



# Surviving COVID – 19: Mental health and coping strategies

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# AGENDA

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This session will address:

## **How we got here?**

- Past and current lessons

## **Where we are headed?**

- Past and current lessons

## **Preparing for the journey**

- Anticipating pitfalls

## **How to arrive safely**

- Preserving our health on the way

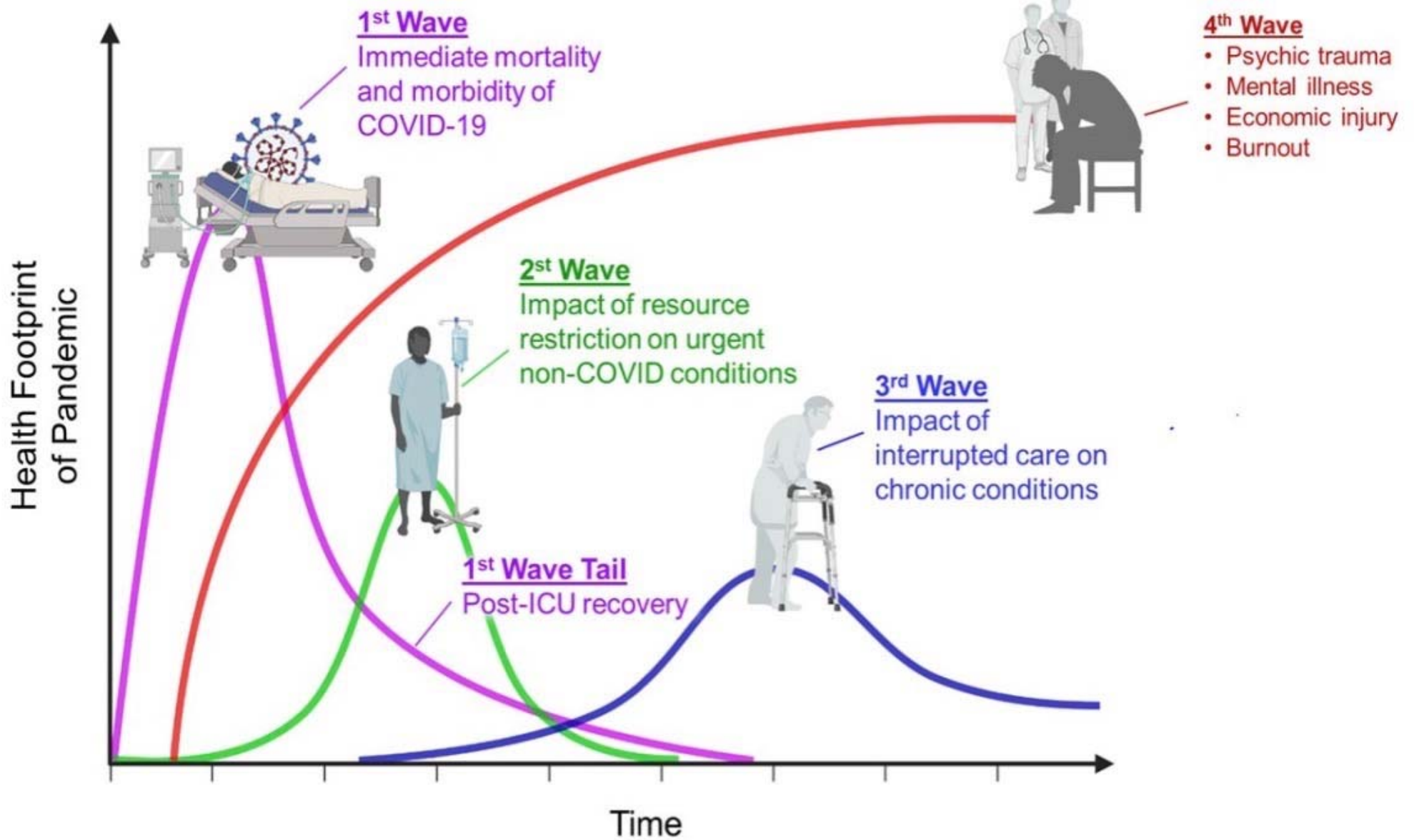
## **Finding help along the way *and after arrival***

- The “Michelin Guide” of resources – Nova Scotia version

# Dante's Inferno

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*“Midway upon the journey of  
my life I found myself within  
a forest dark, for the straightforward  
pathway had been lost.”*



# Four key competencies for physicians

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- Culture of Service
- Culture of Excellence
- Curative Competence
- Culture of Compassion

# The Good, bad and the ugly

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# Six predictors of burnout

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## *Who needed a pandemic?*

1. Work overload
2. Lack of control
3. Insufficient reward
4. Lack of community
5. Unfairness
6. Values mismatch

# Lesson from SARS

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We are aware from SARS and other crisis that pose serious health risks and a significant burden stress on health care workers and physicians that they are at higher risk of stress & burnout, anxiety & depression and maladaptive coping.

Some studies site 35-50% of HCW's suffered from these symptoms following the SARS outbreak.



# 2020 Experience from Wuhan

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Jan. 29 – Feb. 3, 2020 — 1,563 medical staff surveyed for prevalence of common psychiatric symptoms during COVID-19:

<b>Depression</b> 50.7%	<b>Anxiety</b> 44.7%
<b>Insomnia</b> 36.1%	<b>Stress-related symptoms</b> 73.4%

# Normal responses to extraordinary stress

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- Feeling afraid, startle
- Sleeping difficulties, nightmares
- Images, reliving scenes
- Feeling numb, dazed and confused
- Feeling depressed, anxious and worried, demoralized
- Avoidance, isolation
- Mood swings and changes
- Energy and appetite changes
- Substance use

# Issues for frontline

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- Safety: virus, PPE, themselves, family
- Stigma & isolation
- Teams stretched and strained, not enough resources
- Compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma
- Team dynamics: infighting
- Ethical issues, rationing of services, no-win decisions
- Leadership concerns
- Poor communication

# Normal team responses to extraordinary stress

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- Anger
- Fear
- Mistrust
- Suspicion
- Blaming
- Splitting
- Gossiping
- Sabotaging
- Resisting
- Mutiny

# Family responses to extraordinary stress

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## **Kids**

- Fear, sadness, anxiety
- Questions
- Withdrawal, isolation

## **Parents**

- Arguing, fighting
- Feeling numb, dazed, helpless and confused
- Feeling depressed, anxious and worried, demoralized
- Avoidance, isolation
- Substance use...

## **Both**

- Sleeping difficulties
  - Energy and appetite changes
  - Arguing, Mood swings and changes
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*“You can’t go back and change the beginning but you can start where you are and change the ending.”*

-C.S. Lewis

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# Early intervention

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Evidence indicates early intervention and preventative approaches are key to mitigating the risk of physician illness or injury.

# Coordinating efforts of to support physicians mental health and well being

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- Anticipate needs
- Reinforce coping skills/learn new ones
- Timely intervention at every step
- Database -know how to access service
- Appropriate resource allocation
- Expertise in place



You can't force someone to comprehend a message they are not ready to receive

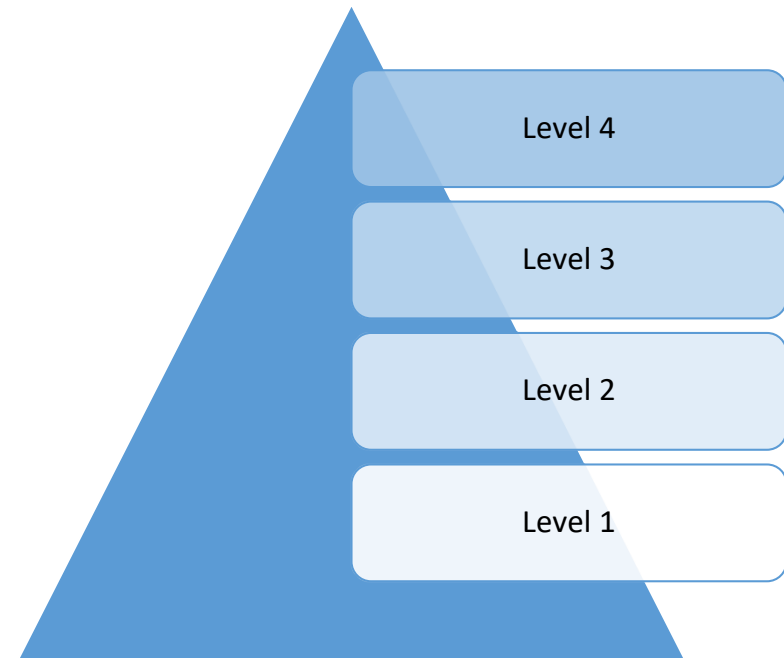
**Still, you must never underestimate the power of planting a seed.**

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# Categorizing need: A levelled approach to triage and deployment

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- Triageing needs to take into account the individual(s) state of distress.
- Triage informs the goal, type, & level of service required.
- The level of support & expertise will need to be secured
- Areas of greatest need can be identified early and preventive services deployed accordingly.



- Level 1 service is lower cost and can be scaled rapidly to reach large numbers.
- Level 4 service come with greater costs as well as a need for more individualization.

	Individuals state <b>WHEN</b>	Intervention <b>WHAT</b>	Service Delivery <b>HOW</b>	Goal <b>WHY</b>	Target <b>WHERE</b>	Expertise required <b>WHO</b>
<b>Level 1</b>	Stable, healthy, mildly stressed	Normalization, connection, self care, emotional literacy	Digital communication, Live large zoom & information webinars	<b>Prevent contagion</b>	Providers province wide	Peer support, basic, communication skills
<b>Level 2</b>	Moderate feelings of stress, overwhelmed, mild substance	Naturalization, mindfulness, emotion tolerance skills	Primarily group based, 3 – 20, open or closed zoom based	<b>Containment</b>	Zone, Site or Department specific	Trainer with mental health experience, Allied MH provider, counselling skills
<b>Level 3</b>	Symptoms of anxiety, anger, sadness, frustration, significant substance use	Stabilization, symptom specific CBT, emotion processing, and grounding skills	Zoom or by phone, closed, group or individual	<b>Block symptom amplification</b>	Group, cohort or Individual	Psychological or psychiatric services
<b>Level 4</b>	Severe anxiety, depression or PTSD	Medical intervention	1 to 1 service, intensive in person or in hospital	<b>Treat illness</b>	Individual	Psychiatric services and support

## A coordinated response

# References

**Maunder, R. et al. Applying the lessons learned from SARS to Pandemic Influenza. Canadian Journal of Public Health vol 99 (6) 2008**

**Leszcz, M. Promoting our colleagues wellbeing: Group work with healthcare providers. Presented at the Canadian Group Psychotherapy Association Canmore Alberta October 28, 2019**

**World Health Organization. The optimal mix of services for mental health: WHO Pyramid Framework.**

**Acknowledgements: Melyn Leszcz, Kas Khorasani and Sabina Nagpal**

# Coping Strategies

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# Stay Focused and Maintain Your Routine

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- Limit news intake
- Find calm
- Practice mindfulness
- Do a hobby
- Get up each morning
- Set goals
- Read a book

# Keep Things In Perspective

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- Exercise
- Eat Healthy Snacks
- Get Outside
- Practice Positivity
- Be Kind to Yourself
- Go to Bed On Time
- Get Organized

# Stay Connected

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- Know Your Limits
- Respect Your Needs
- Smile and Wave
- Work Together
- Find Connection
- Build Community
- Listen to Understand



# Acknowledge Your Feelings

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- Accept Emotions
- Share Your Feelings
- Breathe
- Don't React
- Be Kind to Yourself
- Forgive Mistakes
- Journal

# Current Centralized Expertise & Resource Available

## Level 1. Province wide education and preparedness

- Open access Weekly zoom call-in's At 12 noon
- M W F at 4 open Mindfulness forums, Family education & other topics upon request
- DNS webinars

## Level 2. Site, department, team Issue/situation specific education & support

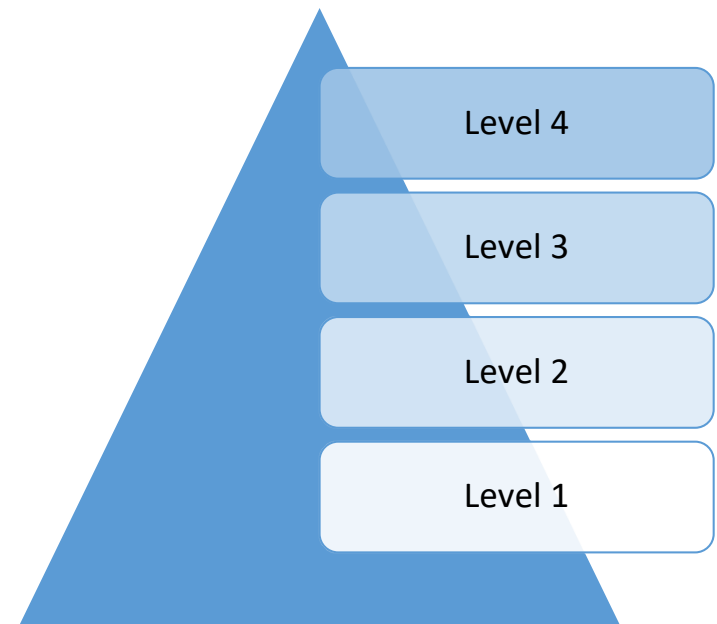
- On request local Champion education & peer support - distance or on site
- Targeted Zoom webinars - case / situation based style
- Leadership/ management education & support

## Level 3. Symptom specific intervention & support

- Confidential, private upon NSHA / PSP referral - intake triage line 1
- Psychological therapeutic individual & group based services & support
- Zoom or on-site as required (eg ICU, ER on location)

## Level 4. Individualized medical attention

- Upon internal referral
- Central roster of available psychiatric mental health providers
- Zoom based or in person assessment and treatment



# Tips and strategies for you

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- Maintain perspective
- Step back, breathe
- Stay grounded
- Talk about your feelings
- Stay connected
- Take breaks
- Be compassionate
- Exercise, get outside
- Turn off the news
- Journal
- Meditate
- Find meaning

# Tips and Strategies for your team

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- Diagnose dynamics
- Interrupt maladaptive cycles
- Active - in trenches
- Manage process (vicarious trauma)
- Common Language to increase emotional literacy
- Make meaning
- Transparency
- Increase perspective
- Provide a reflective space
- Leverage compassion
- Mobilize support
- Adaptive coping
- Promote understanding, non blaming
- Identify and restore boundaries

# Front line

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Safety

Calming

Sense of self/team efficacy

Address shame and guilt

Connectedness - repair ruptures

Instill hope

# At home with kids during COVID-19

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## Lesson 1: Settle down

- Ground yourself first...and then them. As a parent be sure to stay grounded yourself. It's not just viruses, anxiety is contagious too.

## Lesson 2: Practise calm

- Be mindful. Collect your mind and don't ruminate! Create opportunities for quiet time. Reduce stimulation and extensive screen and/or social media time. Look for healthy distractions and then help them learn to mediate, sit quietly and relax.

## Lesson 3: Be positive

- Expect emotion. Emotions are natural. Parents must identify and validate emotions. Expect children will have a range of emotions: anger, sadness and fear. They are natural and normal given the circumstances.

## Lesson 4: Keep talking

- Listen to your emotions. If you can't tolerate your own emotions, your child won't be able to tolerate theirs! Emotions aren't scary. They are important and relevant information. Listen to them.

# At home with kids during COVID-19

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## **Lesson 5: Self control**

- Don't act out! Resist impulsively acting on emotions. Parents must be able to refrain from acting on their emotions. Talk them out. Put your feelings into words, not actions.

## **Lesson 6: Teaching awareness/explanation**

- Find meaning, don't just gather information! Parents have to have a greater awareness and perspective than their children. They have to put things into proper context and talk about things in a reasonable way. Stop watching the news 24/7.

## **Lesson 7: Respect personal freedom**

- Everyone needs space! There is a fine line between mothering and smothering. It's important to maintain control but also allow some freedom. Age appropriate of course!

## **Lesson 8: Empathize and understand each other**

- Stay connected! Parents are responsible to model healthy relationships for their kids. Reach out to your neighbours and friends – they will do the same.

# Questions?

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*Thank you for joining us this evening.*

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