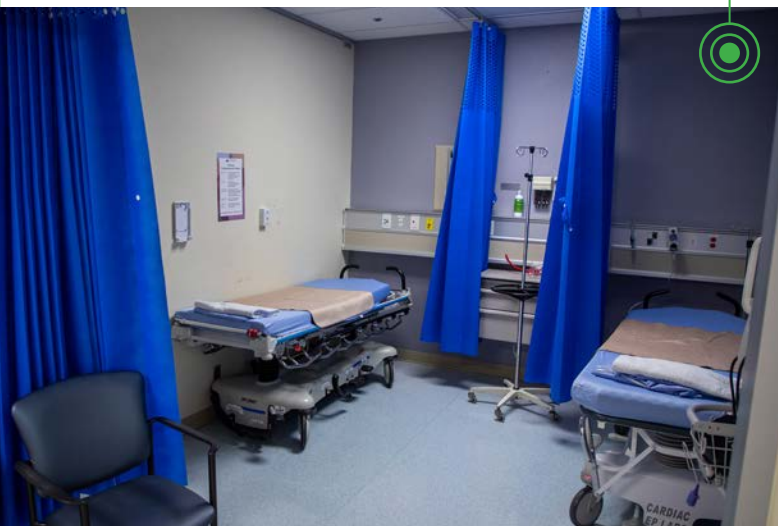
Imagine **not having a private space** to discuss your medical condition and treatment plan with your doctor.

Imagine you have been in the hospital for two weeks and **can't get outside** for any fresh air.

These scenarios would be unacceptable for patients with breast cancer or heart disease. But for Kathy Malanchuk's father and more than 1,000 patients last year alone, this was their experience at Southlake.



Photo credit: Anne-Marie Jackson/Toronto Star



Kathy's Story

He just wanted to go home.



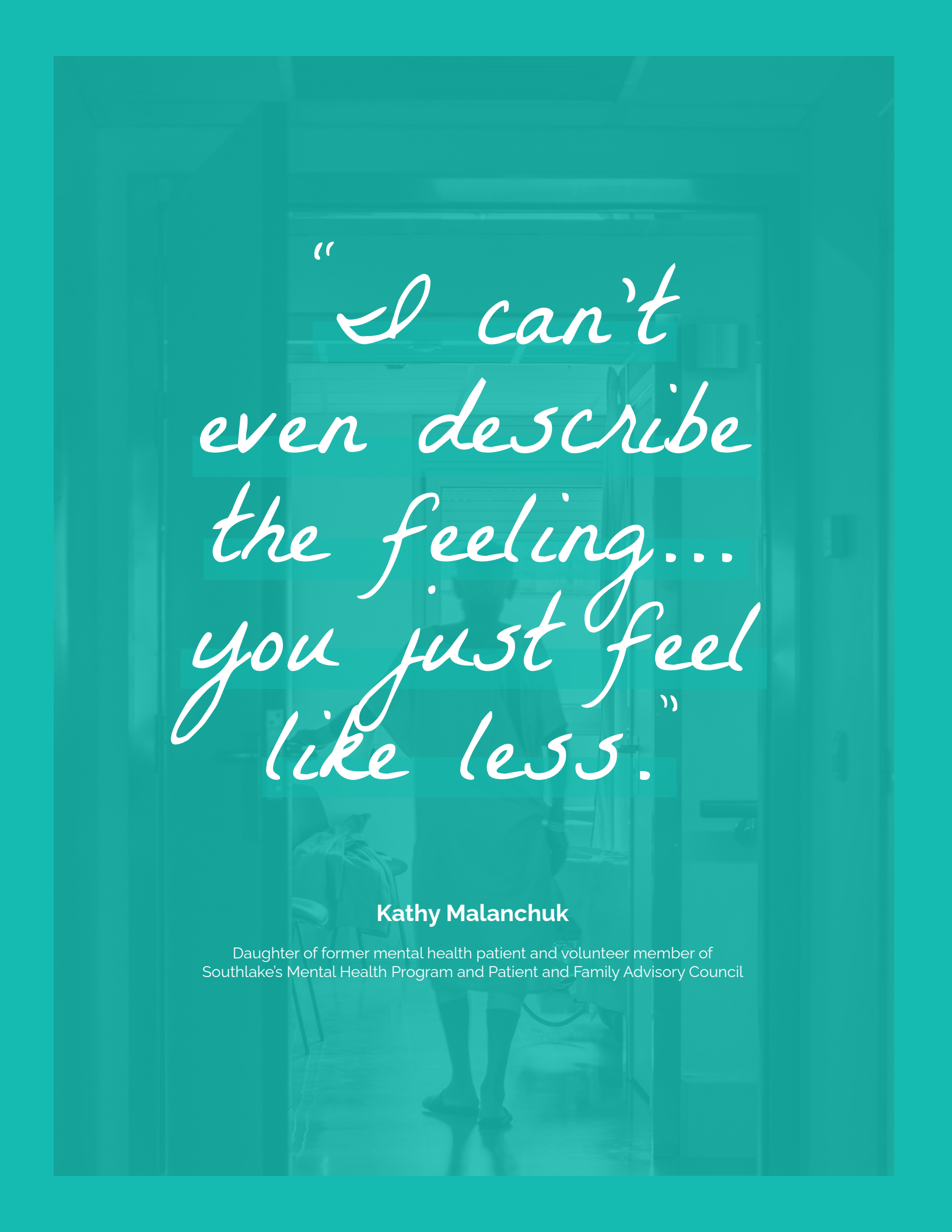
When the phone calls started in the middle of the night, Kathy didn't know what to think. Her 87-year-old father still lived independently, drove, and did his own grocery shopping. He and his wife even had date nights every Friday evening. He had never showed any signs of dementia or anxiety. But he kept calling in the middle of the night, scared that he was having a heart attack. Kathy now understands that his symptoms – accelerated heart rate and shortness of breath – were a result of recurring anxiety attacks. When he threatened suicide, she knew he needed help.

After a stay in our Emergency Department, he was admitted into the Adult Mental Health Inpatient Unit. This was Kathy's first experience with mental illness in her family and she had no idea what to expect.

"He hated the space. He was sharing a room with no telephone, no shower for him to wash

and shave. He couldn't have his cane with him. They're small things, but it made him really agitated when his routine was taken away from him. And it wasn't just him – when we visited, four of us were crammed in a tiny drab room with no windows, trying to comfort Dad, who was sobbing. He just wanted to go home."

The three days that Kathy's father spent there made a lasting impression on her. She got involved as a member of Southlake's Patient and Family Advisory Council, providing advice from the family perspective to help identify and implement changes at Southlake. Through her volunteer role, she has been involved in consultations on changes to the space. Her first-hand insights helped shape this capital expansion project and will ensure Southlake patients will receive the mental health care in the physical space they deserve.



*"I can't
even describe
the feeling...
you just feel
like less."*

Kathy Malanchuk

Daughter of former mental health patient and volunteer member of
Southlake's Mental Health Program and Patient and Family Advisory Council



.Better
begins with
our \$7.5M
campaign to
build spaces
that heal



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This is about more than just the right medicine and the right people.

It's about the things we often take for granted with other illnesses, but are critical for a patient experiencing a mental health crisis. Like **natural light** and **outdoor space** to stretch your legs. Or the peace of mind that a **secure place to store your belongings** can provide. The dignity that comes with **a private place to focus on your own wellbeing**, and the reassurance that **a peaceful visit with your family** brings.

You were there when we reached out to our communities to build the Stronach Regional Cancer Centre and bring treatment close to home. You were there when we needed help to bring a second MRI to our hospital, so patients don't have to travel downtown for critical tests. You were there when our families and neighbours told us we needed a residential hospice for compassionate end-of-life care. And you were by our side as we fought the COVID-19 pandemic head-on.

Today is a turning point. We start by building and doing better: rising to the challenge just like we did for our cardiac, cancer, and other clinical patients across Southlake.

Better begins with the right environment.

Your investment in mental health at Southlake will build a new 6-room Emergent Mental Health Assessment Unit for incoming patients in crisis to begin their treatment the moment they come through our doors, and expand our Adult Inpatient Mental Health Unit to accommodate 400 more patients every year, giving our medical team the ability to provide meaningful and effective treatment.

Better begins with privacy. Patients can feel distressed by hearing about someone else's struggles while they work to understand and cope with their own. Private rooms allow patients to reflect on their thoughts and what they're learning, leading to more successful long-term recovery and lower re-admission rates, and allows staff to build therapeutic and trusting relationships with patients.

Government funding simply won't cover all the costs of lifting Southlake's Mental Health Program spaces to today's standard, so **it's up to our whole community** to deliver the healing space and environment that every patient and family deserves.



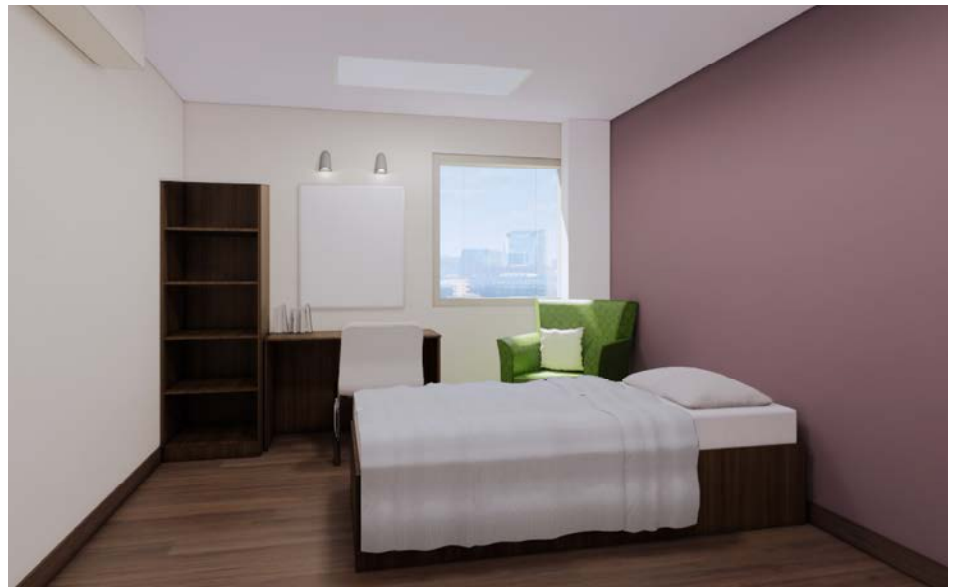
• Better space • Better outcomes

The Emergent Mental Health Assessment Unit

To replace the stressful and inadequate intake area for mental health patients, we're building a new space with six private rooms. A mother struggling with post-partum depression will no longer have to sit on a stretcher in the very public Emergency Department waiting for help. Instead of being constrained and watched by a guard, elderly dementia patients can be with their family in a single room with a proper bed. Along with privacy, patients get the vital natural light proven to contribute to improved mental health, televisions, and music that can provide comfort and security.

The Assessment Unit will be equipped with twice as many bathrooms as the old space, a shower, a common room for meals and watching TV and the space to move around. It will also have a private area for patients to sit with family and friends. A spacious interview room will allow patients and family members to speak privately with doctors and nurses before being admitted, ensuring their treatment can begin earlier.





A 12-bed Expansion to the Adult Inpatient Mental Health Unit.

With high volumes causing significant overcrowding, our semi-private rooms – which are the same size as private rooms at other nearby hospitals – are being used for three patients at a time. Adding 12 private rooms will bring the total beds to 36. That means we'll be able to serve an additional 400 patients each year. These new rooms will include windows with natural light, private bathrooms, improved infection control measures, and most will have personal showers.

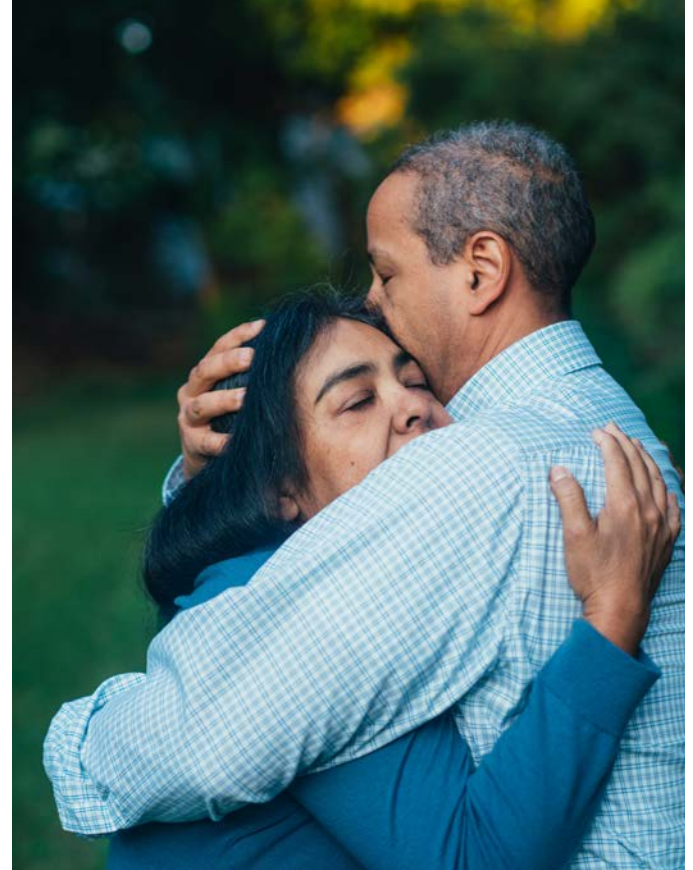
This expansion project also includes revitalization of existing spaces, notably the addition of an outdoor patio accessible from the Adult Inpatient Unit. Patients will have safe access to outdoor space for natural light and fresh air. Something as simple as the opportunity to get out and stretch their legs can greatly reduce the feeling of confinement and the stress that accompanies it.

The new 12-bed unit will also include a spacious area for patients to eat and visit with family, interview rooms for private conversations with primary care providers and family, a lounge area and an activity room. For mental health patients, this can provide the same lifeline as a ventilator to a patient struggling to breathe. It will be an open, welcoming and supportive environment that has been designed to the latest standards of care to promote healing, recovery and the best patient outcomes.



We need help to provide help.

Southlake's Mental Health Program is in crisis. While patients' safety requirements are met, our talented mental health clinicians do not have the space they need to deliver the best, most effective care for mental health patients from diagnosis to treatment. You'll be helping your neighbours who need it most:



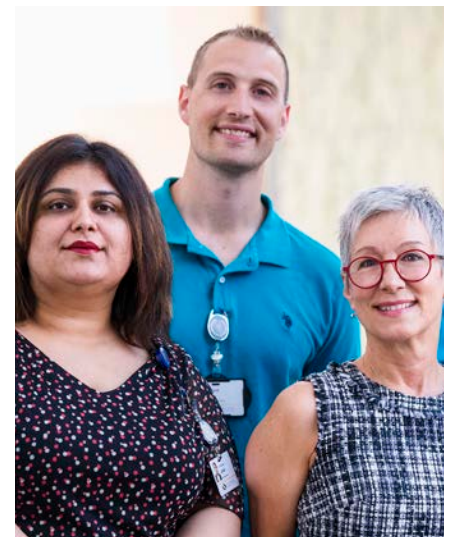
Mental health patients with access to the care they need, right when they need it.



Families by allowing them to be more involved and better equipped to provide support at home, and minimizing their stress with the peace of mind knowing their loved ones are in a healing environment.



Our communities by alleviating the pressure on an already stretched Emergency Department to enable more timely access to critical care.




Our staff by eliminating space as a barrier to best patient outcomes, providing a healing environment where they can do their best work for the patients who depend on them.

This is a crisis shared by our entire community, made more apparent than ever through the prolonged stress and isolation of the pandemic. In fact, we're already seeing increased numbers of patients who are suffering from acute mental illness for the first time as a direct result of COVID-19. That includes more people suffering from severe anxiety and stress, and more people willing to reach out and ask for help.

Everyone is touched by mental illness. You can choose today to create an environment where the best care is possible for the people in your life who need it — whether you know it or not. Make that care a priority by investing in the space we need to offer the leading edge care they expect and deserve, when they need it most.



**With your support, better
can begin right here.**



**“Patients need
a more positive,
continuous
journey, right
from the start.
With your help,
we can make
that possible.**

**While patients
continue to
count on us,
we're counting
on you."**

Dr. Mahdi Memarpour
Chief of Psychiatry



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Let's build **better** together.

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