

# You and Your Students' Mental Health...Both Matter

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Canadian Mental  
Health Association  
*Mental health for all*

Association canadienne  
pour la santé mentale  
*La santé mentale pour tous*



years of  
community  
ans de  
communauté

AND IF TODAY,  
ALL YOU DID WAS  
HOLD YOURSELF  
TOGETHER,  
I'M PROUD OF YOU.



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# Agenda

- Understanding Mental Health & Mental Illness
- What is Stress?
- Sources of Stress for Education Staff including new COVID 19 stressors
- Stress Overload Warning Signs
- Compassion Fatigue
- Protective Factors
- Resilience: what is it and how to do build our resilience?
- Emotional Management
- Self-care
- Resources

# Mental Health Defined

- Mental Health is “the capacity of each and all of us to feel, think and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face. It is a positive sense of emotional and spiritual well-being that respects the importance of culture, equity, social justice, interconnections and personal dignity.” – Public Health Agency of Canada
- It’s about having a balance in life
- Mental health and physical health are intertwined

# Stress

- Stress is the body's reaction to a change that requires a physical, mental or emotional adjustment or response
- Stress can come from any situation or thought that makes you feel frustrated, angry, nervous, or anxious
- Stress doesn't always look stressful
- Stress impacts all of our mental health

IF YOU NEEDED TO  
HEAR IT:

- YOU ARE NOT A BURDEN.
- YOU DO NOT HAVE TO GET WORSE IN ORDER TO GET BETTER.
  - YOUR PAIN IS VALID.
- YOU ARE NEVER AS ALONE AS YOU THINK YOU ARE.
- YOU ARE STRONGER THAN WHAT IS HOLDING YOU BACK.



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# Stress and Education Staff

- 46% of teachers in grades K-12 experience high levels of stress; these numbers are equivalent to that of a nurse or physician
- School staff are the new front line workers
- American Federation of Teachers said that 78% of teachers felt physically and emotionally exhausted by the end of the day
- Help is available

# Sources of Stress for Education Staff

- Environment
  - How is your school functioning/administrative support
- Individual Students and their challenges
  - Behavior management, student motivation/work ethic/ attitude
  - The reason you became a teacher – success of your students
- Peer Interaction
  - Opportunity to engage with colleagues
- Pressure from Parents
- Government Involvement
  - How much controversy/problems are compounding workload etc.

# Stress

Although it was always there, we also know that COVID 19 has spiked it now more than ever...

# Additional Covid19 Stressors

- **Health Anxiety**
  - Health Anxiety is a common form of anxiety, seeing an increase in this during the pandemic; It is important to know that severe anxiety can cause physical symptoms – such as:
    - Shortness of Breath
    - Racing Heart Rate
    - Dizziness
    - Clammy Skin
- **Increased work demands**
  - This can include screening for COVID 19, new cleaning policies & procedures, new playground regulations and so much more!
- **Family/work balance/concerns**
  - Concern over your health, your family's health and safety; are you doing the “right thing” for you and your family?
- **Staff shaming**
  - Everyone is in a different position with their choices, everyone is doing what is best for them and that is OK
- **Public Perception/Information**
  - Getting your information from accurate and reliable resources
- **Uncertainty of the school year**
  - What will 2020/2021 look like? How long will this last?

# Stress Overload Warning Signs

## Cognitive

- Memory problems
- Inability to concentrate
- Poor judgement
- Anxious or racing thoughts
- Increased attention to physical processes
- Constant worrying

## Emotional

- Increased worry about health
- Irritability or short temper
- Agitation
- Depression
- Isolation

# Stress Overload Warning Signs

## Physical

- Headaches
- Stomach pain, nausea, diarrhea
- Dizziness
- Rapid heartbeat, sweating
- Increasing tension or pain
- Loss of sex drive
- Decreased energy levels

## Behavioural

- Isolating oneself
- Eating less or more
- Risky behaviour
- Decreased productivity
- Have trouble sleeping or sleeping too much
- Nervous habits

# Compassion Fatigue

- Compassion fatigue: Cumulative emotional, physical, and psychological exhaustion felt over time by individuals working in professions that require them to care for and/or work with individuals who have experienced trauma
  - Primary trauma: trauma we personally experience
  - Secondary trauma: trauma we are exposed to
  - Vicarious trauma
- Compassion fatigue is a unique form of burnout affecting those in caretaking professions

# Compassion Fatigue

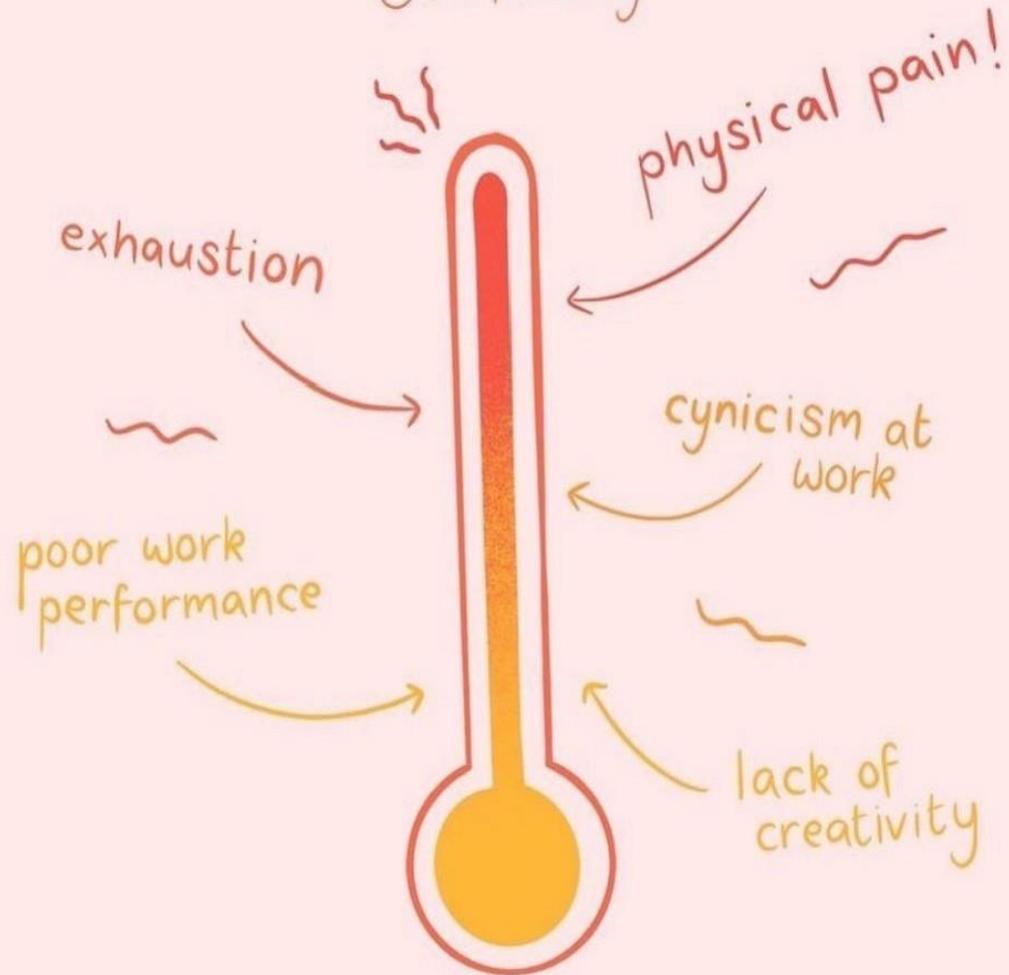
- Compassion fatigue has been described as the “cost of caring” for others in emotional pain (Figley, 1982)
- The profound emotional and physical erosion that takes place when helpers are unable to refuel and regenerate

## Symptoms

- Emotional melting
- Feeling “shut down”
- Loss of enjoyment
- Increase illness or fatigue; aches and pains
- Cynicism or pessimism

# SIGNS OF BURNOUT

@thefabstory



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So, if we know that stress for educational staff has never been higher...



What can we do about it?

# Homework Assignment

Who is involved in your stress? ex. Family, friends, co-worker	How Frequently does it occur? A-Always O-Often S- Sometimes	What degree of control do you have? HC – High Control SC – Some Control NC – No control	How do you deal with it? Anger, Ignore, Humor, Seek Help, Depression, Worry, Other

# Protective Factors

- Some of those same things that can be stressors in our lives can also be protective factors:
  - Your school's administration
    - Support from your school's administration can make a world of difference
  - Peers
    - Being able to connect with your peers on a regular and informal way
  - Your health and wellbeing practices
    - What are you doing at home; exercise, eating habits, fun, support
  - Social Connection
    - It is as important for you as it is for your students

# Personal Story



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years of  
community

# Resilience

Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress — such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems or workplace and financial stressors. It means "bouncing back" from difficult experiences.

American Psychological Association (2016)

FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH:  
IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO BE  
WHOEVER YOU WANT TO BE.

I HOPE YOU LIVE A LIFE  
YOU'RE PROUD OF,

AND IF YOU FIND THAT  
YOU'RE NOT,

I HOPE YOU HAVE THE  
STRENGTH TO START OVER.

— F. SCOTT FITZGERALD



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# Adaptive Resilience

The ability to navigate through adversity, adapt and thrive

- 1. Ability to navigate stress, anxiety and overwhelm*
- 2. Ability to stay focused and motivated amid uncertainty*
- 3. Ability to have mental clarity and agility of thinking*
- 4. Ability to cultivate empathy and compassion in virtual and phone environments*
- 5. Ability to broaden perspectives to transition from negativity biases to growth mindsets*
- 6. Ability to boost creativity, defining new possibilities using the growth mindset*

# Ways to Build Resilience

- Make connections. Positive relationships with close family members, friends or others are very important.
- Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems. You can't change the fact that highly stressful events happen, but you can change how you interpret and respond to these events; Look for the Strengths in an idea rather than the weaknesses first ex. Well that won't work because...
- Accept that change is a part of living. Certain goals may no longer be attainable as a result of adverse situations, and that is okay!
- Move toward your goals. Develop some realistic and reasonable goals.
- Take action on things. Ex. Add a mindfulness practice to your math class

# Ways to Build Resilience

- Look for opportunities for self-discovery. People often learn something about themselves and may find that they have grown in some respect as a result of their struggle with loss.
- Nurture a positive view of yourself. Developing confidence in your ability to solve problems and trusting your instincts helps build resilience.
- Keep things in perspective. Even when facing very painful events, try to consider the stressful situation in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective.
- Maintain a hopeful outlook. An optimistic outlook enables you to expect that good things will happen in your life.
- Take care of yourself. Pay attention to your own needs and feelings.

# Emotional Management

Emotional management is the ability to recognize and constructively handle both positive and challenging emotions.



EM: Daniel Goleman

# Emotional Management:

*Why is it important for Education Staff?*

- When emotions are running high in the classroom, it can be harmful to everyone involved – *students, support staff, teachers*
  - If a staff member is not equipped with the resources or knowledge to manage their emotions effectively, it could be destructive to their personal wellbeing, as well as that of their students
- Overwhelming stress and anxiety can cause frustration and burnout which in turn can block our ability to make wise and rational decisions
  - This can also harm the students in terms of their ability to learn and create an in turn it can emotionally unsafe classroom

# Emotional Management:

*Why is it important for Education Staff?*



# Emotional Management:

*What is it?*

1. Self Awareness

2. Self Regulation

3. Empathy

4. Motivation

5. Social Skills

# 1) Self Awareness

The ability to recognize how you feel and how your actions can affect the people around you.

**TIP:** When your emotions are running high.. *slow down*. BREATH.

Recognize what you're feeling and why you are feeling this way. Listen to what your emotions are telling you and remember: you may not be able to control the situation, but you can control how you respond to it

## 2) Self Regulation

The ability to stay in control of oneself. This includes the ability to be accountable for your actions.

**TIP:** Spend some time thinking about your ethics as an educator. When you know what is important to you ahead of time, you won't think twice when you are faced with a difficult moral dilemma.

**TIP:** Be accountable: refrain from blaming others when something goes wrong. Make a commitment to admit your mistakes & learn from them.  
*Bonus: you'll earn much more respect from those around you.*

# 3) Motivation

The ability to identify and work towards your goals. Set high standards and be proud of your quality of work.

**TIP:** Remember why you chose to be an educator. It's easy to lose sight of what you really love about your job in times of turmoil and uncertainty.  
**HOMEWORK:** Write of a list of 3 reasons why you went into education.

**TIP:** Stay optimistic – although this may be difficult because we have a tendency to learn towards a negativity bias – be coincident and intentful with your mindset. There is always something good in a bad situation if you just look for it.

## 4) Empathy

The ability to put yourself in someone else's situation.

**TIP:** Respond and acknowledge others peoples feelings



RSA

Shorts

## 5) Social Skills

The ability to manage change, resolve conflict and communicate.

**TIP:** Inspire loyalty to your co-workers and students by recognizing and acknowledging the good they do!





I am just checking  
in on you to make  
sure you are  
doing ok. Are you  
doing ok?



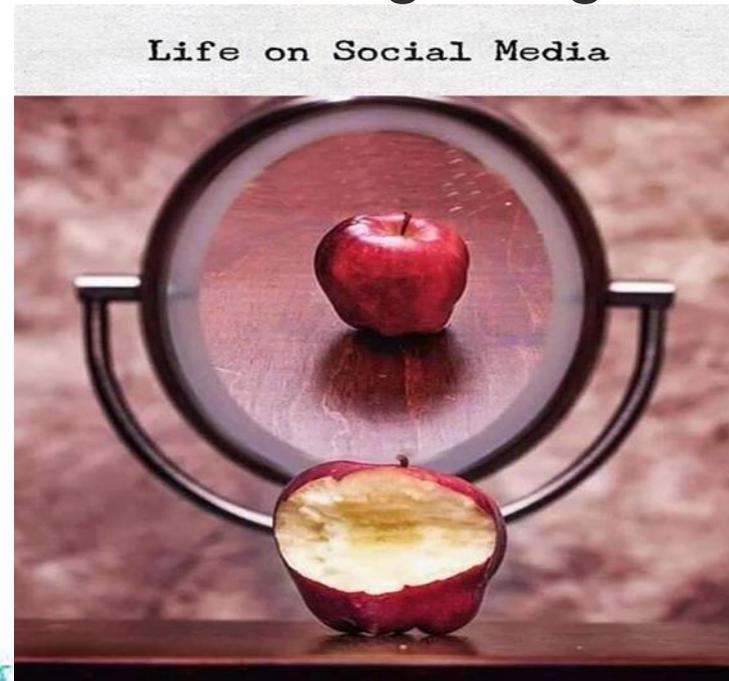
# Coping Tools for Youth

- Acknowledge your feelings
  - It is ok to feel a sense of relief that you don't have to be in class every day, but also frustrated that you can't see your friends
  - Feelings do not have to be one or the other, they can be confusing
- We are not all in the same boat
  - We are all in the same pandemic ocean but our boats are different sizes, have a different capacity and capabilities and they are changing
- Find someone to talk to about your feelings; but don't just focus on the negative ones, it is ok to acknowledge when we are having a good day too
  - So many times we get stuck in this rut of what is going wrong and it is ok to have a positive day during a pandemic too

# Coping Tools For Youth

- Look for places to find joy
  - Where is this for you? Do more of that – is it reading? getting outside? Creating?
- Helping Others
  - It is amazing what doing something for someone else can do for your mental health
  - This could be a friend, family member, or neighbour
- Do the dishes without being asked, clean the garage, or baking something and dropping it off, write letters or cards for residents of a long term care home

- Social Media Awareness
- People only show you what they want to show you
- Getting accurate info and not getting caught up in twitter chains etc.



# Happiness Toolkit

## **Dopamine – The Reward Chemical**

- Completing a task
- Doing a self-care activity
- Eating food
- Celebrating Little Wins

## **Oxytocin – The Love Hormone**

- Playing with a dog
- Listening to music
- Do something nice for someone
- Give a Compliment

# Happiness Toolkit

## **Serotonin – The Mood Stabilizer**

- Meditating
- Running
- Sun Exposure
- Walk in nature
- Swimming
- Cycling

## **Endorphin – The Pain Killer**

- Laughter Exercise
- Watch a Comedy
- Dark Chocolate
- Exercising

# Maintaining Balance in Unprecedented Times

- Check in regularly with other staff – *find out what's working and what isn't*
- Treat fellow staff with extra kindness, patience and respect – *we are all on a big learning curve*
- Put student or parent complaints in context – *try not to personalize them / let them affect your morale*

# Maintaining Balance in Unprecedented Times

- Recognize and acknowledge the additional work put in by everyone at every level – *ECEs, EAs, teachers, Janitors, cafeteria staff, admin, etc.*
- Share resources with one another
- Allow extra time to adjust to the new policies, procedures, technology, classroom layout
- Be flexible, understanding and compassionate if staff/their families become ill

# Take Away Messages

- Focus on what's strong rather than what's wrong
  - We are always trying to fix what is wrong, let's look for what is right!
- What you can and cannot change – **know the difference !**
- We can't change other people's responses to events, but we can change our own

gentle reminder :

you're allowed  
to rest the mountains  
you always carry.

- sonia

[soniamotwani.com](http://soniamotwani.com)



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# Self-Care

- Self care: it's what works for you!
  - Therapy; a lot of therapists are offering virtual care – phone or zoom
  - Music
  - Exercise – gym, walking, hiking, bike riding
  - Do something fun – games, friends, leisure
  - Reading
  - Talking with people who make you feel good
  - Gratitude
  - Mindfulness/Meditation

# Ride the Wave of Change

“We all have a finite amount of energy and we can make decisions about how and where we use it. Change gives us an opportunity to reflect on that.” – Unknown



# Resources

- EAP Programs
- Family Doctor
- BounceBack Ontario
  - [www.bouncebackontario.ca](http://www.bouncebackontario.ca)
- [www.mindbeacon.com](http://www.mindbeacon.com)
- Canada Suicide Prevention Service – 1-833-456-4566 or Text 45645 from 4 p.m. to midnight
- CMHA Hamilton
  - NEW counselling service
  - 905 -521-0090



# Thank you !

Please complete our survey monkey

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SDNXJ3S>

*Link will also be sent to you shortly.*

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*Questions?*

