

Big White Wall

Frequently Asked Questions

1) What is the meaning behind the name “Big White Wall” (BWW)?

Big White Wall explains the name this way:

- “Big” recognizes the infinite nature of human emotion
- “White” conveys the blank canvas that the site provides members to express themselves
- “Wall” symbolizes shelter and support, as well as the barriers we sometimes need to break through to improve emotional health

2) Who pays for the solution?

In Ontario, BWW is made available with funding from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. The Ontario Trillium Foundation has also provided funding to make the solution available in the Central East LHIN.

3) How do individuals register for BWW?

From otn.ca/bigwhitewall, they click “Join Us” on the top navigation bar, then enter their Ontario postal code. From there, they'll be asked to enter their email address and some basic information. They'll then receive a confirmation email.

They click on the link in the email and complete signup. They can use the service immediately.

4) Who are the most appropriate candidates for BWW?

Big White Wall is suitable for individuals:

- 16 years or older
- Seeking support for mild to moderate depression or anxiety
- At low risk of suicide/self-harm
- With a basic level of literacy
- With access to the Internet
- Who prefer an alternate/adjunct to face-to-face therapy
- Seeking community peer support
- Looking for after-hours mental health support

5) Do individuals need a referral from a clinician to use BWW?

Individuals do not need a referral from a healthcare provider. Individuals can register themselves. Healthcare providers do play a key role in suggesting BWW to patients and providing information.

6) How long do users have access to BWW?

Registered users have unlimited access to BWW for six months. After this time, it is hoped that the user would have gained some coping strategies to help support their mental wellbeing. Members can re-register at any time as needed.

7) What is the evidence behind BWW?

- OTN takes a rigorous approach to ensuring that all of the services and programs we offer are safe, secure and provide the highest quality experience and care for patients/members of the public.
- This is why OTN procured BWW on behalf of the Local Health Integration Networks with funding from the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.
- In addition to a comprehensive pilot to evaluate BWW with Women's College Hospital, Lakeridge Health and Ontario Shores, BWW has demonstrated tremendous success in improving care for UK patients.
 - 67% report improved well-being from using BWW, such as reduced isolation, improving coping skills and improved emotional health
 - For 48% of members, BWW was their first step in accessing mental health support, outside of professional intervention
 - 1 in 2 members share an issue for the first time on BWW

8) How is personal information handled?

Respecting user privacy and protecting user information in an online environment is a priority for OTN and BWW. Identifying and registration information is stored in Ontario.

OTN must adhere to a number of privacy obligations under privacy legislation before making available any online or digital health solution. As a result, OTN has conducted privacy and security risk assessments of the BWW solution and included requirements in its agreements with BWW that are designed to limit access to personal information and keep it secure. Nonetheless, there are risks in using any electronic information system. BWW offers users privacy options. Users are encouraged to read the BWW Privacy Statement and Terms of Use prior to registering with and entering the BWW community.

An individual's participation in the online community is voluntary, anonymous and no identifying information is shared publicly. Furthermore, House Rules, Privacy Rules and specific guidance are provided to users, particularly on how to keep themselves safe on BWW. Big White Wall advocates a policy of non-exchange of personal information or private contacts.

9) Who are the Wall Guides and where are they located?

Wall Guides are trained counsellors who have at least one year of counselling experience with people experiencing mood and anxiety difficulties. They are employed by BWW and are based where BWW operates: in Canada, the UK and New Zealand. The various time zones allow them to be available 24/7, 365 days a week. They are supervised by a clinical team that includes a psychiatrist. All Wall Guides are provided training by BWW.

10) What is the role of the Wall Guide?

Wall Guides are committed to keeping users safe and helping them feel they are not alone. They are required to be proactive in responding to users who are in crisis and provide them with support to seek local assistance.

A key requirement of a Wall Guide's work is to ensure that the anonymity of members is maintained and to report any posts that may reveal the real identity of a member. All comments, and all images are monitored to ensure that they conform to BWW [House Rules](#).

Wall Guides are required to model the behaviour that BWW wants users to adopt within the community. This includes being welcoming of new members, exchanging comments that are non-judgemental and respectful, as well as encouraging others to express their troubles and provide assurance of a safe space.

11) How are suicidal risks dealt with by BWW?

If a member discloses feeling unsafe (i.e. thoughts of self harm), either through a chat, visual display or as a result of an online assessment, a Wall Guide engages in a private chat with the member to assess the level of risk. If the level of risk is deemed high, the Wall Guide will provide a local crisis number (based on postal code) to the member and strongly encourage them to call for help. BWW is not a crisis service and does not contact a crisis service for the member. This ensures the anonymity of the service.
(Note: Further details regarding risk escalation can be found below.)

12) Is BWW available in French or any other languages?

At this time, BWW is only available in English.

13) Does BWW have a connection with users' primary care providers?

No. In order to remain a safe and anonymous community, there is no connection between BWW and users' healthcare providers. This allows users to feel comfortable expressing themselves without worry of the information they share being reported back to their care providers.

14) Is BWW available through a phone app?

Users can connect with the BWW community wherever and whenever from a mobile device simply by visiting the mobile-friendly website at bigwhitewall.ca.

(Note: The service requires an internet connection. Some features, like the Guided Support courses, should be used on a desktop computer. For ease, users may want to create a shortcut to BWW on their mobile device.)

15) Who manages support and issues with the BWW site?

Big White Wall user and infrastructure support is managed by BWW. Questions, complaints or feedback can be sent to theteam@bigwhitewall.ca.

16) How are inappropriate posts or behaviours on BWW reported?

Users can click 'Report' on the 'talkabout' and 'brick' pages of the website to report inappropriate posts or behaviours in the system. The information is then escalated to a BWW team member. There is also a system of watchwords that signal inappropriate behaviour or language use, which are immediately flagged to a Wall Guide.