



EHN CANADA

WORK DURING A PANDEMIC: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

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Yvette Brown, B.Sc. OT, M.Sc. A. Psych
Occupational Therapist
CTAP- Concurrent Trauma and Addiction Program
Bellwood Health Services



AGENDA

- ▣ Background information on COVID-19, Pandemics, and Quarantine
- ▣ Psychological Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic – What does this look like?
- ▣ Risk factors for Psychological Ill-Health - especially during a Pandemic
- ▣ Safeguards against the Psychological Impact of a Pandemic
- ▣ Action Plan
- ▣ Final Thoughts

Background

- ▣ Covid-19 pandemic is the largest outbreak of an atypical pneumonia since SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), which occurred in 2003, exceeding the total cases and deaths in just the first few weeks
- ▣ In order to try and control this pandemic, quarantine and/or isolation measures have had to be implemented
- ▣ Quarantine – defined as the separation and restriction of movement of people who have been potentially exposure to a contagion to ascertain if they become unwell so reducing the risk of them infecting other
- ▣ Isolation, on the other hand, is separation of those who are diagnosed with a contagious disease from those who are not sick

- ❑ Quarantine isolation as well as physical distancing have been employed in order to reduce the spread of this virus

- ❑ Quarantine and/ or Isolation is not only problematic because of the restriction of liberty - the longer the duration leads to:
 - Increase in mental health issues
 - Fears of infection
 - Increases in worry
 - Lack of routine
 - Decreased social interaction
 - Isolation from world
 - Decreased finances
 - Unbalanced self-care
 - Psychological distress



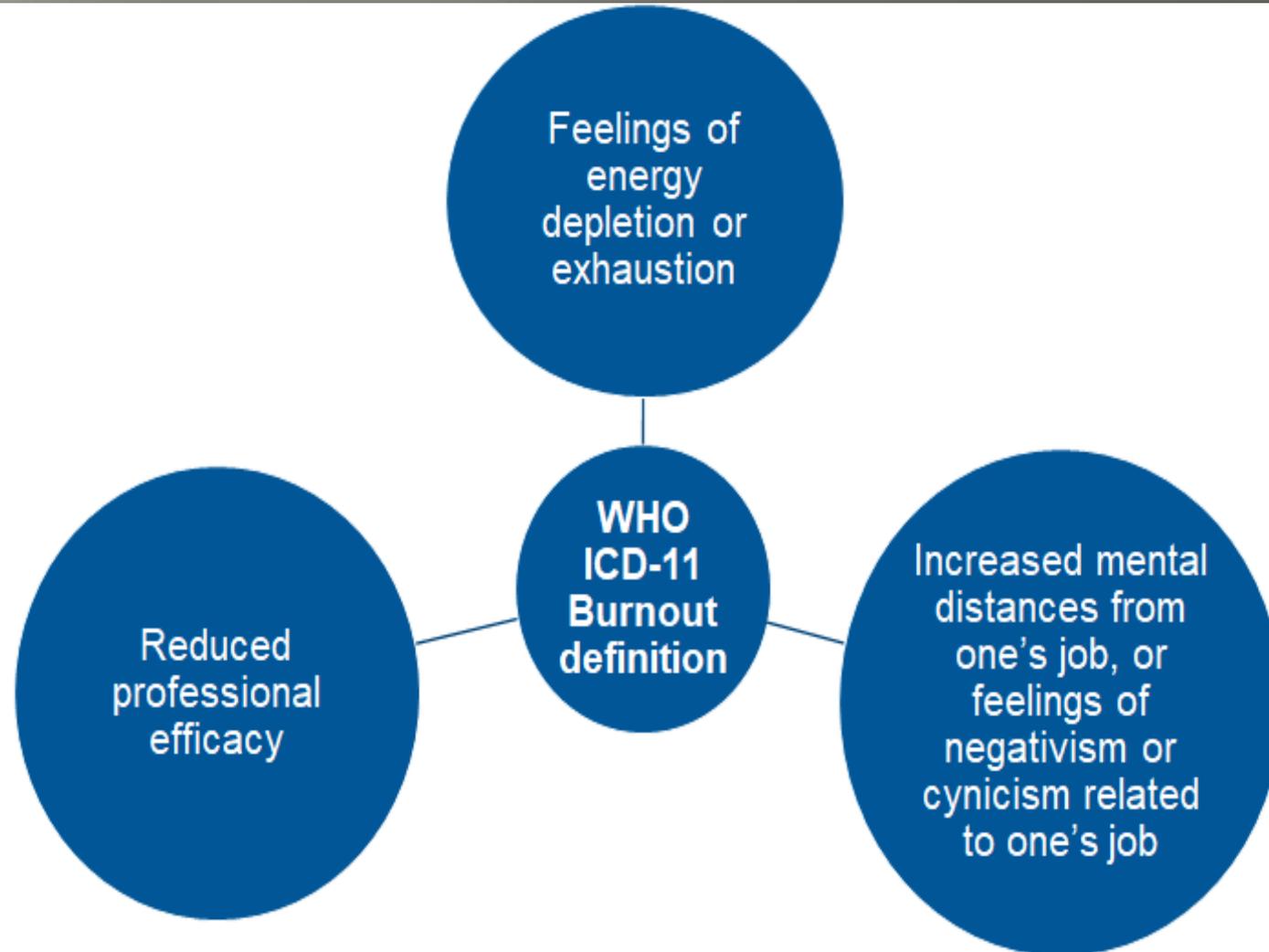
The research gathered from SARS, EBOLA, H1N1 influenza and MERS as well as studies conducted currently on COVID-19, have all found that quarantine can increase psychological distress in both the general public and essential workers.

- ▣ Depression rates increase during infectious diseases
- ▣ One year after SARS prevalence of depressive symptoms among survivors was 40%; another study 4 years after found prevalence of depression among survivors 39%
- ▣ Post traumatic stress symptoms and depression found to be mutually predictive variables.

Psychological Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic: What does it look like?

The psychological impact of a pandemic may look like: insomnia, worry, fatigue, irritability, anxiety, burnout, depression, and traumatic stress. It involves: fear of being sick or dying; fear of infecting others; helplessness; stigma; closures of facilities; increases negative emotions and/or cognition and uncertainty

- ▣ People who have experienced high levels of stress from a traumatic crisis, such as a pandemic, are at risk of developing PTSD – an anxiety disorder caused by frightening, stressful, or distressing events



Risk factors for Psychological Ill-Health - especially during a Pandemic

- Clinic consult increased anxiety
- Poor health (self rated or not)
- History of chronic illness
- Dissatisfaction with COVID-19 health information
- No confidence (or trust) in physician to diagnose or recognize COVID-19
- Low survival of COVID-19 increased stress
- High level of perceived likelihood of family or child getting the disease
- Changes in work
- Being isolated
- Lack of resources
- Negative impact on livelihood
- Perception of personal danger
- Misinformation



Risk factors for Psychological Ill-Health - Special Mention

- ▣ **Moral injury** is defined as the profound psychological distress which results from actions, or lack of them, which violate one's moral or ethical code – acts of perturbation, **acts of omission or experiences of betrayal from leaders or trusted others**
 - Experiences of potentially morally injurious events (PMIEs) can lead to negative thoughts, deep feelings of guilt or shame or disgust which in turn can lead to the development of mental health problems including PTSD, depression and anxiety
 - While not a mental illness those with moral injuries are likely to develop negative thoughts about themselves or others as well as intense feelings of shame, guilt or disgust

- ▣ **Stigma** - a mark of disgrace associated with a particular person, circumstance, or quality
 - Quarantined individuals, were more likely to report stigmatization and rejection from people in their local neighbourhood; experience withdrawal of social invitations; being treated with suspicion and fear; have (negative) comments directed toward them; being avoided; and have intra-household tension especially in regards to essential workers
 - There is also disenfranchisement of minority groups in the community; and xenophobia

▣ Catastrophizing, SENSE OF INJUSTICE and Cognitive Distortions

- This emphasizes the broad adverse psychological effects of quarantine, particularly in terms of the mixture of anxious and depressive symptoms, with some rising to the level of PTSD



Safeguards against the Psychological Impact of a Pandemic

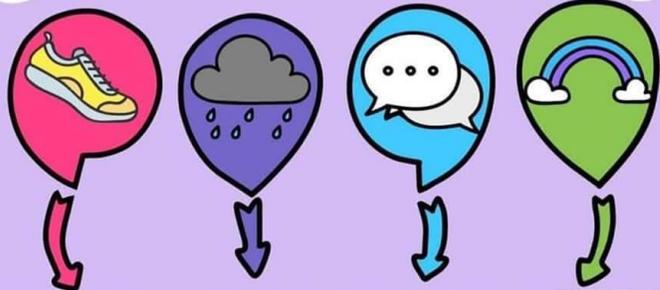


- ▣ What we know:
 - Expect some level of anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress, uncertainty, worry, anger, insomnia and so forth
 - Pandemics, whether quarantined in isolation and/or working, can result in restricted or diminished income; financial loss; separation from loved ones; emotional confusion; avoidance; loss; psychological distress; hopelessness, stigma, moral injury, and a sense of injustice

- ▣ What can be done
 - Immediate intervention – enhances psychological resilience
 - Provision of rest areas
 - Broad access and detailed rules on the use and management of PPE
 - Training (specialized) on handling COVID-19 client/patient– which reduces anxiety from perceived unfamiliarity and uncontrollability of hazards involved
 - Foster and/or strengthen a supportive environment and social supports
 - Normalize what is being experienced by people
 - Clear communication
 - Acknowledge that this is a marathon *NOT* a sprint
 - Psychoeducation – for understanding and especially in early recognition of the signs of psychological distress

“I have come to believe that caring for myself is not self indulgent. Caring for myself is an act of survival.” – Audre Lorde

TYPES OF SELF-CARE



- | PHYSICAL | EMOTIONAL | SOCIAL | SPIRITUAL |
|--|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sleep Stretching Walking Physical release Healthy food Yoga Rest | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stress management Emotional maturity Forgiveness Compassion Kindness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boundaries Support systems Positive social media Communication Time together Ask for help | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time alone Meditation Yoga Connection Nature Journaling Sacred space |

WHAT SELF-CARE ISN'T

So we've covered the fact that self-care is different for everyone and that all individuals have different needs to meet in order to be mentally and emotionally healthy. There is no ultimate guide for self-care because it is such an individual thing; however, here are some handy pointers on what self-care does not mean.

A SIGN OF WEAKNESS



You are never weak for taking the time to care for yourself. Actually, prioritizing your self-care is bound to ensure your mental and physical health, and through that, your strength as an individual.

ONLY EMOTIONAL CARE



Self-care techniques can be as emotionally rooted as journaling or as physical as going to the gym. Taking care of yourself comes in all types of packages.

ONLY FOR SOME PEOPLE



It doesn't matter who you are -- caring for yourself is important. Feelings of being run down and exhausted don't discriminate... and neither does the need for self-care.

SOMETHING TO KEEP QUIET



Keep talking about self-care! Exchange self-care techniques and start a campus-wide conversation. It's our responsibility to look after ourselves and to look out for each other.

THE SAME FOR EVERYONE



Your self-care routine is likely very different from your friend's, from your sister's, from your professor's -- and that's okay. Every individual is different, and so are our self-care needs.

BUT SELF CARE IS...



... whatever it looks like to you, an extremely important and extremely healthy way to manage stress, to achieve success, and to always make sure you're doing your best.

SOME SELF CARE TIPS INCLUDE:

- ▣ Taking a walk – we are like plants! Natural light is a mood booster, while fresh air helps to clear the head!
- ▣ Eating a healthy balanced diet.
- ▣ Investing in some 'me time' –don't feel guilty about it.
- ▣ Engage in activities you enjoy.

NOTE: One thing you can do daily is some self care around your sleep.

Sleep is arguably the most important of the three pillars of a healthy life (i.e. nutrition, sleep, and exercise). It impacts on psychological health, metabolism, cardiovascular health and the immune system.

HERE'S SOME SLEEP SELF CARE TIPS:

- ▣ **A good morning routine.**
- ▣ **Avoiding caffeine 8 hours before bed.**
- ▣ **A bedroom environment that helps you sleep.**
- ▣ **Use music, reading or mindfulness to relax before bed.**
- ▣ **Switch your phone off and keep it out of the bedroom.**
- ▣ **Watch out for BLUE LIGHT**



Isolation

- ▣ Establish a routine – build a balanced and consistent structure into each day
- ▣ Create a sense of personal control through engagement in activities to add distraction and stimulation (e.g. exercise, internet-enabled entertainment, social media, games, cooking, meditations, Online courses, or breathing exercises) to combat boredom and/or monotony
- ▣ Focus on small achievements to foster a sense of competence, complete a project, keep journals or (positive data) logs to combat decreased interest, motivation and/or low mood
- ▣ Socially connect with others - stay in contact with family and friends (even if it is virtual)
- ▣ Avoid unhelpful coping strategies i.e. tobacco, alcohol or other drugs, gambling, ignoring your personal care

Managing Emotions – Guilt, Shame, Moral Injury

- ▣ It is important to gain some understanding of how to cope with these different intense, but normal, emotional responses to COVID-19.
 - If you are feeling anxious, overwhelmed and uncertain: plant both feet on the ground, take a few deep breaths , then plan what you can do today and think about what you do know or can control
 - If you are feeling guilty, remember it is because you are a compassionate and caring person and you simply want to help – acknowledge that we are all doing our best during these unprecedented times
 - If you are feeling grief: 1. express them safely; 2. try to ride the waves of the emotion; and 3. exhibit self-compassion -be patient and kind to yourself knowing that this will likely take many months to pass

Stigma

- ▣ Stigma can destroy or sabotage social cohesion promoting 'othering' – What language are you using in relation to COVID-19 in your work environment?
 - Language matters and can feed into **stigma** around a threat
 - Avoid terms such as 'victim'; 'carriers', 'infected', etc.
 - Using accurate information to reduce bias and stereotypes
 - Corrects myths, rumours and stereotypes
 - Challenge those who's language promotes bias



- ▣ People should be given a **frank, realistic, plain English assessment** of what they will be facing – anything else will end in anger once reality “bites”
- ▣ Discussion groups to make sense of what is going on – **support from colleagues and immediate managers protects mental health**
- ▣ Watch for signs of presenteeism i.e. working less effectively because of reduced mental health
- ▣ Reflect on what has happened when things are over or start to recede – on their experiences – be on guard for lingering stressors as well as negative cognitions, guilt and shame
- ▣ Reinforcing that this is a marathon NOT a sprint
- ▣ **Most important message: normalization, self-care, and foster help seeking behaviour and social connections**

Under quarantine and in a pandemic it is important to have:

- reliable trusting information
- strategies to cope with boredom and stress
- social contact - feeling connected to and with others
- proper cell phone technology
- relaxation and meditation techniques
- awareness of available assistance and resources

Avoid: initiating or increasing substance use; avoiding following TV and NEWS sources non-stop – check reliability of source; and stigmatization of sick people, Asian populations and “others” which fuels stress and xenophobia



FINAL THOUGHTS

Healthcare workers, in one study, request five things from their employer during the pandemic:

1. Hear me
2. Protect me
3. Prepare me
4. Support me
5. Care for me

These five requests focuses on creating a psychologically safe environment, strong leadership, clear organizational strategies for staff wellbeing, consistent communication and significant team support. This in turn fosters individual resilience, sanctions self-compassion and self-care. Ultimately helping to reduce the likelihood or severity of psychological manifestations requiring prolonged and at times complex treatment.

TAKE AWAY

Whether someone develops a psychological injury or post-traumatic symptoms, growth is dependent on the support they have before during and after the challenging incident.

QUESTIONS



HELPFUL RESOURCES

- ▣ <https://www.ics.ac.uk/ICS/Education/Wellbeing/ICS/Wellbeing.aspx>
- ▣ https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/covid19-stigma-guide.pdf?sfvrsn=226180f4_2
- ▣ <https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/>
- ▣ <http://metrisleadership.com/blog/archive/succeeding-as-a-team-ways-to-build-collective-resilience/>
- ▣ <https://www.worksafebc.com/en/about-us/covid-19-updates/health-and-safety/staying-safe-at-work>



- ▣ <https://www.canada.ca/en/government/publicservice/covid-19/mental-health-tips.html>
- ▣ <https://www.pcmag.com/news/get-organized-20-tips-for-working-from-home>
- ▣ http://kprcontentlibrary.kprdsb.ca:8080/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-10245/nmt2016_stress_management.pdf
- ▣ <https://www.canada.ca/en/government/publicservice/covid-19/working-remotely.html>
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source information and material

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