

# Recovery and Resilience



*Mental Health Matters*

# In a time a pandemic...

- **“It is possible to prepare for the future without knowing what it will be. The primary way to prepare for the unknown is to attend to the quality of our relationships, to how well we know and trust one another”**

*Margaret Wheatly, 2004 (retrieved from Disturb Me, Please - Margaret J. Wheatley)*

# What is Resilience?

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines resilience as:

*“an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change”*

MSN Encarta defines it as:

1. speedy recovery from problems: the ability to recover quickly from setbacks
2. elasticity: the ability of matter to spring back quickly into shape after being bent, stretched, or deformed



# What is Resilience?

**“Resiliency is the ability to overcome a crisis quickly and move past it”**

- Parents for Children's Mental Health

-cited in Ontario Legislative Assembly. Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, Interim Report, March 2010

# What is Resilience?

- **Resilience:** The ability to recover from defeat, frustration, or failure
- **Compassion:** Being aware of and sympathetic to the humanity of ourselves and others

# Why is Resilience so Important?

- Because it is rare for individuals never to be confronted with adversity or challenging circumstances during the course of their lifetime.
- People who are resilient tend to be able to harness their inner strengths and resources to rebound quickly and more fully from setbacks

# Resilience: Ordinary or Extraordinary?

- There are many examples in history of “extraordinary” individuals who have been “models of resilience”.
- But, research has shown that “ordinary” people commonly demonstrate resilience as well.

# Extraordinary Resilience

"We can either watch life from the sidelines, or actively participate ... Either we let self-doubt and feelings of inadequacy prevent us from realizing our potential, or embrace the fact that when we turn our attention away from ourselves, our potential is limitless."

Christopher Reeve (Sept. 25, 1952 – Oct. 10, 2004)

Noted actor, director, producer, screenwriter best known for portrayal of *Superman*.

After being thrown from a horse in an equestrian competition in 1995, he was paralyzed from the neck down and required a wheelchair and breathing apparatus for the rest of his life.

He lobbied on behalf of people with spinal cord injuries, and for human embryonic stem cell research afterward.

He founded the Christopher Reeve Foundation and co-founded the Reeve-Irvine Research Center.

# “Ordinary” People Demonstrate Resilience

“...the presumption that men and women will usually break down emotionally if subjected to severe hardship is flawed. “Most people have deep resilience and the ability to persevere in extreme situations,” he notes. “Those miners reached for the best in themselves. Maybe if it were one man trapped down there, he would have died. But as a team, they survived.”

- Claudio Ibañez, co-leader of a psychological team at the mine and one of the first to make contact with the trapped miners

# How Can We Develop Resilience?

- It's possible that some people may be more biologically predisposed toward being resilient
- However, psychological and environmental factors can contribute to its development.
- The good news is that resilience is not a trait that people either have or do not have – it involves thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours that can be learned and developed.

# Psychological and Environmental Factors that Contribute to Resilience

- Positive Self-Regard
- Internal Locus of Evaluation
- Stress Management Strategies
- Concepts of Freedom and Responsibility

Why do we need to be resilient?



# Stress is:

- a natural response to any demand placed on you
- stimulating and increases your level of alertness
- inescapable, part of day-to-day living
- a motivator and energizer
- often predictable by the amount and rate of change you are exposed to

# Distress or Di/Stress

- suffering, misery, agony
- the state of being in great trouble.
- implies an external and usually temporary cause of great physical or mental strain and stress.
- suffering implies conscious endurance of pain

# Thoughts and Feelings of di/Stress

- Difficulty concentrating, forgetting, excessive self-criticism, pre-occupation with thoughts/ tasks
- Moody, worried, scared, irritable, depressed, reduced self-esteem, pessimistic, helpless, withdrawn, easily embarrassed

# di/Stress can lead to:

- adverse health consequences that affect many of the bodily systems.
- worries, uncomfortable physical symptoms and emotional discomfort
- feeling angry, or overwhelmed and immobilized

Unless we learn how to manage our stress, we will suffer mentally, emotionally, and physically. Managing our stress can take some practice, but it is possible.

# Prevention Strategies that Contribute to Resilience

- good nutrition
- regular exercise
- enough sleep
- relaxation and imaging skills
- positive affirmation
- self-help groups
- ventilate
- prayer/ acts of spirituatlity
- sports
- change/ vacation
- time management
- social support network, inter-dependence
- assertiveness skills
- negotiation skills
- problem-solving directly rather than avoidance
- Music
- Art
- Games

Recovery...



# Exercise

- The ancient “fight or flight” response is still activated when we feel stressed.
- More adrenaline and cortisol is generated to prepare us for action.
- Physical exercise metabolizes these excess stress hormones and restores the body to a calm, relaxed state.
- Any exercise is better than none at all.

# Relaxation

- If you can slow down your mind and body long enough to realize that you are not in mortal danger, you can remain calm.
- One way to do this is by breathing deeply.
- Another straightforward technique is to focus on a word or phrase that has significance for you. Repeat this word or phrase if you find yourself becoming tense.
- Relaxation lowers your pulse rate, respiration, and blood pressure.
- When you combine different techniques such as deep breathing, muscle relaxation, meditation, and yoga, you can significantly lower your stress levels, elevate your mood, and improve your ability to focus.

# Healthy lifestyle choices

- Try to reduce your consumption of drinks containing caffeine or alcohol. These are stimulants, so they increase your stress levels.
- Try to replace caffeinated drinks with water, natural fruit juices, and herbal teas.
- Refined sugars are well-known for giving your body a temporary boost and then causing an energy crash, which leaves you feeling tired and irritable.
- A healthy, nutritious, and well-balanced diet can go a long way towards helping you to cope with stress.

# Talk about it!

- Expressing your feelings to others can help to reduce your stress levels.
- When you feel stressed, take a break and call a friend.
- A reassuring voice that makes you feel nurtured and understood will help you to keep your problems in perspective.
- Give yourself a little pep talk may help.
- Research suggests every thought and emotion can release chemicals into our bodies.
- Negative self-talk is damaging. Tell yourself that you can deal with the situation and that everything will turn out fine.



# Sleep

- Stress can affect your ability to sleep, but lack of sleep is also a fundamental cause of stress.
- Your brain and body are out of whack and even when you feel tired, you may toss and turn for hours.
- Try turning off the TV earlier, dimming the lights and giving yourself some time to unwind and relax before going to bed.
- Lose the phone
- Getting enough sleep is essential to fuel your mind and body. If you feel exhausted, it may cause you to think irrationally, and this only increases your stress.

# Freedom to Choose

- Everything can be taken from a person, but one thing. The last of human freedoms, “...to choose one’s attitude in any set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way”

-Victor Frankl, “Man’s Search for Meaning”. Boston: Beacon, 1963

