

# Healthy Employer and Employee Responses to COVID 19

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# Objectives

## ***Participants will:***

- Learn to build and maintain resilience.
- Learn to assess psychological health and safety during the pandemic...and beyond.
- Understand the importance of trustworthy communication.
- Understand the coping skills that build resistance to stress.

# Healthy organization responses...



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# COVID-19: The new (Ab)normal

**Total confirmed cases, APRIL 29**

**Canada: 52,069**

**Global: 3,193,886**

## ***Big Challenges AND Opportunities...***

- What is your 'Road to Recovery'?
- Are there opportunities to redesign work?
- What are key lessons for the recovery?

## A question for you...

“Does your organization have a plan for post-pandemic recovery?”      **Yes / No**

*Please use Chat to send Valerie your answer. Thanks!*

# Pandemic Paradox



- Remote work on the rise pre-pandemic
- Huge unmet demand for flexible work
- Benefits = engagement, well-being, 'working smarter'
- **BUT** homework was quickly and externally imposed
- **CAN YOU ADAPT IT AS A SUSTAINABLE STRATEGY?**

# Homework: Challenges create opportunities...

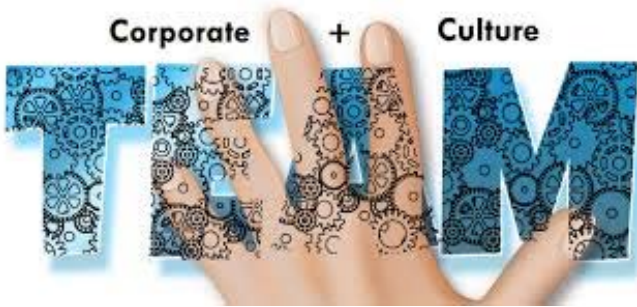
- Find new ways to learn, collaborate and innovate
- Acknowledge dependent care responsibilities
- Monitor employee experiences
- Develop resilience (basic psychological safety skills)
- Trust levels will go up if remote work is handled well



# Maintaining a positive culture



- You can't take culture for granted during trying times
- People-centered values guide decisions and actions
- Well-being is integrated into how you operate
- Culture is a rallying point for a motivated workforce
- A sense of community depends on mutual trust





# Taking an inclusive approach to change



- Improvements are a shared responsibility
- Managers encourage employees to take initiative to improve their workplace
- Resilience skills training builds change capacity

# Think of your workplace as a community



Todd.Ramsay.Art (on Instagram)

## **A workplace community has a caring culture:**

- Employees can rely on each other
- Everyone is a 'good citizen'
- Managers support well-being and engagement
- It is psychologically healthy & safe



# Team resilience checklist

## *Does your team...*

1. Continually strive to improve how we do our work.
2. Focus our energy on where we can make a difference.
3. Have effective problem solving and decision-making processes.
4. Promote self-care in our daily work practices.
5. Collectively develop our skill and knowledge.
6. Positively support each other to get the job done.
7. Encourage each other to feel part of the team.
8. Emphasize possibility not negativity.

- **Adapted from:** McEwen K & Boyd CM. (2018). A measure of team resilience. *J Occup Environ Med.* 60(3):258-272

# Psychologically Healthy and Safe Workplaces...during a pandemic

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Director

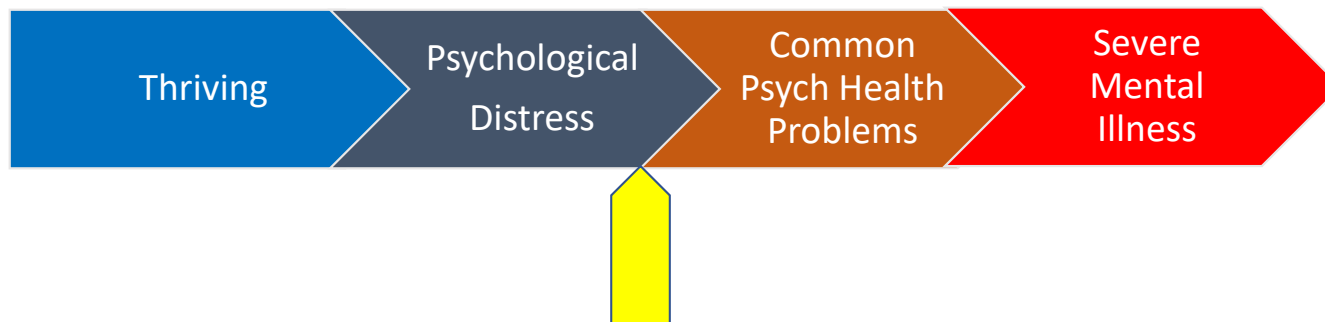
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# What is psychological safety & health?

- Psychological safety = a work environment that minimizes risks to the psychological health of workers
- Psychological Health  $\neq$  Mental Health



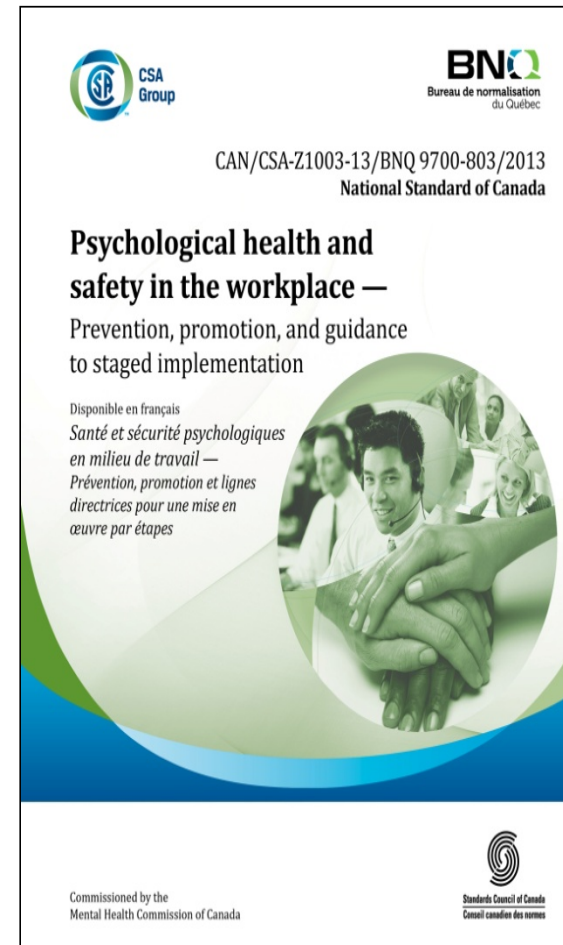
## A question for you...

“Has your organization assessed psychosocial risks within the last 3 years?” **Yes / No**

*Please use Chat to send Valerie your answer. Thanks!*

# The National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace

- Prevent psychological harm from conditions in the workplace
- Promote psychological health in the workplace through support





# Key Elements of the Standard



# The 13 Psychosocial Factors



Psychological Support



Civility & Respect



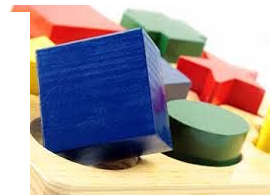
Recognition & Reward



Balance



Organizational Culture



Psychological Job Fit



Involvement & Influence



Psychological Protection



Clear Leadership & Expectations



Growth & Development



Workload Management



Supportive Physical Environment



Engagement

# Key Factors during the current pandemic (and beyond)?

- **Psychological Support:** A work environment where coworkers and supervisors are supportive of employees' psychological and mental health concerns and respond appropriately as needed.
- **Balance:** A work environment where there is recognition of the need for balance between the demands of work, family and personal life.
- **Organizational Culture:** A work environment characterized by trust, honesty and fairness
- **Civility & Respect:** A work environment where employees are respectful and considerate in their interactions with one another, as well as with customers, clients and the public.
- **Protection of Physical Safety:** A work environment where management takes appropriate action to protect the physical safety of employees
- **Clear Leadership & Expectations:** A work environment where there is effective leadership and support that helps employees know what they need to do, how their work contributes to the organization, and whether there are impending changes.

# New factors for essential services (and other sectors?)

**Protection From Moral Distress:** staff feel supported in doing their work in a manner consistent with their personal and professional values.



**Support for Psychological Self-Care:** staff are actively supported in caring for their own psychological health and safety.



**Cumulative exposure to critical or stressful events:**  
An organization that monitors exposure to critical events and takes appropriate action.



# Essential Ingredient: Trust

- In our institutions
- In our organizations
- In one another



We have found that the level of employee agreement on the Guarding Minds@Work survey item “*Employees and management trust one another*” is a strong indicator of the psychological health of the organization

# Trust depends on the Psychological Contract

This is the unwritten employer-employee agreement. It is:

- Based on individual perception and experience
- Constantly changing over time and situation
- Reciprocal between both parties



**During a crisis the psychological contract is particularly fragile**

# Trustworthy Communication during a crisis is...

- Judicious
  - “Say something once, why say it again.”
  - Connect thoughtfully
- Honest
  - “Sometimes the world has a load of questions. Seems like the world knows nothing at all”
  - Say what you know, acknowledge what you don’t’.
- Helpful
  - “Don't get exhausted, I'll do some driving, you ought to get some sleep”
  - Provide practical information not platitudes

# Psychologically Safer employees



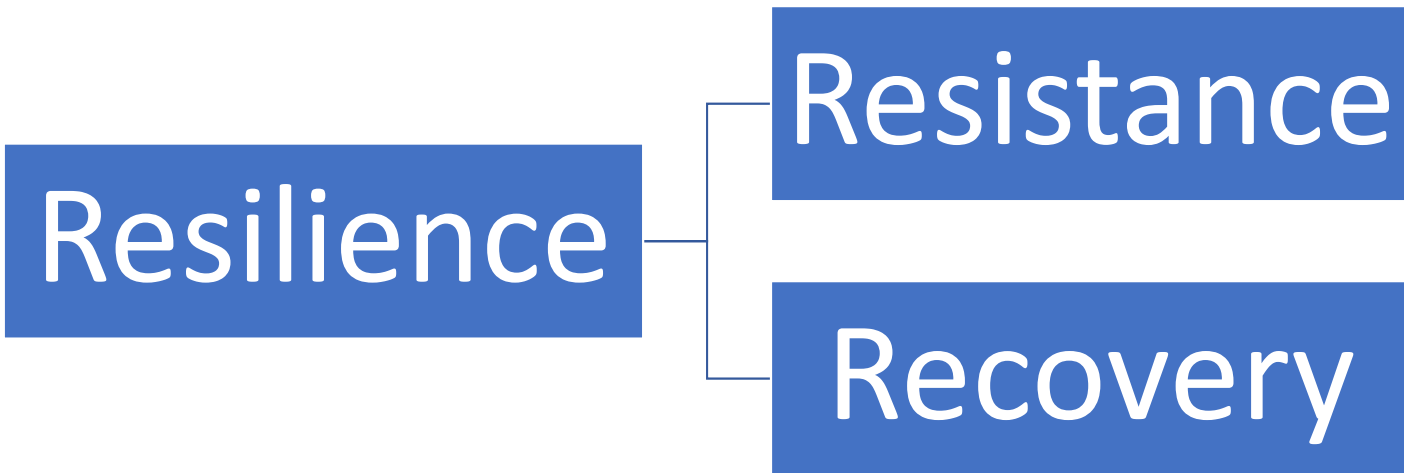
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## A question for you...

“Does your organization provide tools or training to support resilience in your workforce?” **Yes / No**

*Please use Chat to send Valerie your answer. Thanks!*

# Psych Resistance Project

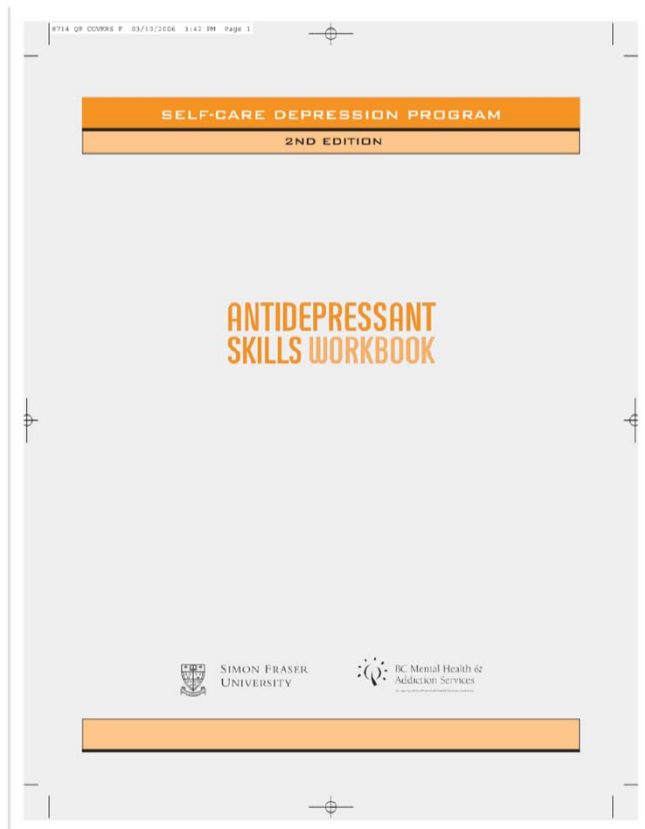
- Our research group wanted to understand Psych Resistance (the capacity to get through a high stress situation without being psychologically injured)
- We studied First Responders (paramedics & dispatchers) who are daily exposed to very intense stress
- We identified 5 factors in successful coping



# Psych Resistance in the Covid-19 Crisis

<b>1. Balance</b>	<b>2. Acceptance</b>	<b>3. Trusted Support</b>	<b>4. Meaningful Work</b>	<b>5. Physical Self-Care</b>
I structure my time, even at home, to balance work and personal activity	I think about the crisis in a realistic & helpful way	I maintain contact with supportive friends , family and co-workers. <i>(2 meters apart, by video, whatever)</i>	I feel part of a community working hard to cope with the crisis.	I exercise, eat well and sleep enough during the crisis

# How to enhance Psych Resistance to this crisis?



Refer employees to self-care resources.

- 1. Antidepressant Skills Workbook**, free download, in 7 languages
  - 2. Antidepressant Skills @ Work**, free download, workplace - focused
- Both are at [www.psychsafety.org](http://www.psychsafety.org) under **Self-Care Project**

## Key Points

1. Address psychological health and safety in your organization
2. Make communications thoughtful, transparent and useful
3. Support staff to cope with the crisis by providing self-care
4. Be guided by culture and foster a sense of community
5. Engage staff in planning post-pandemic recovery

Questions?  
Comments?

THANK YOU

[www.grahamlowe.ca](http://www.grahamlowe.ca)

[www.vanpsychsafety.org](http://www.vanpsychsafety.org)