
Caring for Carers: Supporting the Mental Health Needs of Care Providers and Caregivers in Light of COVID-19

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Psychiatry
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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Disclosures

- Dr. Nica-Graham: no commercial or industry disclosures

- Gita Lakhanpal: no commercial or industry disclosures

Objectives

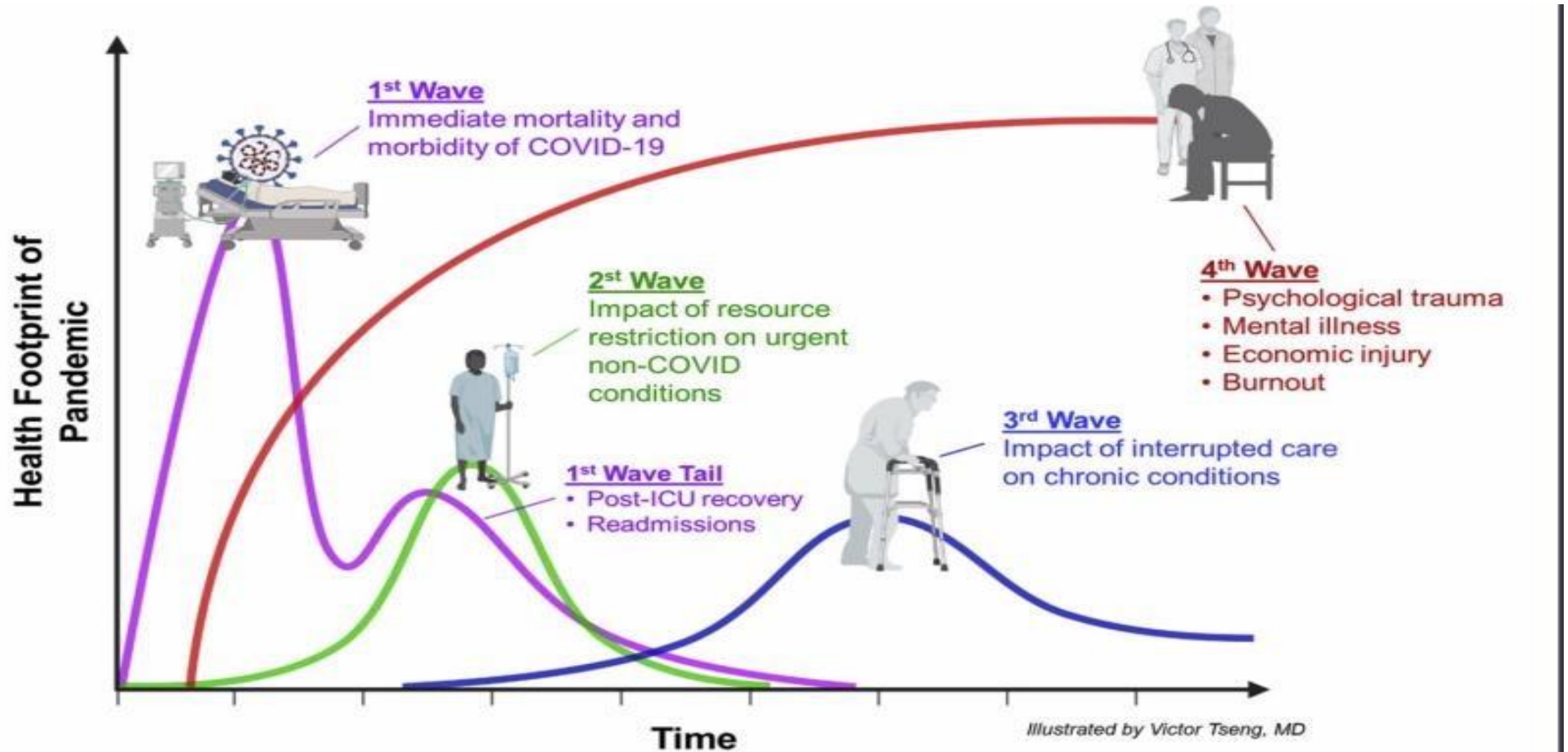
- Understand the factors that may be causing added stress for carers during the pandemic
- Learn virtual methods and resources to support carers during the pandemic
- Recommend strategies and resources to promote wellness and resilience among health care providers



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The Mental Health Wave of the Pandemic



The Health Promotion and Community Development Foundation



Expanded Chronic Care Model: Integration of Concepts & Strategies from Population Health Promotion and the Chronic Care Model, Victoria Barr et al 2003



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Connecting with Caregivers in Ontario during the pandemic

Managing Stress and Anxiety in COVID-19

TELE-MINDFULNESS

for Caregivers of a Person with Dementia

A free live online video event

For Family Caregivers

FRIDAY
APRIL 17

11:00 AM - 12:30 PM



Caregivers are facing unprecedented stress and decision making as they confront COVID-19.

It's vital to know you are not alone, there are skills and supports to help. Join other caregivers across the province to learn and practice mindfulness skills via this interactive video seminar.

Mindfulness skills have shown a positive impact in managing stress and coping with challenging emotions, for those caring for a family member or friend living with dementia. This video seminar introduces elements of the Enhancing Care Tele-mindfulness group program.

CAREGIVER CHECK-IN

Challenges & Choices in COVID-19

THURSDAY
MAY 14

2 PM to 3:15 PM

This is our second event. We'd like to hear about the issues and topics you would like to focus on.

[Let us know when you register.](#)



CAREGIVER CHECK-IN

Challenges & Choices in COVID-19

THURSDAY
JUNE 11

11 AM to 12:15 PM

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Your Voice – Your Choice

COVID-19 Themes from Caregivers

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How to talk about COVID19 with PWD?• Move to/ from LTC?• Hygiene & PPE management with PWD• How do I isolate?• POA legalities• PSWs & safety | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personal Care Services how to get services when agencies are doing virtual care• No Day Programs: How to keep PWD occupied & stimulate mentally• Does my (wife/caregiver) life need to end as I know it in regards to seeing grandchildren, having guests or going to the cottage? | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keeping Distancing when out for a walk; how to enforce with someone with dementia?• Hire more in-house care or accept LTC offer• PWD confused by Facetime & Window Visits; stressful to see this• Using Phone: Strategies, handling negative feelings by phone |
|---|---|---|

Your Voice – Your Choice

Medical/Health

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Primary Doctor?
Geriatrician, Neurologist, or Family GP to follow• Hallucinations – at night• Delirium – how to manage?• Sun downing• Incontinence | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Medications for Aggression• Signs of Next Stage of dementia? | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sleep disruption• Lack of physical activity for myself and family member• Stop their driving |
|--|---|---|



Your Voice – Your Choice

BEHAVIOURS

- **Argumentative** spouse: Change my behaviour?
- **Challenge keeping distancing** on walks
- **No Programs:** What to do to keep
- **Resists Help:** Early onset frontal lobe dementia
- **Balance doing for vs.. independence**
- **Spouse “fixes”** things; I have to fix and change afterwards
- **Hygiene tips for parents:** bathing, washing clothes; how to get them to do this?



Your Voice – Your Choice

	Communication	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Future planning resistance: POA, Wills• Supporting from a distance• Helping parents make decisions, still talking to them as adults – Tips• Ambiguous loss due to LTC and Dementia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Control my temper• Stop their nagging & repetition• Redirect when confused/ assertive• Talking about their dementia with them	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I need more patience & understand more• Help children understand: logic doesn't work, don't get stuck on correcting• He cries at TV but then unempathic to my tears



What We Learned Process & Content

- Caregivers are very willing to connect and engage on digital platforms
 - Initially concerns about COVID-19 dominated discussion
 - Then the practical, communication, relational, and own wellbeing concerns started to become foreground
- The Ontario wide events were clearly communicated as education and opportunities for connection – not group psychotherapy
- Aware and acknowledge that there is a segment of the population that has limited internet and technology resources



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What We Learned About Live Online Engagement

1. Design flows of engagement so technology is a support not an impediment

- Work out the backend processes so it's easy for the caregivers on the front end
 - Automated Pop up success messages and success emails
 - Each communication indicates how to reach the team, and the team is able to respond

2. Tailored and specific to who is on the screen

- Caregivers listed their concerns and questions at registration
- Providing information in a clear, with plain language
- Taking time to show relevant resources online, and how they are relevant to the caregivers situation
- Responding to the emotion that underlies the question/concern



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Dementiacarers.ca Website – COVID & Learning Resources

The screenshot shows the website's navigation menu with options: COVID-19, Find a Program, Learning Resources, Join a Network, Program Events, About Us, and Blog. The main content area is titled "Managing ongoing care through COVID-19" and lists several resources:

- **How to Handle Challenging Behaviours in People with Dementia:** A guide for caregivers and family members (Mount Sinai Hospital, Reitman Centre for Alzheimer Support and Training)
- **Long Term Care: Thinking About Removing Your Older Loved One From Long Term Care During COVID-19** (Regional Geriatric Program of Toronto)
- **Caregiver Tips & Resources** from The Ontario Caregiver Organization
- **Taking Care of Yourself & Activities to Do from Home** from Alzheimer Society of Canada

Below this is a "Legal Resources" section with a video resource: "Substitute Decision Making: A Legal Guide for Dementia Caregivers/ Care Partners (Nancy Reason, LL.B., lawyer with Pro Bono Ontario)".

There are expandable sections for "Legal Organizations and Advocacy for Caregivers", "Other Resources" (including COVID-19 Resources | Government of Ontario, How to self assess, isolate, monitor | Public Health Ontario, and Regional Assessment Centres | Public Health Toronto), and "ONLINE SUPPORTS".

“We help caregivers manage their emotions and learn the specific skills necessary to deal with dementia.”

Dr. Joel Sadavoy

Medical Director of Enhancing Care for Ontario Care Partners,
The Cyril & Dorothy, Joel & Jill Reitman Centre for Alzheimer's Support and Training

Ways to learn

The Reitman Centre has developed a variety of award winning, education and informational resources for caregivers for the Enhancing Care for Ontario Care Partners Program. These tools and resources are geared to assist family caregivers dealing with dementia at home.

Caregiver Tip Sheets and Videos



Tip Sheets for Dementia Care Partners

Tips and strategies to help look after yourself while caring for a person living with dementia.

Includes tips on:

- Talking with a person with dementia
- Maintaining good brain health
- Staying in the moment
- Navigating the health care system
- Effective memory strategies
- Visiting someone with dementia

*Winner, 2018 Digital Health Awards

[Learn More](#)



Your Questions Answered - Video Series

Common questions and effective strategies for caregiving, delivered by Reitman Centre mental health professionals.

8 topics covered include:

- Is it ok to lie to my family member with dementia?
- Managing lack of interest (apathy)
- Sharing their Alzheimer's diagnosis
- and more....

*Gold Winner, 2019 Digital Health Awards

[Learn More](#)



Caregiving coaching using simulation - Videos

An instructional videos series demonstrating communication and behaviour management strategies using coaching and simulation.

8 topics include:

- Paranoia and accusations
- Resistance
- Repetitive questions and calls
- Paranoia and accusations
- Time to Stop Driving
- Asking for help
- Disrupted Sleep
- Disinhibited Behaviours

[Learn More](#)



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Increase in Activity on Website & App During Pandemic

Users

53.70%

3,160 vs 2,056



New Users

56.42%

3,058 vs 1,955



Sessions

60.65%

4,503 vs 2,803



Pageviews

63.49%

10,828 vs 6,623




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Dementia Advisor App

Caring for a family member with dementia?


GET THE
SINAI HEALTH SYSTEM
**DEMENTIA
ADVISOR
APP**



Dementia Advisor is a mobile app that helps family caregivers learn how to deal with difficult dementia behaviours, improve communication and gain problem-solving skills

DOWNLOAD FOR FREE

Download on the App Store



Caregivers learn how to cope with dementia through interactive role playing and chat-based dialogue, guided by expert coaching.



"It's a completely different way of learning that's really made for your phone"
- Teresa Manley

"The scenarios we've created for the app are based on years of clinical experience"
- Dr. Joel Sadavoy, Director of the Reitman Centre and Head of Geriatric Psychiatry at Mount Sinai Hospital.

Canada
Funded in part by the Government of Canada's Social Development Partnership Program - Children and Families component.

Sinai Health System
THE CYRIL & DOROTHY, JOEL & JILL REITMAN CENTRE FOR ALZHEIMER'S SUPPORT AND TRAINING

Online Supports & Resources

CARERS

- 8 week small group therapy for family caregivers
- Practical skills training and emotional supports and coaching through the use of simulation

TEACH

- 4 week small group for family caregivers covering four themes: Self Care, Navigating the System, The Changing Relationship, Future Planning

TELE-MINDFULNESS

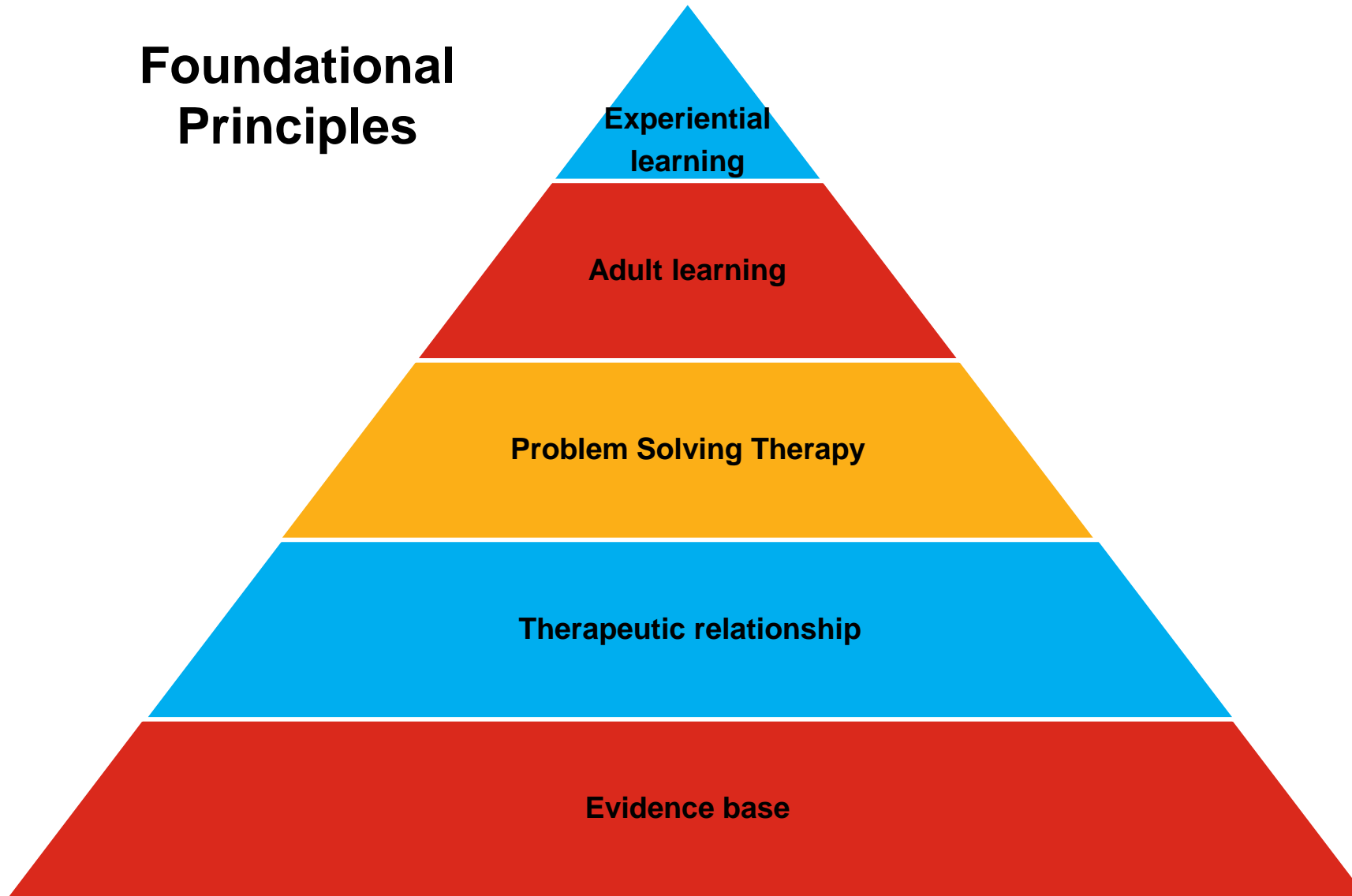
- 8 week mindfulness meditation program for family caregivers
- Caregivers learn how to more effectively relate to and cope with internal and external stressors



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Foundational Principles



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Objectives

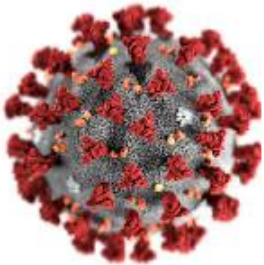
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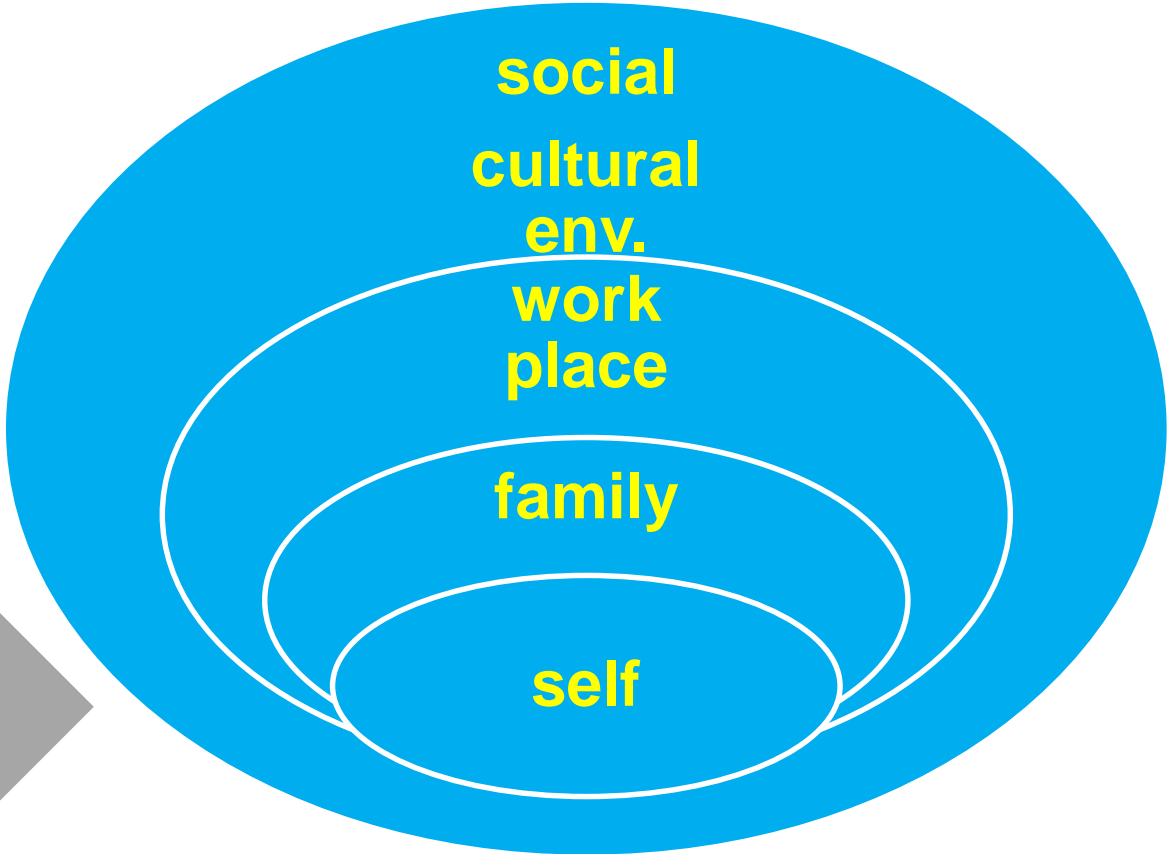
Covid-19 Related Stress



THREAT to SAFETY

UNCERTAINTY

PROLONGED STRESS



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Covid-19 Related Stress

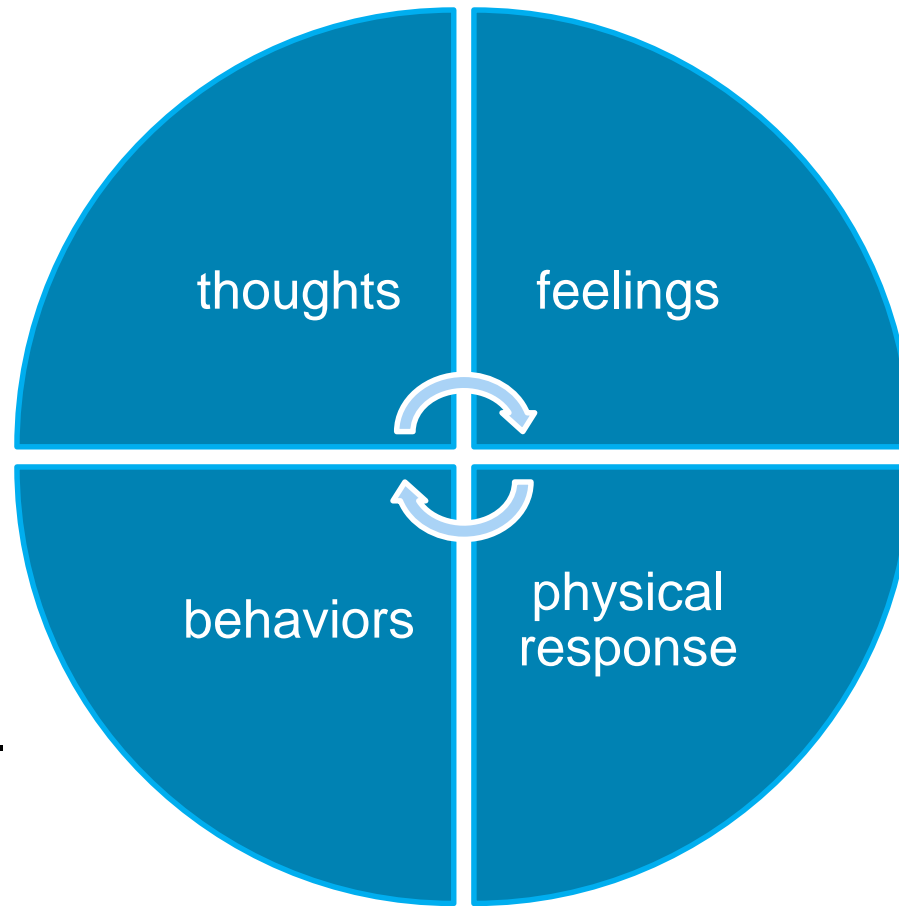


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Mental Health Consequences Among Health Care Providers

- I can't cope
- catastrophizing
- I am alone and unsupported



- afraid, anxious
- angry
- alienated
- sad
- irritable
- moral distress

- media over-consumption
- disrupted sleep schedule
- poor eating habits
- stop healthy routines (e.g. exercise, socializing)
- avoidance
- substance use

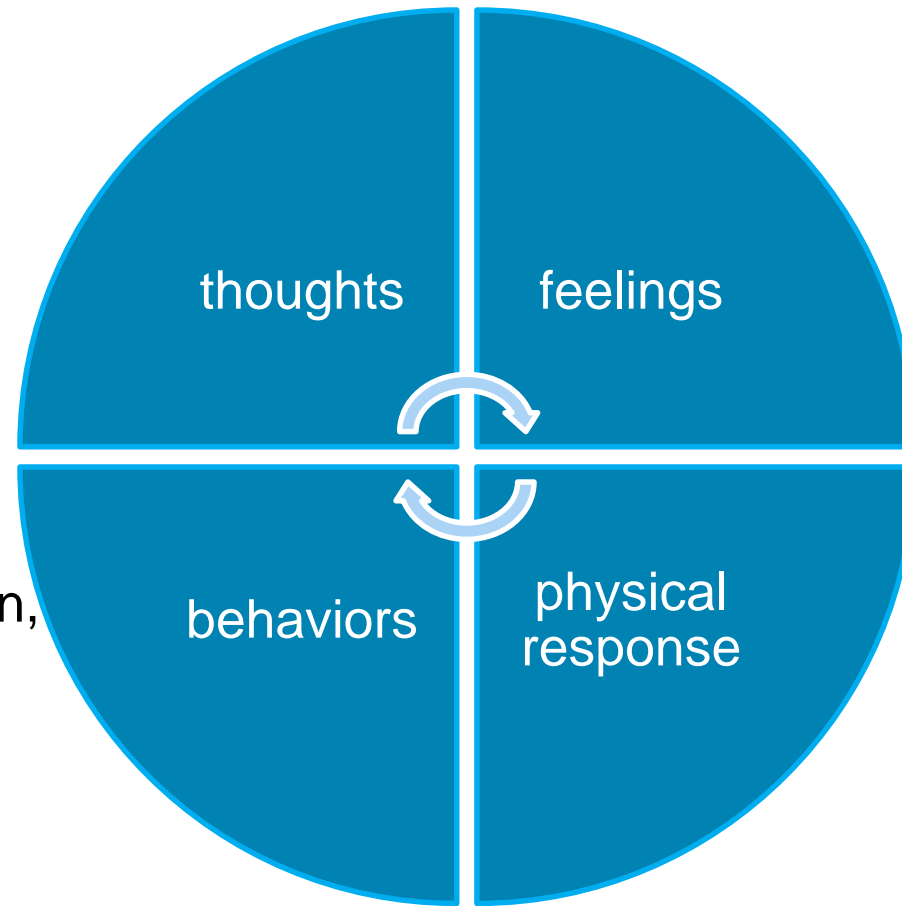
- fight or flight response: elevated BP, mm tension, hyper-focussed, on edge
- prolonged stress response- fatigue, insomnia, dysregulated hunger, poor conc.



Coping with COVID-19 Related Stress

- **GET THE FACTS**
- assess personal risk
- adjust expectations of yourself
- **Focus on things in YOUR CONTROL**
- **self-efficacy**

- limit media use
- attend to sleep, nutrition, exercise
- **ROUTINES**
- **ask and offer help**



- self-compassion
- meditation, yoga, breathing skills
- **CONNECTEDNESS**
- **find MEANING** in your work and attitudes

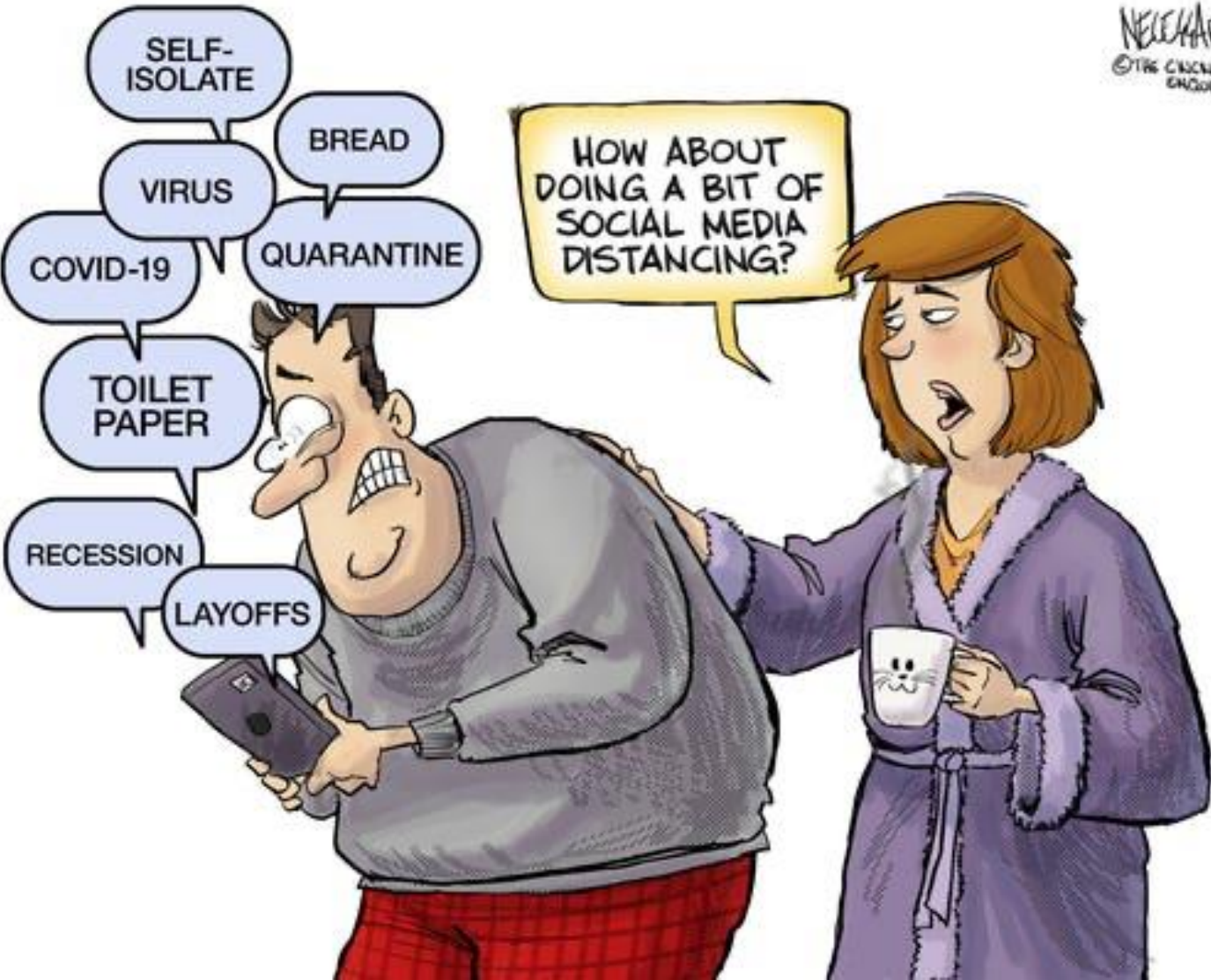
- tolerable distress
- able to relax

Professional mental health support is available!

Coping with COVID-19 Related Stress

Personal Protective Relationships

“PPR”



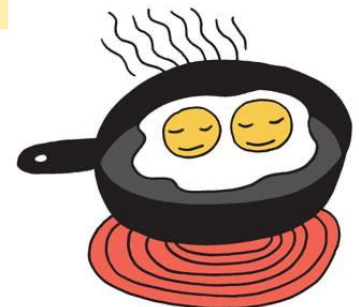
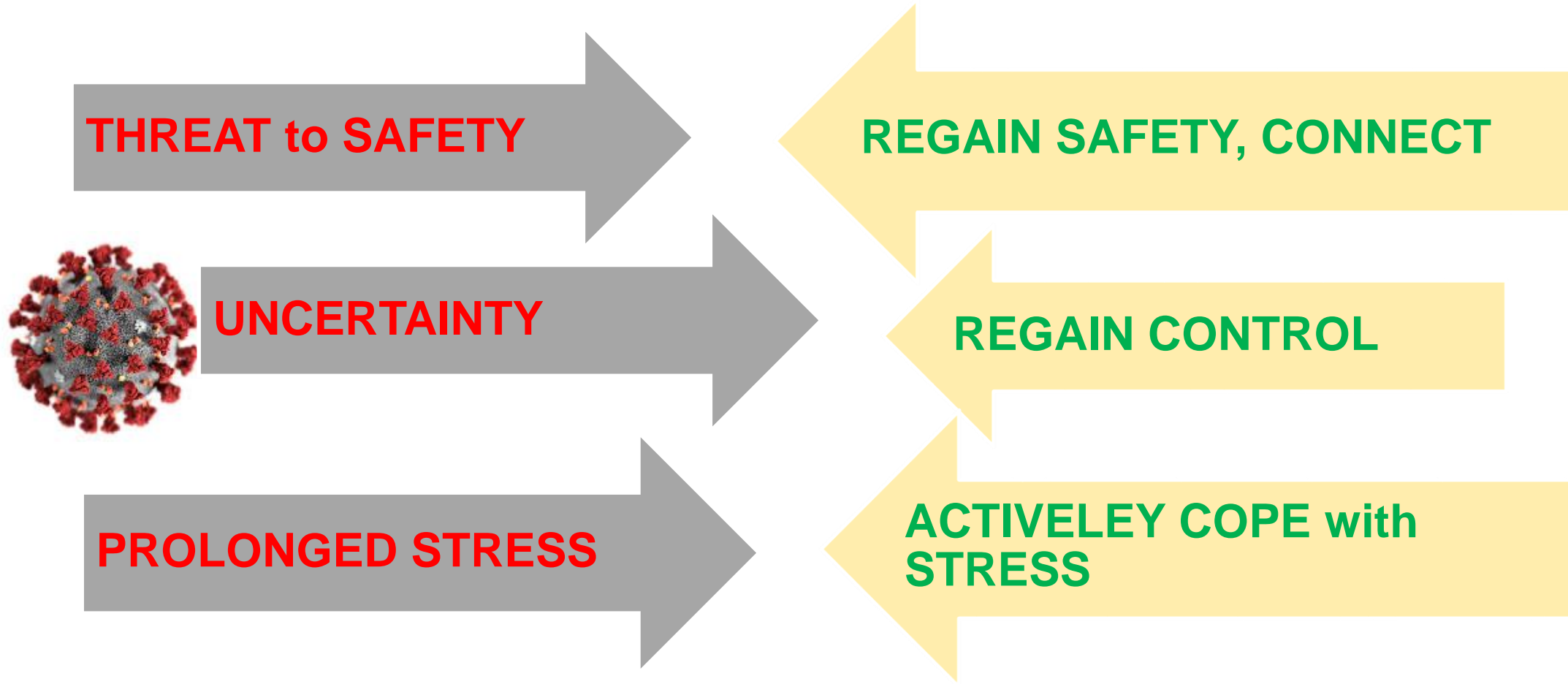
Coping with COVID-19 Related Stress in the WORKPLACE

- Skills and capacity building in managing changes at work
- Information and transparency
 - PPE; testing; policies and guidelines for re-opening
- Support from leadership and colleagues
- Address basic needs (childcare, transportation, illness in the family)
- Peer support and resiliency coaches for frontline health care workers
- Avoid blaming and criticism

Feeling heard, protected, supported, and competent in the job help sustain wellness and resilience!



Coping with Covid-19 Related Stress

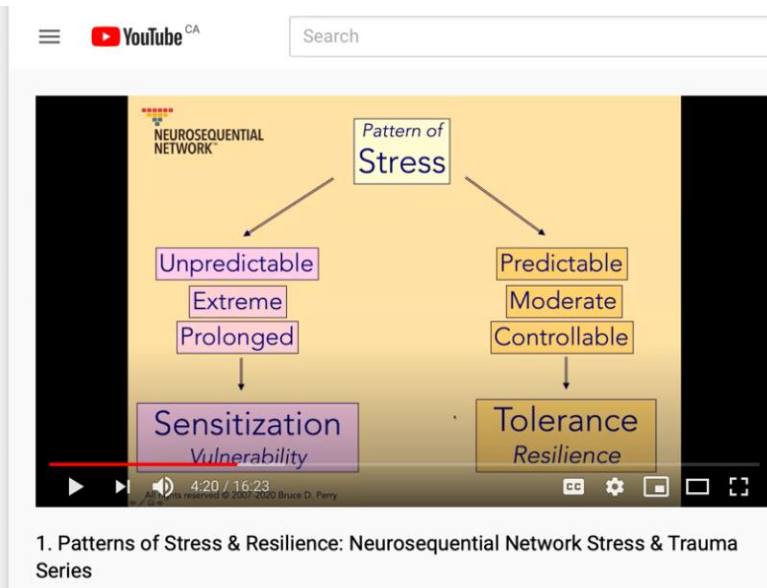
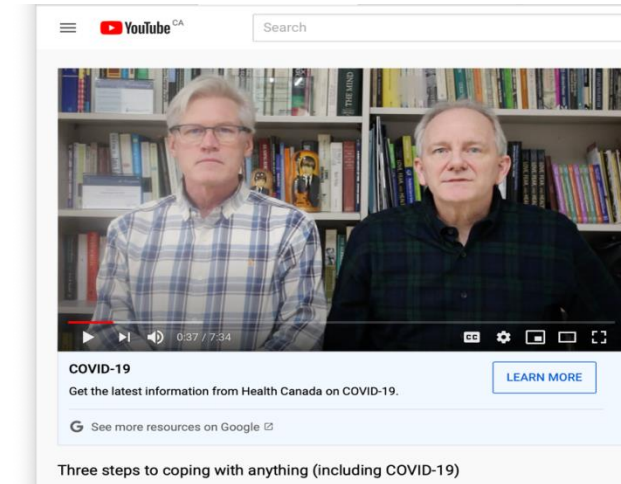


WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER.
THIS HAS BEEN A JERENVILLE COMMUNITY SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT.

Resources

- Hunter and Maunder link: Three steps to coping with anything (including COVID-19)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rkz7vJOZ2HU>

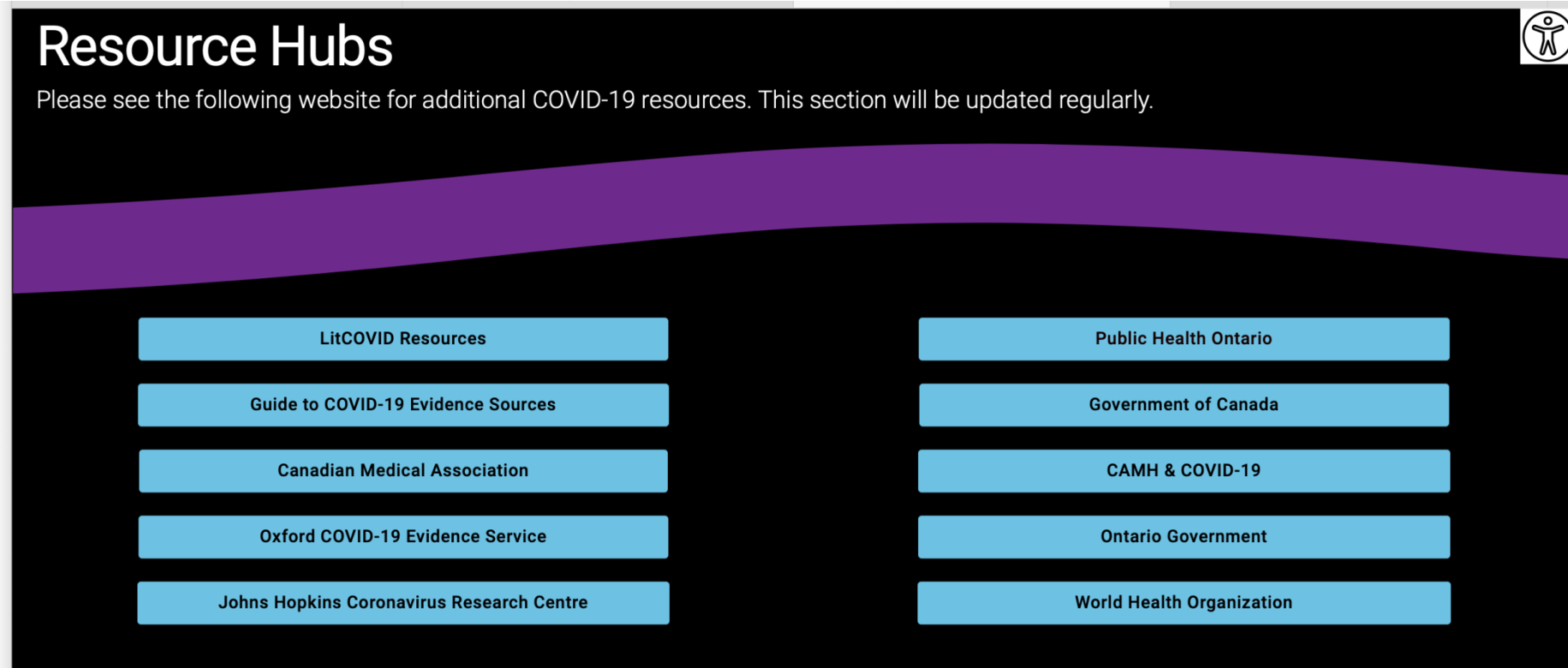


Perry, B. (2020) Neurosequential COVID-19 Stress, Distress and Trauma Series:

<https://www.neurosequential.com/covid-19-resources>

Resources: ECHO Coping with Covid

<https://camh.echoontario.ca/echo-coping-with-covid/>



Resource Hubs

Please see the following website for additional COVID-19 resources. This section will be updated regularly.

LitCOVID Resources	Public Health Ontario
Guide to COVID-19 Evidence Sources	Government of Canada
Canadian Medical Association	CAMH & COVID-19
Oxford COVID-19 Evidence Service	Ontario Government
Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Research Centre	World Health Organization



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Resources

Professional Mental Health Support: Canada.ca

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL canada.ca. The page title is "Taking care of your mental and physical health during the COVID-19 pandemic". The header includes the Government of Canada logo, a search bar, and a "Français" link. A "MENU" dropdown is visible. The main content area features a large heading "Taking care of your mental and physical health during the COVID-19 pandemic" and a call-to-action button "Visit Wellness Together Canada". Below this, a section titled "On this page" lists several links: "If you are in crisis", "Fear, stress and worry are normal in a crisis", "Tips for taking care of yourself", "More ways to get help", and "Provincial and territorial resources".

Government of Canada COVID-19 Resources | Mental Health Commission of Can... Wellness Together Canada | Home Taking care of your mental and physical health during the COVID-19 pandem... +

Government of Canada Gouvernement du Canada

Search Canada.ca

Franglais

MENU

[Canada.ca](#) > [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#)

Taking care of your mental and physical health during the COVID-19 pandemic

Need mental health support? [Visit Wellness Together Canada](#)

On this page

- [If you are in crisis](#)
- [Fear, stress and worry are normal in a crisis](#)
- [Tips for taking care of yourself](#)
- [More ways to get help](#)
- [Provincial and territorial resources](#)



Resources

Professional Mental Health Support: Professional Organizations

- CPA Psychological support:
<https://cpa.ca/corona-virus/psychservices/>
- Employee Assistance Program at your site
- OMA-Physician Health Program:
<http://php.oma.org/help-me-now/>



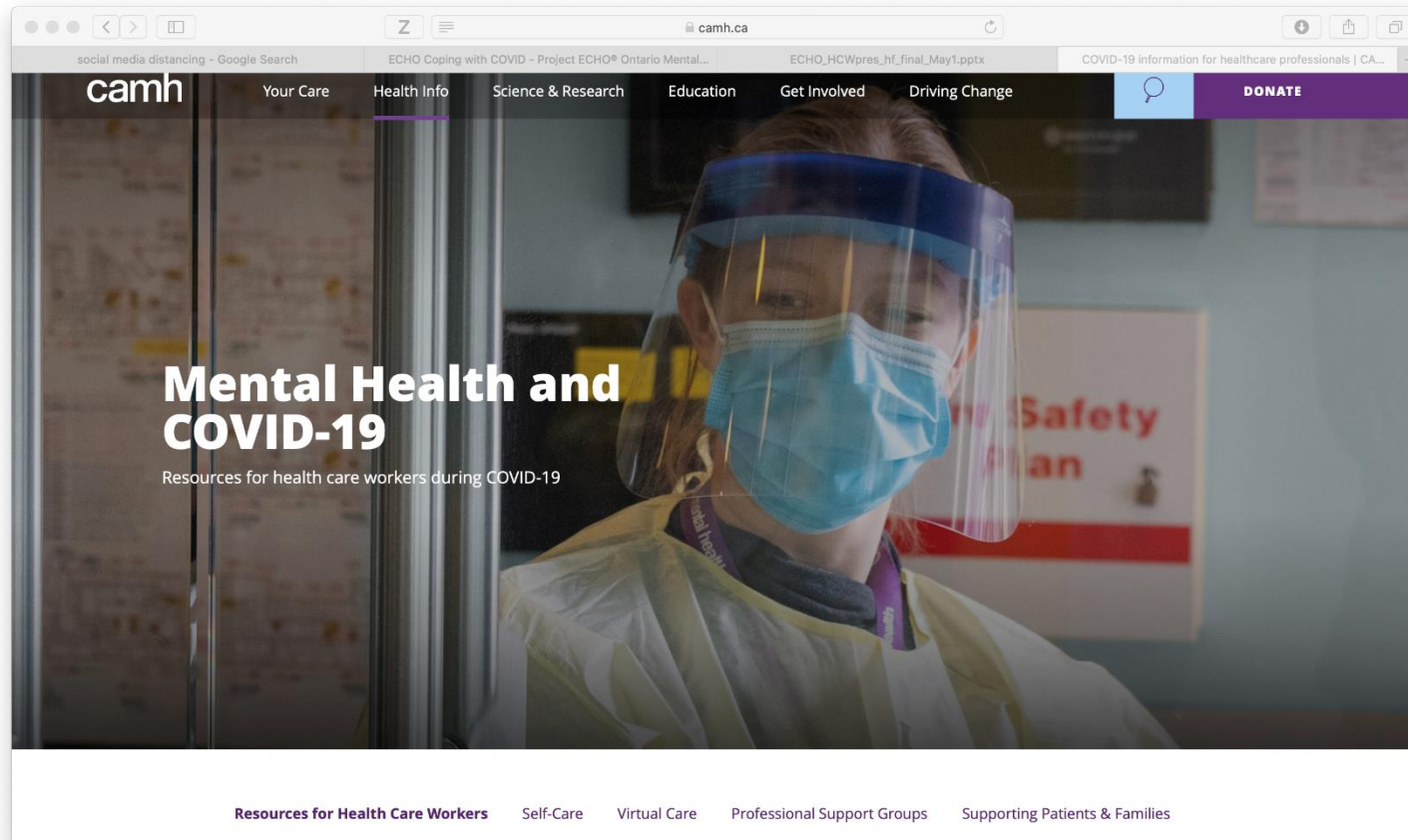
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Professional Mental Health Support: CAMH

<https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-health-and-covid-19/information-for-professionals>



Your Mental Health and Self-Care

Self-referral for Mental Health Care

Virtual Care

Professional Support Groups

Supporting Patients and Families



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References

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- Maunder R, Hunter J, Vincent L, Bennett J, Peladeau N, Leszcz M, Sadavoy J, Verhaeghe LM, Steinberg R, Mazzulli T. The immediate psychological and occupational impact of the 2003 SARS outbreak in a teaching hospital. *CMAJ*. 2003 May 13;168(10):1245-51.



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