

# Youth Wellness & Empowerment

Q&A

## Empowering Youth of All Ages

Actress and activist Skai Jackson is a positive force and role model in every way. The 18-year-old rose to fame after starring in multiple Disney Channel series — and she’s had major success in standing up for what she believes in. Her first book, *Reach for the Skai: How to Inspire, Empower, and Clapback* (2019), shares her takes on self-acceptance and girl empowerment. We asked for her advice on feeling empowered and dealing with bullying.

**Having struggled with bullying first-hand, what’s your advice for other teens out there who have been bullied by their peers?**

The first thing I want to say is: it will get better. My advice is to never be shy about telling a friend or an adult about what’s going on. You might be nervous, but don’t be — your friends and family are there to help you.

*Read the full interview on page 2. →*

## Self-Esteem and Self-Worth: Filling Up Your Own Cup First

Michael Eisen

Youth today struggle to understand how their self-esteem isn’t dependent on external forces but instead comes from within and can be cultivated, by them and for them, to create a lasting feeling of belonging and empowerment.

During the process of identity formation, youth — and especially teens — look to those around them in order to feel validated. This can include feelings of safeness, happiness, appreciation, support, respect, and belonging. There’s a misconception that in order to feel these things they must seek and receive them from others, and for this reason the external feedback they get from their peers, teachers, and parents can be heavily weighted against other potential sources of self-worth.

As most of us have experienced first-hand, when we seek validation from external sources we’re often left with a feeling of lack that perpetuates

a negative emotional cycle. This cycle looks something like this:

- We tell a joke (seeking validation through providing the value of humour)
- Our friends laugh at the joke (validating our value as a friend)
- We feel good about ourselves and our place as that person’s friend
- The validation quickly wears off
- We’re then looking for external validation again, perpetuating the cycle.

Youth do this in various ways, such as social media likes and follows to show approval from others, high grades to feel smart, and complimenting others in hopes of being validated in return. These inevitably lead to anxiety, doubt, insecurity, and distress in their lives, as no matter what they do, those positive feelings quickly dissipate and the cycle continues.

The truth of the matter is that we have the ability to fill ourselves up and create positive and sustainable

self-esteem. True self-esteem comes from within instead of relying on others. We’re all born with the natural ability to love, honour, and respect ourselves, but we’ve forgotten how. True and sustainable self-esteem and self-worth are generated from within so that we always have an infinite supply with which to replenish ourselves instead of constantly looking to others to fill us up.

But what does filling up your own cup look like? It consists of feeling more positive about ourselves and realizing that our self-worth isn’t reliant on others (parents, teachers, or peers included). It’s celebrating who we are in the moment and appreciating our wins, losses, and lessons learned along the way.

In order to remember that self-esteem comes from within, we need to remind youth to practise daily so that relying on themselves becomes second nature. Practices such as writing down 10 things they like about themselves,

setting positive reminders in their phones, doing something that puts them outside of their comfort zone, or having a solo dance party in their room can all lead to increased self-esteem, confidence, and resilience.

The important thing to remember is that these practices have to be chosen by them and for them. The first step to generating our self-esteem from within is making the commitment to ourselves that we will try our best and practise often. This can only be done on an individual basis. Through this process of filling up our own cup and creating self-esteem from within, youth can learn sustainable practices — leaving them happier and healthier while ultimately cultivating a more empowered generation as a whole. ■



**Michael Eisen**  
Founder,  
Youth Wellness  
Network

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The best summer accessory?

# Sun Safety!

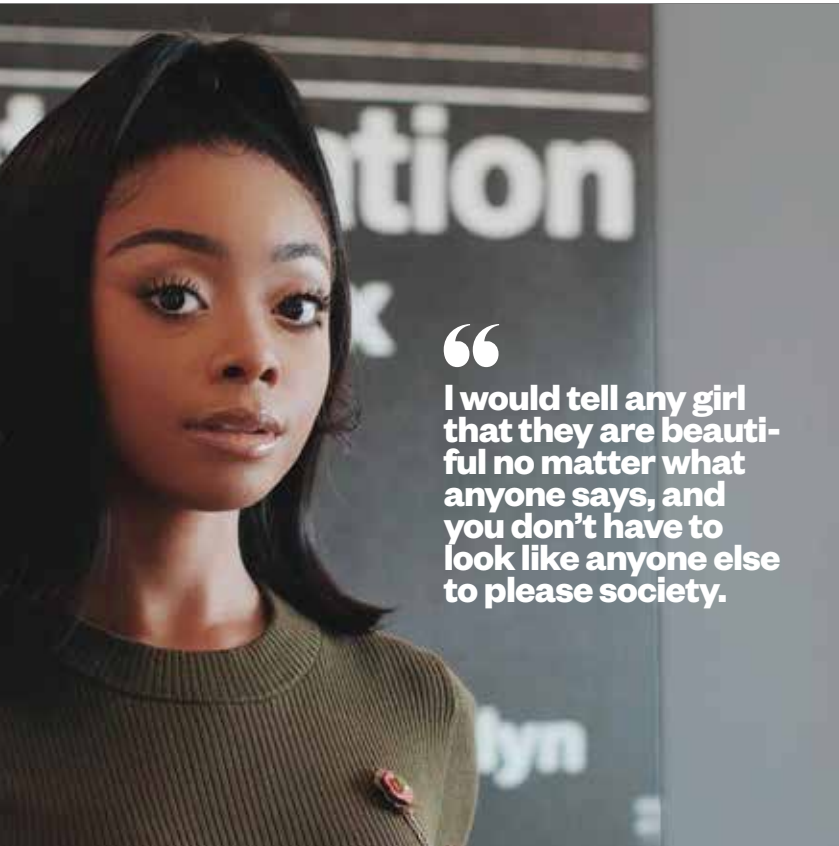
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 save your skin  
FOUNDATION





“  
I would tell any girl  
that they are beautiful  
no matter what  
anyone says, and  
you don’t have to  
look like anyone else  
to please society.”

**As a woman in the spotlight, how did you overcome pressures and negative messages from cyberbullies?**

I realized that nobody who says negative things about me on the internet knows the real me and I have so many other things to worry about. The things they say to me on the internet, they wouldn’t say to my face. I have so many more supporters than haters and it’s important to remember that.

**Why do you think it’s important to empower girls and young women around the world to reach their potential?**

I think it’s just important to support everyone, period. We can go so much further when we all come together and we can do amazing things. Positivity makes everything great.

**What’s your advice for girls who are feeling discouraged with themselves?**

I would tell any girl that they’re beautiful no matter what anyone says, and you don’t have to look like anyone else to please society. There’s only one you and you should be the greatest YOU can be.

**Why is it important to foster gender equality in the entertainment industry?**

A lot of women don’t get the same opportunities that men do in the industry and I think it’s so important that we continue to stress that we deserve what they get. We don’t do any less work than they do, and sometimes we work harder. Our gender shouldn’t define us. ■



## Help Empower Kids and Youth Worldwide — Play It Forward

Rebecca Cuthbert

**R**ight To Play is a global organization that protects, educates, and empowers children and youth to rise above adversity using the power of play. It reaches 2.3 million children each year in some of the most difficult and dangerous places on Earth, helping them to stay in school and graduate, resist exploitation, overcome prejudice, prevent disease, and heal from the traumas of war. The organization does this by harnessing play, one of the most fundamental forces in a child’s life, to teach the critical skills needed to dismantle barriers and embrace opportunities, both in learning and in life.

This month, Right To Play is launching its newest event, the Play It Forward virtual challenge. It’s open to anyone willing to engage in their playful side for a good cause — no matter their age.

From June 18 to July 1, a new daily challenge will be issued to keep participants connected, active, and having fun while empowering millions around the world, including Indigenous children and youth in Canada. Friends and family can sponsor participants, earning them more points — and more chances to win one of the top prizes.

Now more than ever, Right To Play needs the help of supporters to fund critical programming throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Funds raised will benefit Right To Play’s mission and ensure that programs can continue in Canada and in the 14 other countries in which it operates. ■

**i** Are you ready to Play It Forward? Register at [righttoplay.ca/rtpplayitforward](https://righttoplay.ca/rtpplayitforward).

This article was sponsored by Right to Play.

**PLAY IT FORWARD**  
VIRTUAL CHALLENGE



## Virtual Resources and Supports Are Empowering Youth

RBC Future Launch is empowering youth with access to the programs and resources they need to succeed — even amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Tania Amardeil

**M**any young people in Canada are feeling anxious about entering the workforce. Fewer than half (41 percent) of students feel that they’ve gained the critical skills needed to transition to the workforce. Furthermore, only 43 percent of employers feel that students are prepared with the necessary professionalism, work ethic, and teamwork and collaboration skills. Youth face numerous barriers when making the school to work transition, including lack of relevant work experience, relevant skills, professional networks, and access to mental well-being supports.

As Canada’s prosperity is directly linked to our ability to prepare the next generation for success, these challenges affect us all.

**Creating change through collaboration**

To this end, RBC is empowering youth for the future of work by providing access to programs, tools, and resources directly focused on preparedness. RBC Future Launch is a 10-year, \$500-million commitment to help young people develop the capabilities and connections to thrive and prosper in the workforce.

“RBC Future Launch brings together governments, educational institutions, and partners in the public and private

sectors to co-create programming and solutions to ensure that young people are equipped for the future of work,” says Mark Beckles, Senior Director of Youth Strategy and Innovation at RBC. The program focuses on four pillars: work experience, skills development, networking, and mental well-being. The key focus areas were developed based on research that RBC conducted with young people, educators, and thought leaders across Canada, Beckles notes.

**Helping youth adapt in challenging times**

“Much of the programming we support through RBC Future Launch is built on bringing people together — to share stories and ideas and to learn from one another,” says Beckles. “In our current reality, doing this in a physical setting quickly became impossible, but our partners have adapted to this new normal with virtual programming and resources to make RBC Future Launch at Home possible.” The online learning hub offers more than 40 virtual opportunities to support Canadian youth in remote and virtual environments amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

The RBC Future Launch Scholarship is another resource designed to support young people. “We re-imagined

our approach to funding scholarships so that it’s more inclusive and accessible,” says Beckles. The unique program helps part-time students or those who are not in school gain new skills and has already received over 6,800 submissions.

“Young people have been disproportionately affected by the economic fallout of COVID-19,” says Beckles. Many rely on summer jobs to help pay for their schooling, but now wonder if they’ll be able to find placements. For its part, RBC has welcomed close to 1,400 summer students this year.

For youth struggling to find summer employment, Beckles offers some advice. “Continue to visit job boards and to watch for opportunities to present themselves as the economy begins to open up,” he says. “There’s no doubt it’s going to be a challenge, but it’s also just a matter of being resilient and sustaining your efforts. The government has announced significant dollars to pay for youth employment opportunities and we should see those emerge quite quickly.”

Even in unprecedented times, youth can find success. With leaders like RBC helping to address the challenges that youth face and working collaboratively to create opportunities, the future remains bright for Canadian youth. ■



**Mark Beckles**  
Senior Director of Youth Strategy & Innovation, RBC

**i** Learning shouldn’t stop during difficult times. Stay engaged, connected, and empowered through virtual opportunities from RBC Future Launch and its partners. To learn more, visit [rbcfuturelaunch.ca](https://rbcfuturelaunch.ca).

This article was sponsored by RBC.

**RBC Future Launch**



# Working Together to Help Canadian Women Find Their Voices

Sandra MacGregor



**Catherine Chalmers**  
Vice President of Philanthropy,  
Plan International Canada

Over the last couple of decades, women of all ages have made great strides in the quest for equality and economic empowerment. Those successes are in no small part indebted to the work of charities like Plan International that promote the rights of children and equality for girls around the world.

“Our charity has been around for over 80 years and our mandate is to advance children’s rights and equality for girls,” says Catherine Chalmers, Vice President of Philanthropy for Plan International Canada. “We also want to encourage young women to take on more leadership positions because women make up half of the world’s population and they bring an important voice to the table. Just look at the powerful women like Angela Merkel and Jacinda Ardern who are making a truly impressive mark as leaders. Unfortunately, because of things like gender bias and negative stereotypes, many young women face barriers to top positions in many industries.”



DOURRA, A 19-YEAR-OLD  
UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA STUDENT  
VISITING THE PFIZER OFFICES

## Plan International initiatives

In its commitment to give women and girls around the world the tools and opportunities to realize their full potential and make their goals more attainable, Plan International created two main programs. One of these is Because I am a Girl, a global initiative that supports the youth-led movement for girls’ rights and gender equality by challenging social norms and ensuring every girl can access the education and life-changing resources that will help her reach her full potential.

In 2018, Alesse (a Pfizer brand) proudly announced a partnership with Plan International to help prioritize gender equality, inclusion, and diversity by supporting the Because I am a Girl movement. Because I am a Girl aligns with the

company’s desire to have a positive influence in young women’s lives by promoting and encouraging women’s capabilities.

Girls Belong Here is Plan International’s program that pairs girls from the ages of 14 to 24 with organizations across the country to challenge what leadership looks like — for example, leading meetings, participating in important conversations, contributing to critical organizational goals, and demonstrating the value in their unique perspectives. The participants spend a day with senior business executives at their workplaces and get an incredible chance to hone their leadership skills and learn about what it takes to be a top executive. In September 2019, as part of Girls Belong Here, Pfizer Canada welcomed Dourra, a 19-year-old biomedical science student from the University of Ottawa who had the incredible opportunity to take on the role of President and Executive for the day. Dourra met with leaders, got a chance to discuss her career plans with other executives, and took advantage of mentorship opportunities with employees.

“Dourra had a life-changing experience,” says Chalmers. “It’s these kind of experiences with business leaders that break down barriers and can open a space for young women to expand their horizons and envision future leadership positions.”

## A fruitful partnership

One of Plan International’s most long-standing and fruitful partnerships is with Alesse, says Chalmers. “It’s great to see organizations like Pfizer Canada supporting initiatives like Girls Belong Here,” she says. “It has also supported our international programs. The company takes gender equality seriously and wants to help bring women’s unique voices to the leadership table. They want to open up channels and opportunities for women. Pfizer was first out of the gate in terms of putting that stake in the ground and declaring that girls belong in the boardroom.”

Engaging women and teaching them to believe in themselves is key to improving opportunities for women of all ages and enriching society as a whole. “Empowering girls at a young age really sets them up for success throughout their lives,” says Chalmers. “We all win when more women find their voices and have the confidence to follow their own unique paths.” ■

This page was **sponsored by Alesse.** **ALESSE**™

## Know the Numbers

Encourage the women and girls in your life to get out of their comfort zone and be the best version of themselves they can be.

Between the ages of **18 to 24**, young women in Canada report feeling less equal because of their gender and that their confidence reaches a low.

**42%**

of young Canadian women aged **18 to 24** said they felt less equal than their male counterparts.

ONLY **38%**

of young women aged **18 to 24** said they believe they have the same opportunity as men to lead.

**72%**

of young women have regularly or occasionally felt pressure to change their behaviour because of their gender.



In academic settings, young women have felt nervous to ask questions because they either didn’t feel clever enough or were worried they misunderstood the content.

# IGNITING CONFIDENCE IN WOMEN AND GIRLS

Figuring out who you are at a young age can be tough, especially when navigating through finding your first job or going to your first doctor’s appointment on your own. Below are six simple tips that can help you find the confidence you need when speaking to a working professional, educator, or health care provider.

**1**

Look for good mentorship and networking opportunities and be willing to mentor others.



**2**

Make sure that you’re in environments where your voice and opinions matter.



**3**

Surround yourself with people who believe in you.



**4**

Think courageously and be persistent when you see injustice.



**5**

Let empathy guide you in your interactions and respect others as you want to be respected.



**6**

Don’t be afraid to speak up and be direct about what you want — trust your gut and act on your intuition.





## Pioneering New Atopic Dermatitis Treatments Bring Hope and Relief

Tania Amardeil

**A**topic dermatitis is a chronic inflammatory skin condition characterized by dry, itchy skin, with rashes that can be red, cracked, and even ooze and bleed. Flare-ups can be prompted by environmental elements or “triggers” such as certain soaps, clothing fabrics, deodorants, carpet fibres, and dust. Overheating, excessive sweating, low humidity, certain foods, and stress can also contribute to flare-ups.

Since our skin is outwardly visible to all with whom we interact, atopic dermatitis’ severe symptoms often have deep physical, emotional, and psychosocial impacts on patients — especially on adolescents. Sleep disturbances, symptoms of anxiety and depression, and feelings of isolation are common amongst the estimated 17 percent of Canadians living with atopic dermatitis, as reported in the Canadian Skin Patient Alliance 2018 report *The Skin I’m In*. Patients may also avoid physical or social activity and miss work or school as a result of their diagnosis.

### A life-altering condition

“Living with eczema can be difficult. You stand out in front of all your classmates,” says Maryum, a teenager who suffers from atopic dermatitis. “I was the only kid with different skin, and who had dry, itchy, inflamed skin.”

Atopic dermatitis affects people of all ages, but especially children and adolescents. “Atopic dermatitis is the most common form of eczema, and one out of every four or five children will be diagnosed with at least one symptom of atopic dermatitis,” explains Dr. Vipul Jain, an allergist and immunologist at Niagara Region Medical.

To date, treatments for atopic dermatitis have included various creams and lotions, topical steroid medications, and UV therapy. These treatments have had various measures of success in keeping the condition under control. “Steroids are just a temporary kind of thing,” says Saba, Maryum’s mother. “We tried UV light therapy for four or five months. It didn’t work. And then we were introduced to some newer options, new treatments in the market — the injectables.”

### Promising news for adolescents with atopic dermatitis

Fortunately for adolescents with atopic dermatitis, there’s hope. Medical advancements — like the injectables that Saba mentions — are changing the way the condition is treated and managed. It’s now being viewed as an autoimmune disease rather than as a surface issue. This allows medical professionals to treat the patient and not just the symptoms.

Finding effective treatment for adolescents suffering from the condition can be transformative to their quality of life. “When you treat a patient’s atopic dermatitis, you help them feel what normal feels like. That’s a very powerful thing,” says Dr. Jain. “It’s an exciting time to be treating atopic dermatitis because of this newer, injectable therapy that’s available. It’s associated with potentially less-serious side effects, the efficacy data is excellent, and patients do really well. Previously this treatment was only indicated in adult patients, but now it’s used to also treat adolescent patients.”

“**I’m hopeful about the future because there’s been more awareness about eczema in recent years and there have been innovations and medical advancements that will hopefully help people like me live a better life.**”

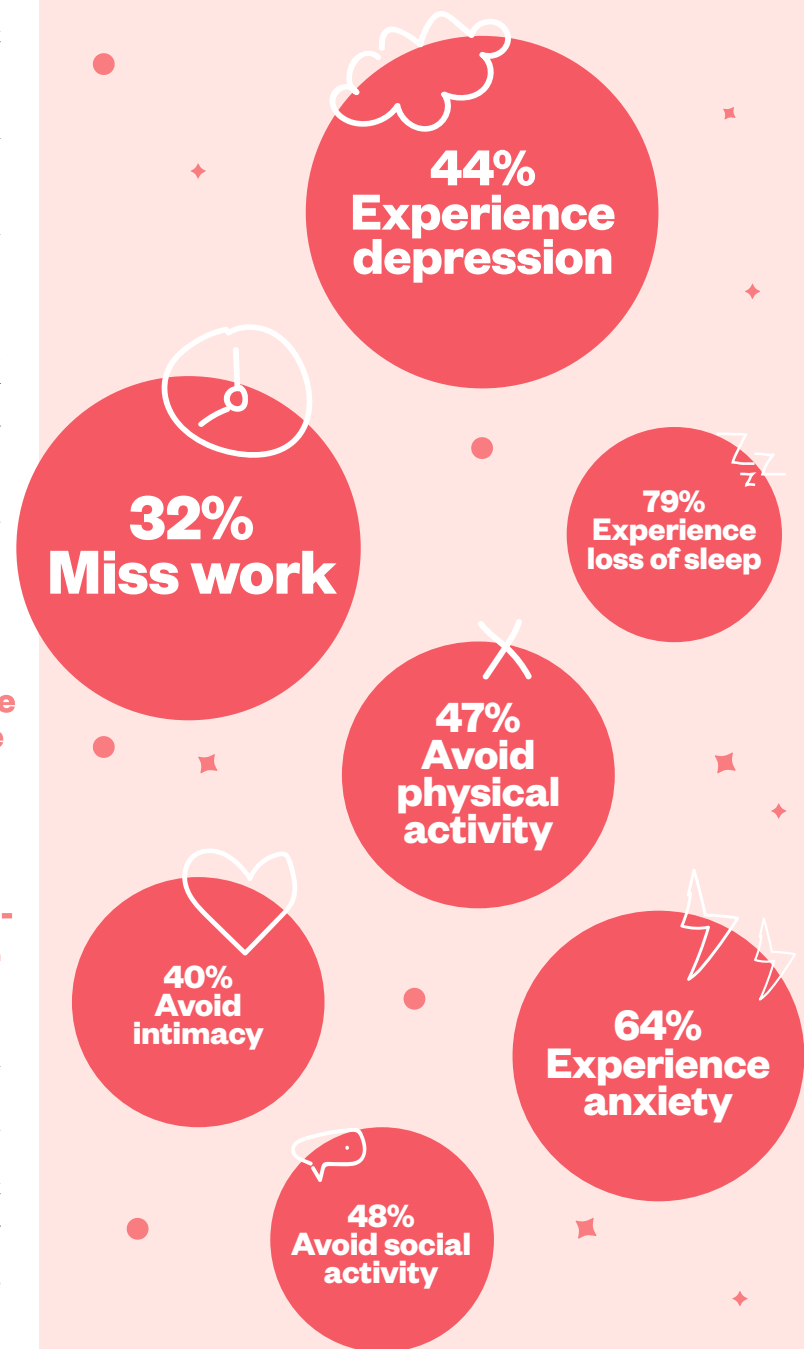
This is promising news for adolescents with atopic dermatitis. “I’m hopeful about the future because there’s been more awareness about eczema in recent years and there have been innovations and medical advancements that will hopefully help people like me live a better life,” says Maryum.

If you suffer from this condition, one of the new treatment options may be right for you. Talk to your dermatologist, allergist, paediatrician, or general physician about finding the treatment that’s a perfect fit for you. ■

## Intense Itch. Burning. Pain.

The physical symptoms of atopic dermatitis have significant impacts on quality of life for those suffering from the condition.

The Eczema Society of Canada undertook a quality of life project to better understand the burden of living with atopic dermatitis. Survey respondents with moderate to severe atopic dermatitis identified the following quality of life impacts:



To learn more about atopic dermatitis and managing your condition, speak with your health care provider. The Eczema Society of Canada offers support and resources at [eczema.ca](https://eczema.ca).

All information in this infographic was obtained from a 2016/2017 quality of life report produced by the Eczema Society of Canada.

This article was made possible with support from a leading biopharmaceutical company.



**ECZEMA MADE ME FEEL AWKWARD**

### I felt so self-conscious, insecure and restricted.

There are different types of eczema, but the most common one is atopic dermatitis. The itch experienced during atopic dermatitis flare-ups may be a part of a reaction happening inside your body. The visible signs of your atopic dermatitis may come from under your skin. Find out what may cause atopic dermatitis, and what could really be going on under your skin.

[EczemaRevealed.ca](https://eczema.ca)

To learn more about different ways of getting your eczema under control, talk to your doctor.