



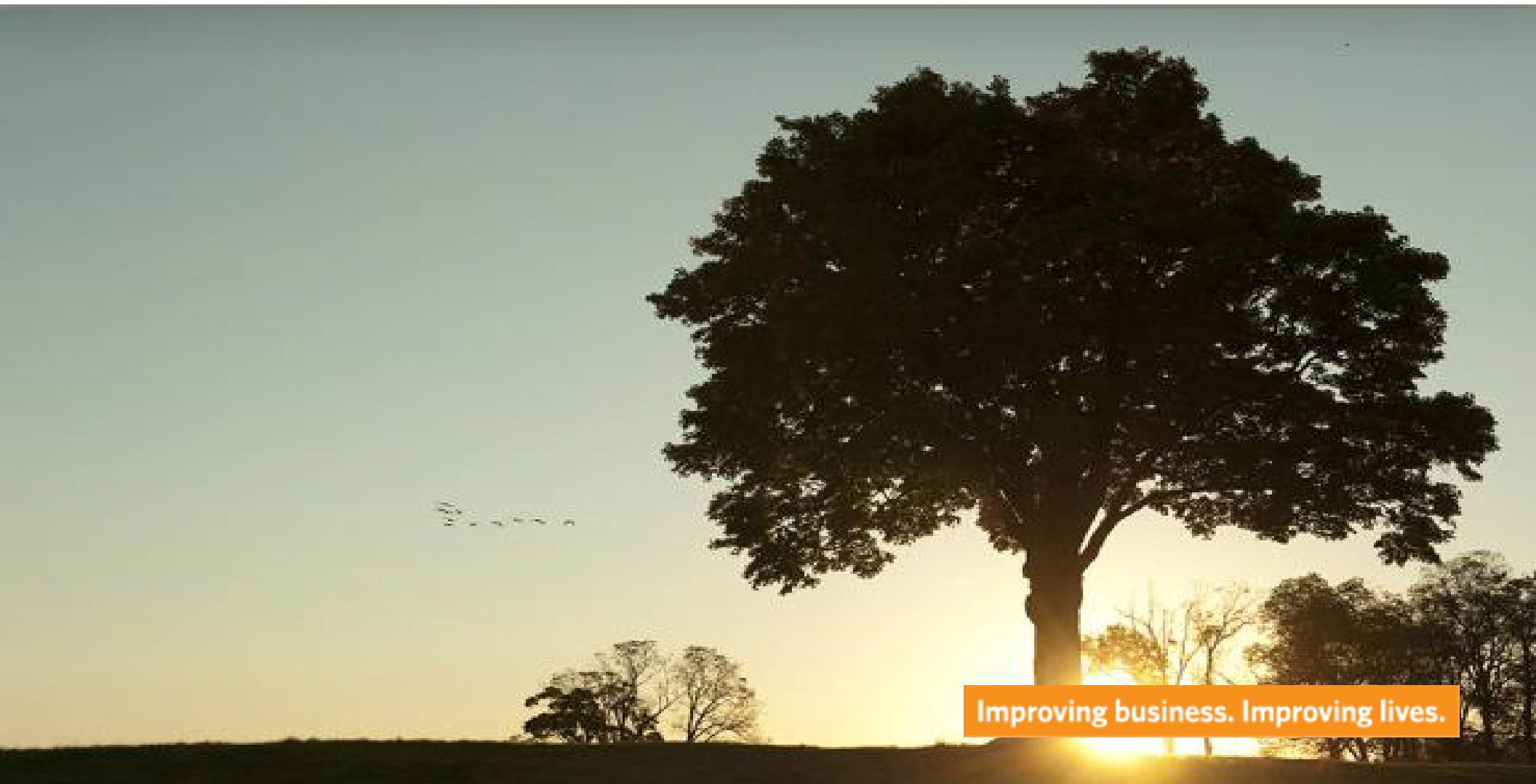
# Mental Health and Well-being Through the pandemic and changes

M. Cole Cohen, Ph.D.  
Morneau Shepell  
**June 11, 2021**

# Mental Health and Well-being

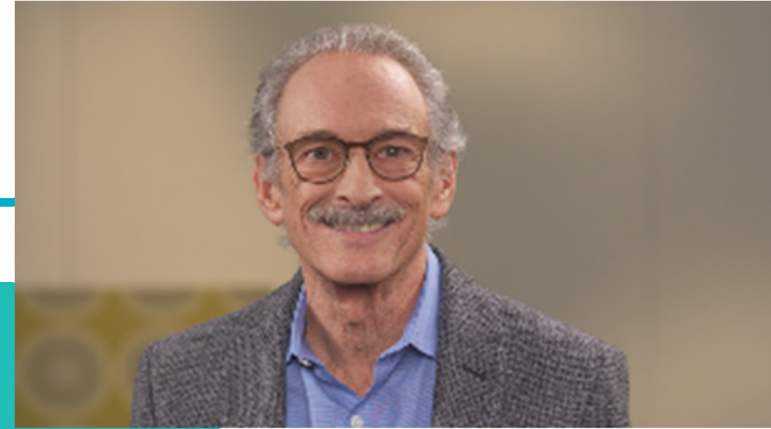
## Through the pandemic and changes

M. Cole Cohen, Ph.D., Morneau Shepell  
Presentation to the ACC Ontario Chapter  
sponsored by Blakes  
June 11, 2021



Improving business. Improving lives.

# The expert facilitator



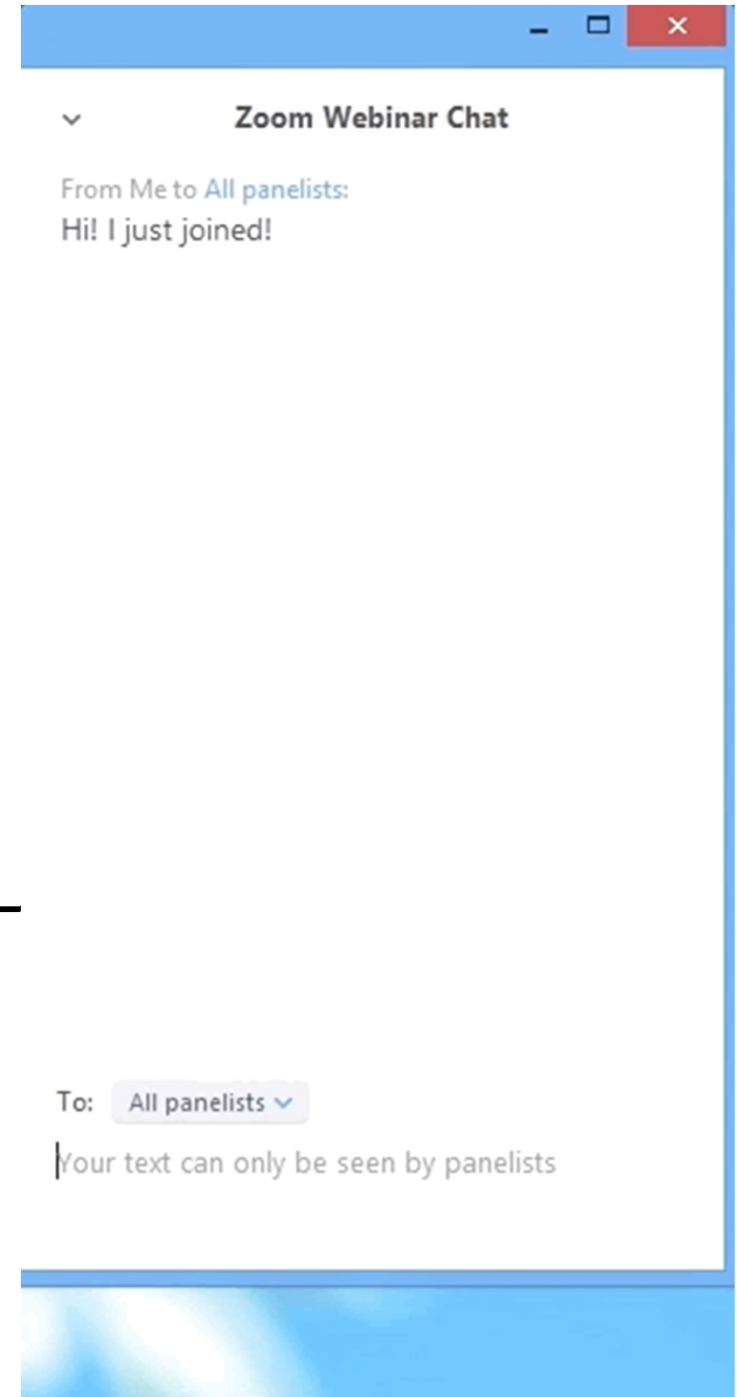
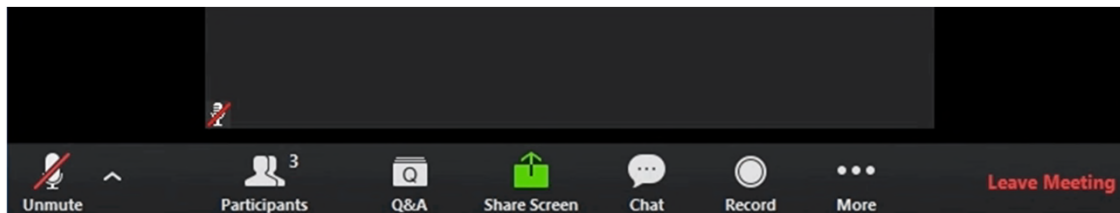
M. Cole Cohen, Ph.D.

- Internationally known speaker on Resilience, Stress Management and Mental Health in the workplace
- Doctorate in Psychology & Masters in Communication Science
- Familiar with organizational culture through multiple seminars over the past 20 years
- Practices what he preaches

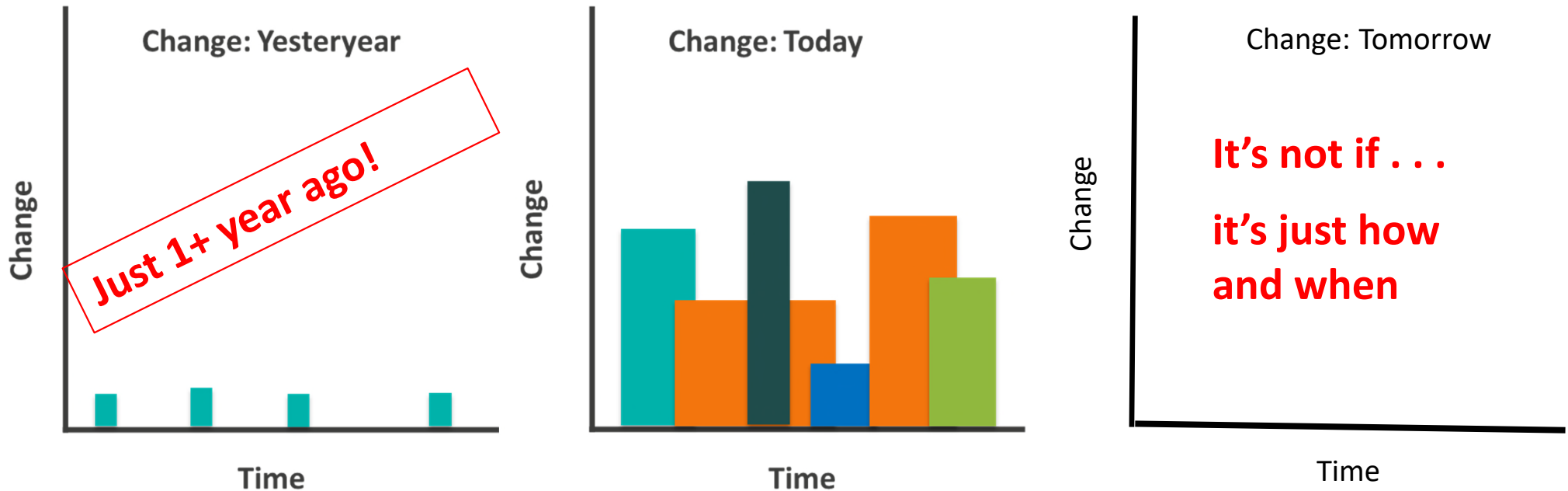
# Zoom functionalities

To submit a question or a response, go to the **Chat**, which is in the controls at the bottom of your screen.

1. As an attendee, **Chat** will be in the controls at the bottom of your screen.
2. When you click on chat, the chat window will appear. It will be on the right if you are not in full screen. If you are in full screen, it will appear in a window that you can move around your screen.
3. Type your message and press **Enter** to send it.  
You can also select who you would like to send the message to by clicking on the drop down next to :



# Why Are We Here?



Ongoing 'change' is the new normal.



## Understanding Mental Health

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# Mental Health Continuum



Languishing



Flourishing

We may be at a different point on the continuum at different times

# What is Good Mental Health?

Mental health is:

*“the capacity to **feel**, **think** and **act** in ways that enhance one’s ability to enjoy life and deal with challenges.”*

## Good mental health means...

- We feel well
- We can cope with stress
- We can do our best work
- We can achieve our personal goals

Mental health is more than the absence of an illness and it is not static



# Temporary Mental Health Problems

- Temporary problems that can interfere with our ability to function and affect our quality of life and cause reactions, such as anxiety, to things such as:
  - Serious illness of a loved one
  - Working from home while caring for children
  - Financial uncertainty
  - Concerns for personal health
  - Extended isolation



Factors that might influence a person's ability to deal with COVID-19

# Mental Health Continuum



Languishing



Flourishing

Mental disorders often require professional help for recovery

# Startling Canadian statistics

## Of the 20% of Canadians

- Who suffer from mental health disorders each year, less than 1 in 3 will seek treatment

(Canadian Medical Association & Canadian Psychiatric Association, 2016)

## Depression and Anxiety

- Cost the Canadian economy almost \$50 billion a year in lost productivity

(Conference Board of Canada, 2016)

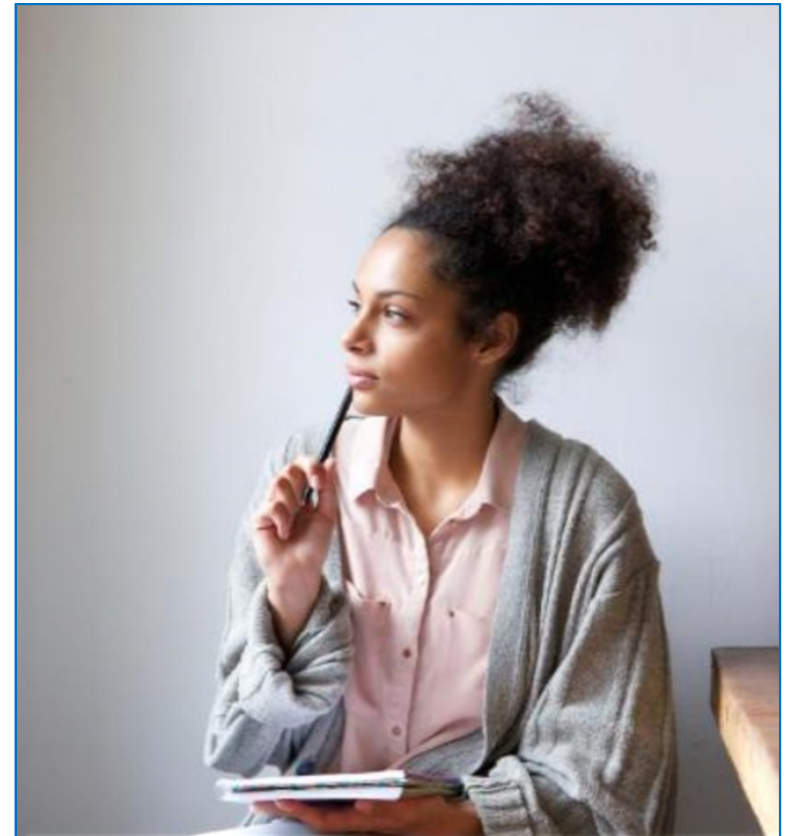
## 500,000 Employed Canadians

- Are unable to work due to a mental challenges, on any given week

(Centre for Addictions and Mental Health, 2018)

## 77 %

- Would not tell their current manager if they were experiencing a mental health problem (Dewa,2014)



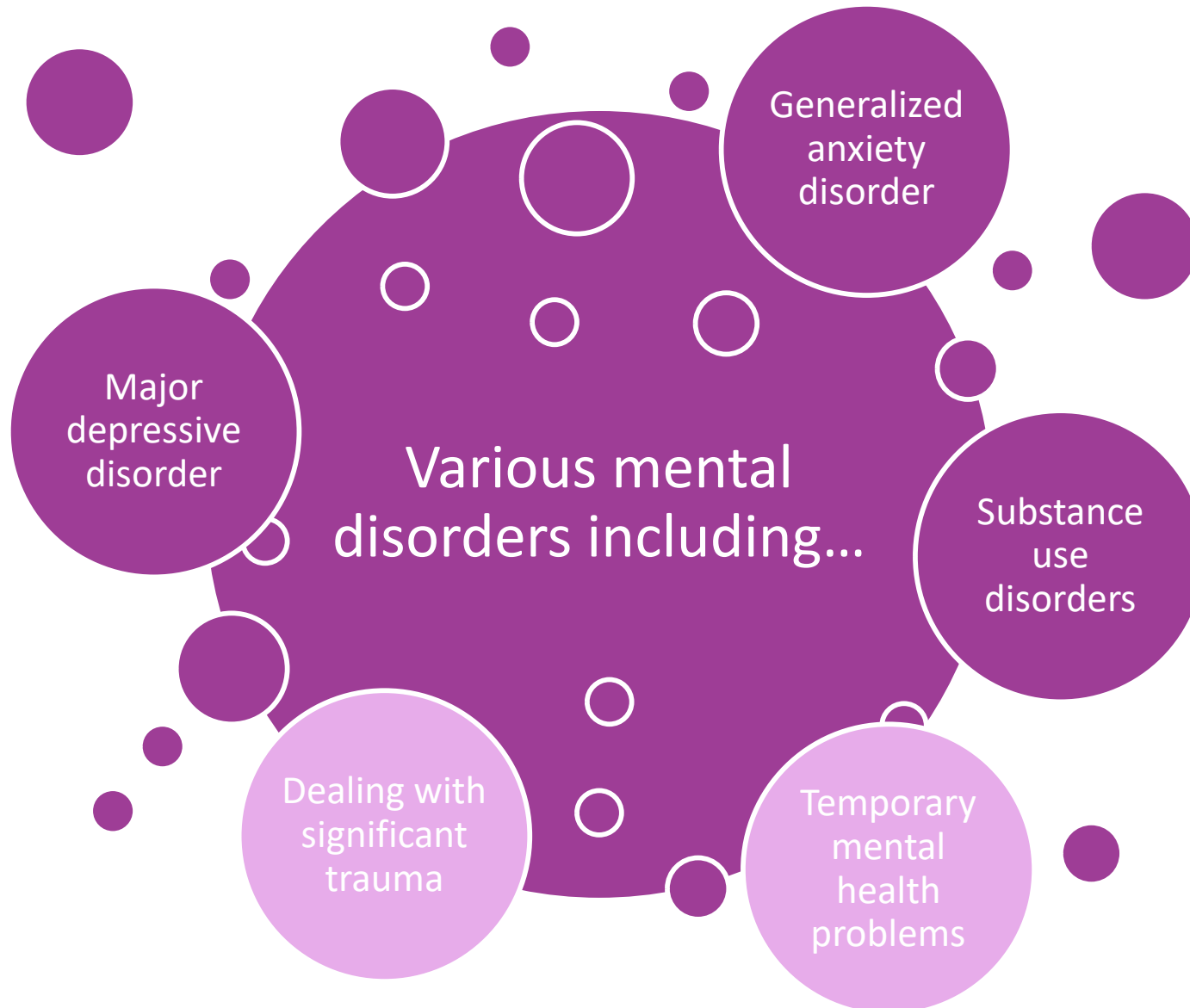
# How do these facts make sense?



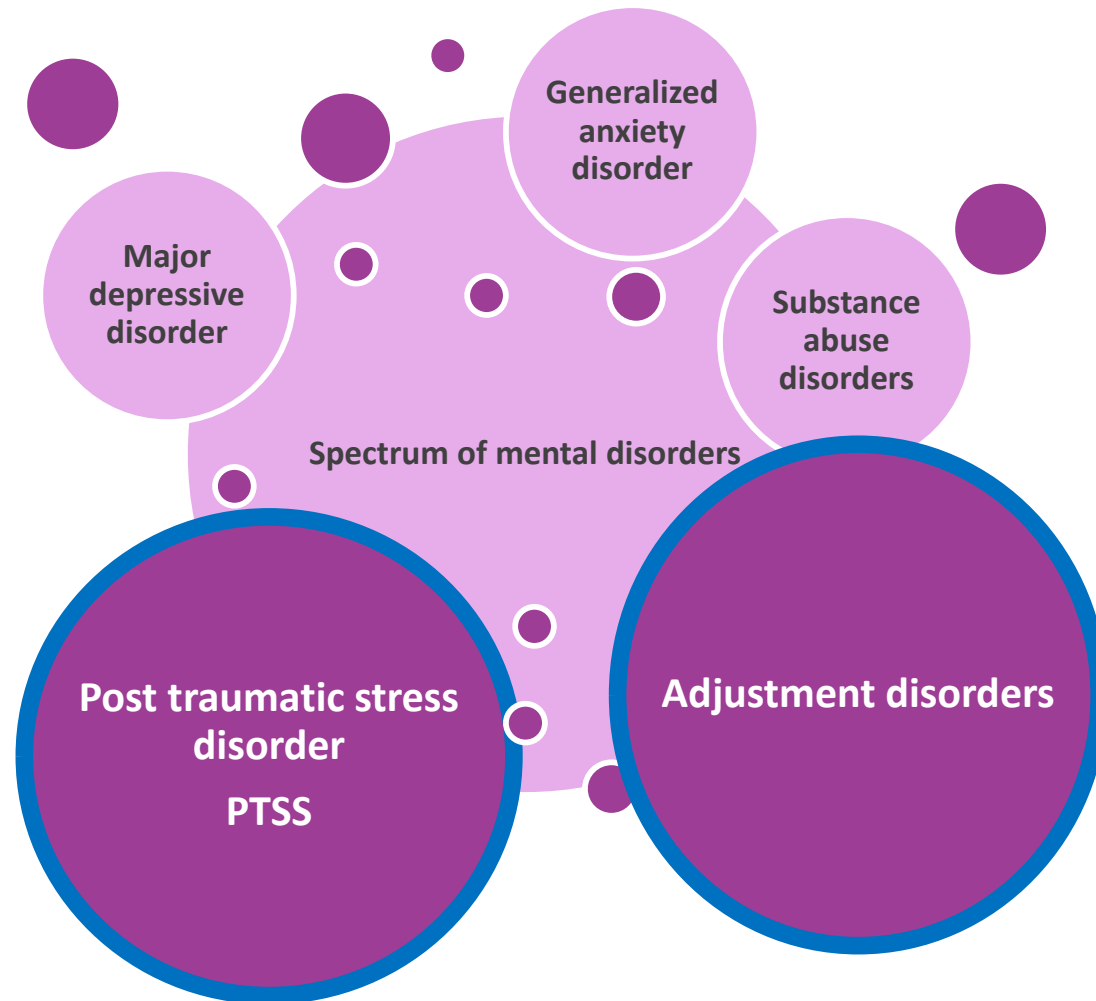
- **Only 1/3** of those who need mental health services in Canada actually receive them.  
(Statistics Canada)
- **77% of Canadian employees** report not feeling comfortable discussing a psychological health issue with their employer.  
(Employment and Social Development Canada, 2016)

*\* Use the Chat function through Zoom – word or phrase*

# Common Mental Disorders



# Mental disorders and the impact of a crisis like COVID-19



# The present situation

- We find ourselves in an unexpected, never-before experienced situation
- We have little control over what is happening
- There's an uncertain future (school and business closures, stock market, price of gas, etc.)
- We have little past experience to rely on
- The situation is **more challenging in the midst of significant change**
- There are real implications for personal and family safety

*We live and work in a **VUCA** World*

*(**V**- Volatility, **U**- Uncertainty, **C** – Complexity, and **A** - Ambiguity)*

*COVID-19 is an intense example of how we live and work in a VUCA world*



# The reality of your situation

You do have control over:

Your thoughts

Your feelings

Your actions







## Coping and Resilience Strategies

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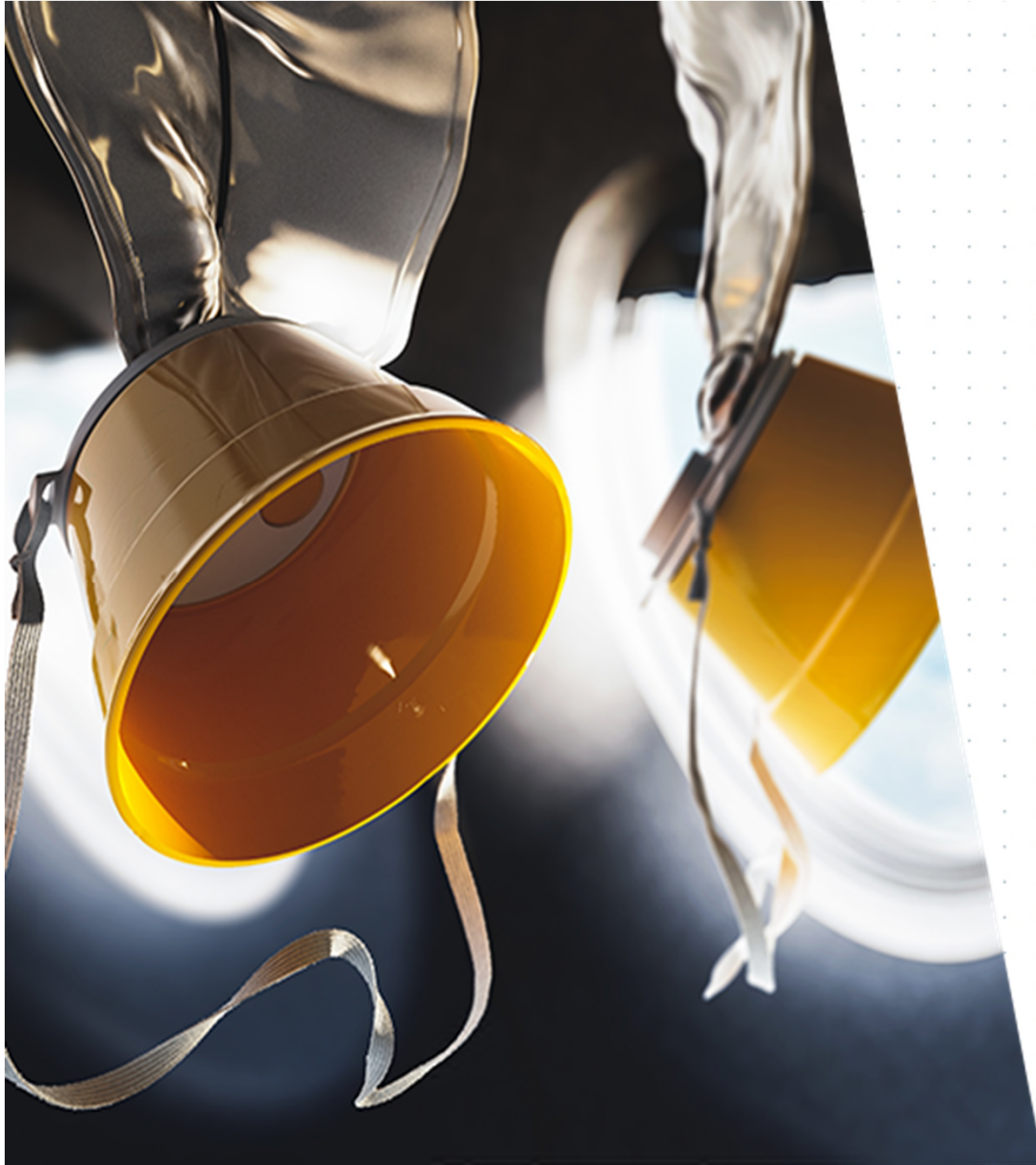
# Resilience

## Definition:

“... ability to succeed, live, and develop in a positive way”... in the face of “stress or adversity that would normally involve the real possibility of a negative outcome.”

(Boris Cyrulnik, 2002)





## Put on your own oxygen mask first...

- Set clear limits for work, family and self-care.
- Maintaining your mental well-being is important to fulfil your commitments to your family and to your workplace!

# How resilience works



# Quick resilience strategies

Deep  
Breathing

Take a Time-  
Out

Positive  
Thinking

Physical  
Health

# Deep breathing

Deep  
Breathing

Take a Time-  
Out

Positive  
Thinking

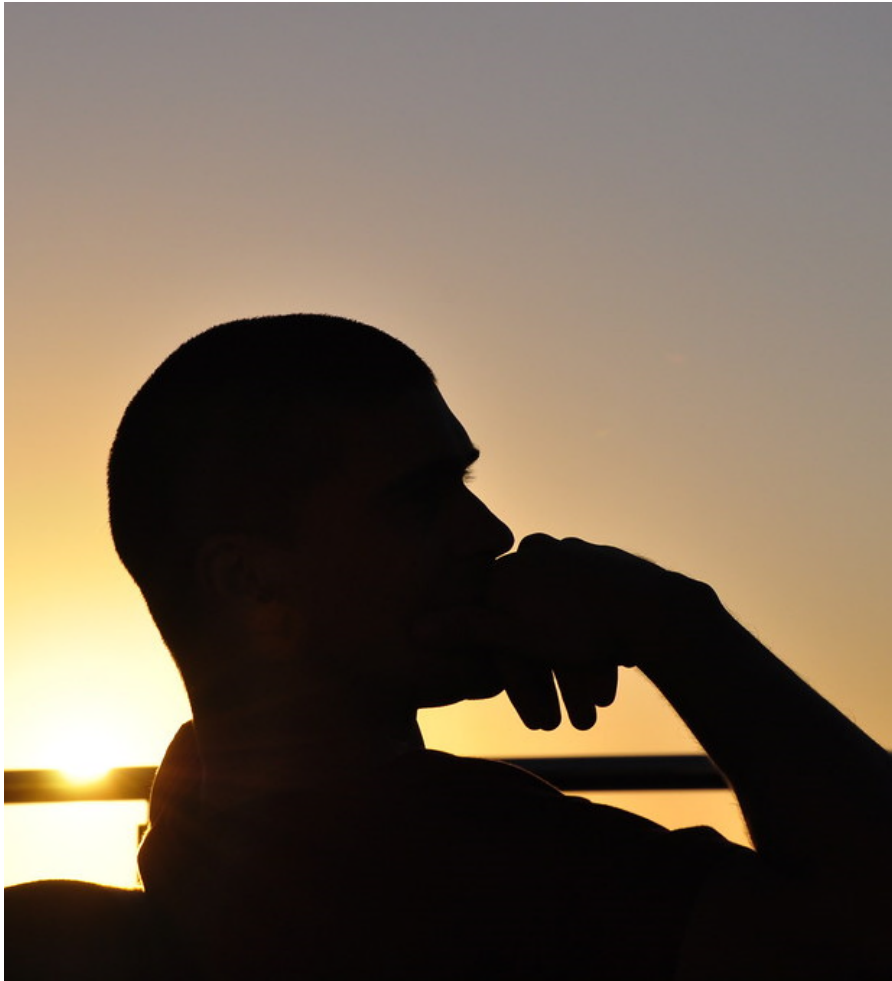
Physical  
Health



- Diaphragm breathing
- Used in meditation
- Sit in a chair with your shoulders, head, and neck supported against the back of the chair

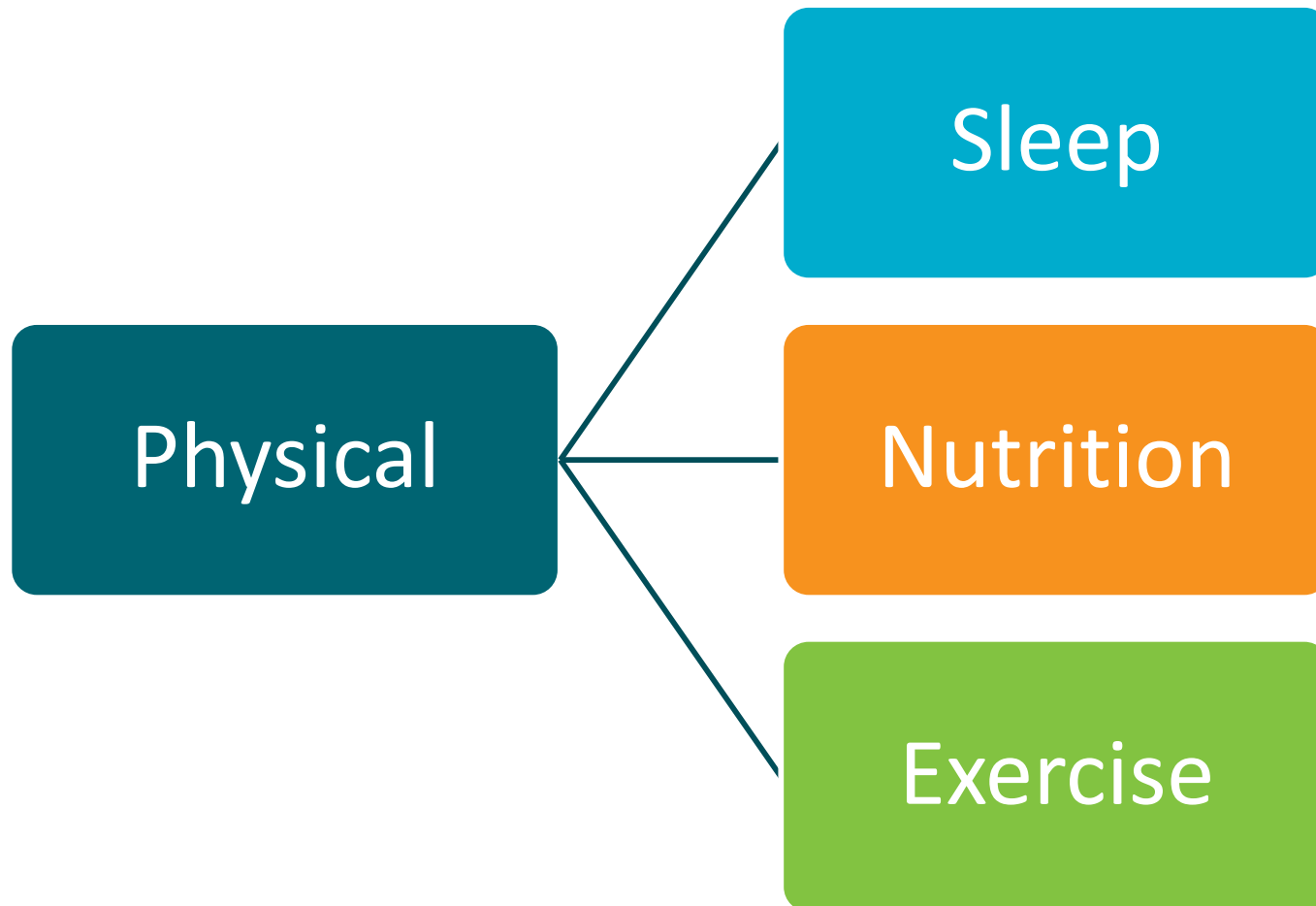


# Take a time-out



- Stop what you are doing and do something completely unrelated
  - Make the bed
  - Call a friend
  - Have a stretch break
- Close your eyes and guide yourself to mentally be elsewhere – pleasant
- Have a laugh / watch a funny show

# Boost resilience through physical health





# Strategy to manage your thoughts...

## Reframe negative thoughts

- Pay attention to your limiting and negative thoughts
- Start to challenge and change core beliefs
- Shift to a positive outlook
- See the opportunity in the situation

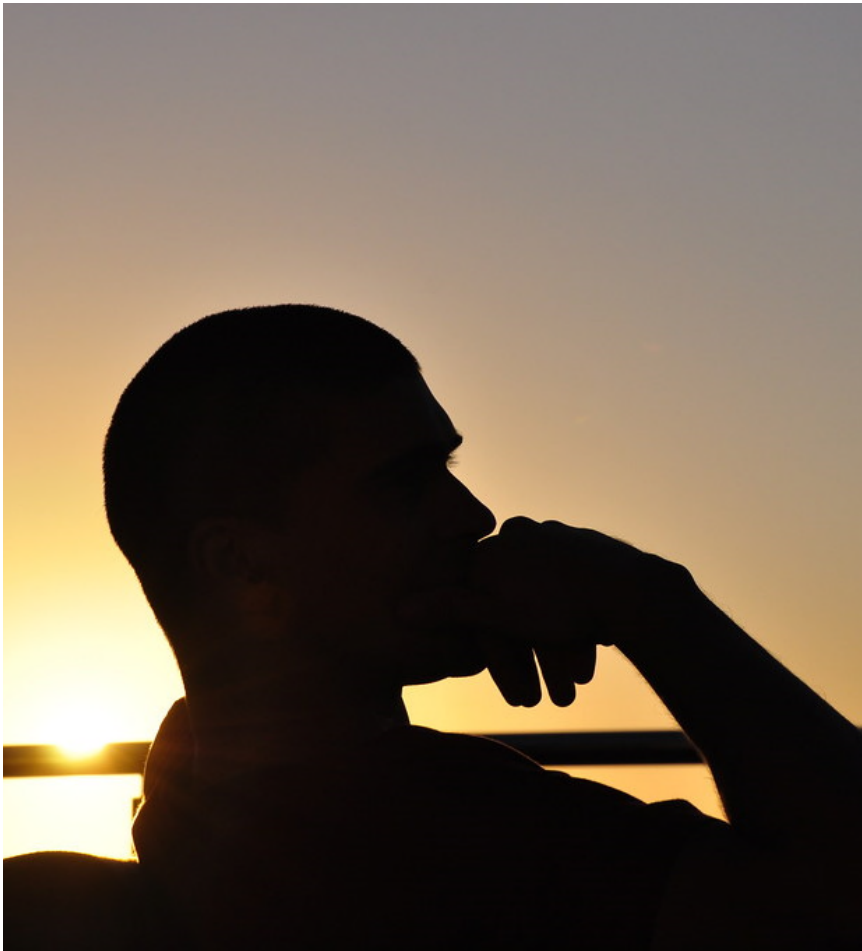
People who train themselves to think positively are 35% less likely to experience heart disease and strokes

# Start to challenge and change thoughts ...

- I feel helpless in this situation— *not true, there are things I can do.*
- The worst will happen— *There is no proof of that. There is hope.*
- I'm so stressed out! — *There are things I can do to help, like exercise and playing music.*
- I've got cabin fever. I can't take it anymore!" — *I am restless and anxious and I'm pre-occupied with these emotions. I need to shift to occupying myself with music, work, movie, call a colleague/friend, etc.*

Negative thoughts make mountains out of molehills.

# Have a positive outlook



- Take stock of things for which you are grateful
- Think of the advantages of working from home
- List the personal opportunities that could come from this
- Write down how you are currently thinking and reflect on it
- Identify your life goals



## Supporting ourselves, our families and colleagues

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# Supporting my family

Many of us are caring for our children and also supporting our aging parents

- How do I explain the situation to my children without creating more anxiety?
- What tactics will be best to ensure my children are healthy and continue to grow and develop?
- How can I better support my parent who is self-isolating, when I can't even visit!
- More than just, "Can I help?" Allow them to vent in the presence of someone who cares

# What do I tell my children when they are stressed by all of this?

How do I explain  
without creating  
more anxiety?

- The importance of **listening and empathy**
- Enlist your children as **partners**
- There is reason to be concerned
- There are actions we can take to ensure our health and safety
- **We are all in this together** – globally
- Benefits for the environment

# Strategies for supporting my family

Many of us are caring for our children and also supporting our aging parents

- Balance honesty with instilling hope
- Set **regular routines** – some with and for your children/parents to play constructively / online education
- Communication system (red / green)
- Use FaceTime, have virtual coffee times, phone chats
- **Put on your own oxygen mask!**

**Social distancing Day 359:** Today my kids wanted me to wear my wedding dress at lunch and I couldn't think of a reason not to.







## Managing the incoming media

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# Stay educated and manage the impact of the incoming media influence

**There is an  
onslaught of news  
and information**

- How do I know what's accurate and what is merely uninformed opinion?
- How do I filter the incoming information?
- All the news stresses me out further!
- Etc.

# Stay educated and manage the impact of the multi-media influence

There is an  
onslaught of news  
and information

- Stay with **trusted** sources
- Moderate your time watching and reading the news
- Moderate use of social media
- Recognize when you are **near** your limit and take a break

# Remote Work Can Be Exhausting



We have shifted to digital-mediated interactions for almost **everything** in our lives through the pandemic.



Video conference meetings and online collaboration takes **more energy** than working face-to-face.



Virtual work can easily zap our energy and bring on “**Virtual Fatigue**”

# Why Remote Work Can Be Exhausting

- Not a full sensory experience
- Perceptions shift
- Hyper self-awareness when on video cam
- It can be more 'intimate' (up close with colleagues' faces)
- Context shifts virtually (we're in my home vs. my office)
- The temptation to 'multi-task' – loss of focus
- Loss of physical cues (e.g., handshakes, pat on the back)



# Prepare for the new etiquette

- Hand shaking may disappear
- Saying hello and making “human contact”
  - The Buddhist bow
  - Fist or arm bump
  - The simulated hug
- Face masks may become a more common accessory
- Fewer in-person interactions
- More virtual / electronic communication





## Resources

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# Resources for Support

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## On the Job



- Your leader
- H.R. Partner
- Employee & Family Assistance Program
- Go-to person or buddy

## Personal Resources



- Family
- Friends
- Pets
- General Practitioner
- Therapist
- Spiritual Connection

## In Your Community



- Canadian Mental Health Association
- Mood Disorders Society
- Workplace Strategies for Mental Health (Canada Life)



# Build a bridge to resources

## Access Your Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP)

*For confidential EFAP support call:*

English 1 844.880.9142

French 1 844.880.9143

*or visit:*

[www.workhealthlife.com](http://www.workhealthlife.com)

*or access resources:*



**My EAP app:**





Improving business. Improving lives.

**Thank you very much.  
Take care and stay safe.**