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Striking the Right Balance

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Living with balance and dizziness issues can include living with fear and anxiety of what the next day or even the next moment might bring. For some the symptoms come and go, while for others the symptoms may be chronic and present at all times. The usually invisible nature of these illnesses brings on its own challenges. Are you faking it? Is this something you can just “get over” or make it go away?

Feeling lost in my own journey, I connected with Balance and Dizziness Canada, a not-for-profit society dedicated to supporting and educating those affected by balance and dizziness disorders. In a disorder filled with instability, there was hope for some stability. Balance and Dizziness Canada held their first support group in April 2024. Many participants shared a sense of relief in knowing they were not alone and that what they were experiencing was real. You see, balance and dizziness issues can often be misunderstood and dismissed by family and friends, but also by healthcare providers. Your experience is minimized. The ways in which our lives are turned upside down and spinning out of control, sometimes literally, is ignored. To find a community of people who just get you is healing.

Another support group was held in June 2024, this time bringing new participants as word was spreading. People expressed hopelessness. Does this ever end or does this just become your new reality? People shared losses in work and relationships. However, amongst these, people also shared gratefulness for all that is well in life and how poor health can make you really cherish the days where everything is alright. People also shared the resilience one gains from living with balance and dizziness issues. The impacts of these disorders on one’s mental wellbeing can often be forgotten. To have your sense of balance, something many take for granted, just snatched from you is devastating. To not have answers for why this might be occurring is shattering. And then to have your reality questioned by family, friends, employers, and healthcare providers of if what you are experiencing is even real is a feeling you cannot explain.

Balance and dizziness disorders do not impact just the person experiencing the symptoms. Along with them, their loved ones and caretakers are also impacted. These support groups provide a space for these individuals too. Participants share tips on how to cope with supporting their loved one while also caring for themselves. They also learn to be more understanding of their loved one’s condition, as someone can look perfectly fine on the outside with complete turmoil taking place on the inside.

The support groups also serve to empower participants with knowledge. People share treatments they have found relief with. While participants are encouraged to not try any treatments without discussing with their healthcare providers, it is helpful to know that some people have found solutions and ways to reduce their symptoms. This introduction to medications, vestibular

physiotherapy, and other treatments, can empower participants to then speak to their own healthcare provider and become advocates for their own wellbeing.

Going forward, the plan for Balance and Dizziness Canada is to continue holding support groups every few months. The hope is for more people across Canada to become aware of these groups and for more healthcare providers to know this is a resource they can offer to their patients. If you are interested in attending a support group, please sign up at https://balanceanddizziness.org/support/support-meetings/.