



Factsheet — Mental Health Impacts of COVID-19 For Families Affected by Serious Mental Illness

Based on the presentation by Dr. Diane McIntosh, BSc Pharmacy, MD, FRCPC; Psychiatrist; CEO, Copeman Healthcare; Chief Neuroscience Officer, TELUS

MENTAL HEALTH – A DEFINITION

According to the WHO, mental health is “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.”



PRE-COVID-19 AN ALREADY CHALLENGED MENTAL HEALTH LANDSCAPE

Mental illness affects all Canadians, and we all need to have and grow our awareness. At any given time, **one in five Canadians will personally experience mental illness.** This means that every single Canadian experiences a mental illness, loves someone with a mental illness, or lives closely with someone who has a mental illness.



ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH!

Sobering statistics provide data on limited access, inadequate guidance, and long wait times (6 to 24 months) to consult a psychiatrist.



THE LACK OF ACCESS TO CARE IS A \$51 BILLION PER YEAR CANADIAN ECONOMIC PROBLEM!

It costs the Canadian economy **\$51 billion a year** when employees cannot work due to poor mental health.



THE INEXTRICABLE LINK BETWEEN PHYSICAL/MENTAL HEALTH AND ECONOMY

Impacts of an economic recession, lesser income and job losses are directly linked to a higher prevalence of suffering from mental illness, more significant substance abuse and suicide.

Engagement in work is important to mental health! Many people with mental illnesses wish to engage in work no matter how ill they are. Paid employment provides them with security, daily structure, a sense of worth and regular supportive social engagement.

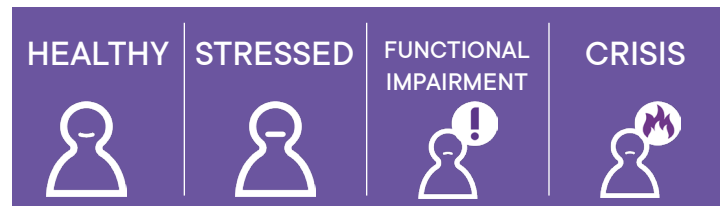


MID-COVID-19 IMPACTS ON OUR COMMUNITIES

WE ARE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC AND UNPREDICTABLE STRESS

The kind of stress we are under as a community right now is the worst kind of stress for us and our brains. Stress causes structural and functional brain changes, which increase risks for depression, inflammatory illnesses (i.e. obesity, diabetes, heart disease, etc.), dementia, and Alzheimer’s.

COVID-19 MENTAL HEALTH TRIFECTA



The circumstances and effects of the pandemic cause high anxiety. We are all worried about our health, or the health of loved ones and our community.

Another facet of the trifecta is the experience of financial stress due to potential job loss, retirement worries, and general economic concerns. Also, quarantine or isolation and experienced loneliness due to physical distancing significantly impact our mental and physical health.

During the second wave of the pandemic, we see a resurgence of anxiety, financial stress, and fear of isolation during potential imposed shutdowns.



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CRISIS IMPACTS ON CANADIANS

The COVID-19 crisis has caused particular impacts on Canadians. Research data demonstrates that anxiety levels in people are four times higher than pre-COVID-19.

Consumption of alcohol and cannabis has increased by nearly a third, and more than half of Canadians who experienced a loss of their job report negative impacts on their mental health.

THE MENTAL HEALTH SPECTRUM AND HOW TO MOVE TO A HEALTHY STATE

Considering the mental health spectrum outlined by Dr. McIntosh, the greatest goal is to meet people where they are at right now and intervene before they get into crisis mode.



PRAGMATIC TIPS - HOW WE CAN SUPPORT RETURN TO WORK AND A HEALTHY STATE

- 1 Apply a Schedule to Your Days**
Schedule your day and routines – from wake-up times to bedtimes, meal times, breaks, fitness, etc.
- 2 Stick to Your Treatment**
Medication is key to helping ensure that mental illness symptoms are managed.
- 3 Address Anxiety**
When anxiety builds over subjects such as finances, don't avoid addressing them.
- 4 Separate Work and Home Life**
If possible, separate your workspace from the rest of your home. Try to go outside as much as possible to nurture your mental health in nature.
- 5 Avoid Cannabis and Alcohol**
Usage impacts sleep and brain development.
- 6 Find Positivity and Gratitude**
Find positivity and gratitude throughout your day. Positivity is infectious, just like anxiety.
- 7 Monitor your Thoughts and Intakes of Information to Control your Anxiety**
Monitor what news and media you consume on the internet. Learn and apply critical thinking. Limit time on screens and put constantly changing information into context.



This information was presented at the BC Schizophrenia Society 2020 Virtual AGM on Saturday, September 26, 2020. It was part of this year's BCSS AGM Education Session: "Schizophrenia in the Time of COVID-19." Find more details and information at www.bcsc.org.

The BCSS Annual AGM Education Sessions are proudly sponsored by the Otsuka-Lundbeck Alliance.



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