

Not Your Typical Self-Care Seminar:

Prioritizing Connection Over Information



Presenter:

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Date: February 3, 2022

Time: 9:15 am

For: CHSSN

Agenda



Objectives

- Take a moment to connect with yourself and others .
- Reflect on your emotions and reactions through the pandemic, with emphasis on the past few months.
- Identify common pitfalls that negatively impact well-being or interferes with our ability to implement self-care strategies.
- Identify concrete strategies to increase your well-being and resilience.

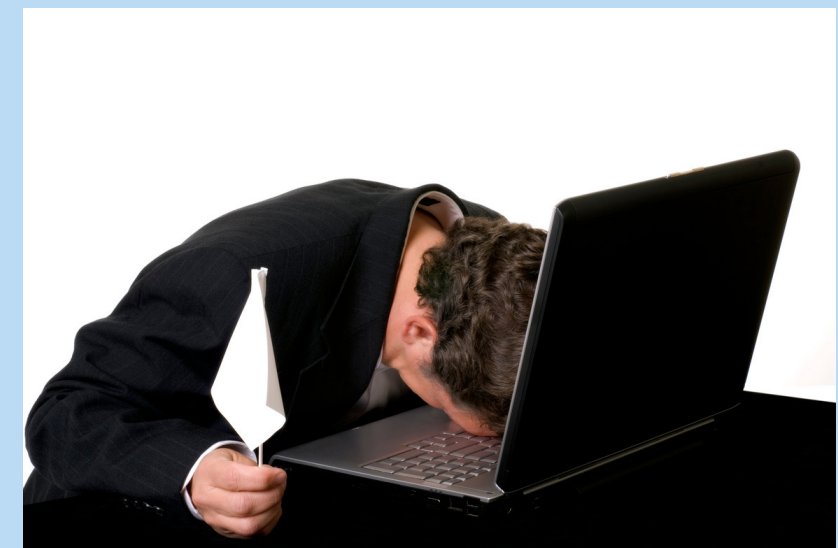
This presentation is not:

- 1 Added pressure. You are free to share or not share your experiences.
- 2 Treatment. The goal is to connect within and with; please do not hesitate to seek mental health services from a competent provider if need be.
- 3 Judgment. Please try to connect with the curious, compassionate and playful parts of yourself and gently ask the inner critic to take a break.



From fight or flight to learned helplessness

The COVID-19 journey



COVID-19 TRAJECTORY

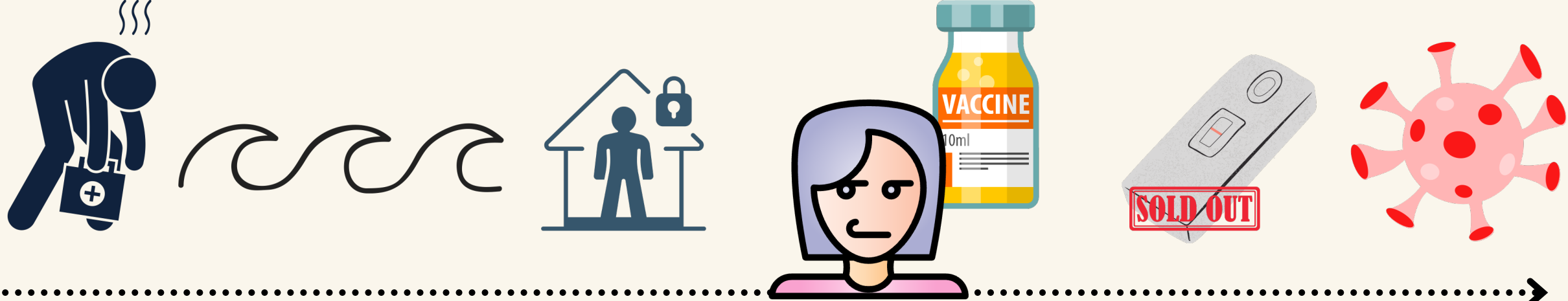
Start



Middle

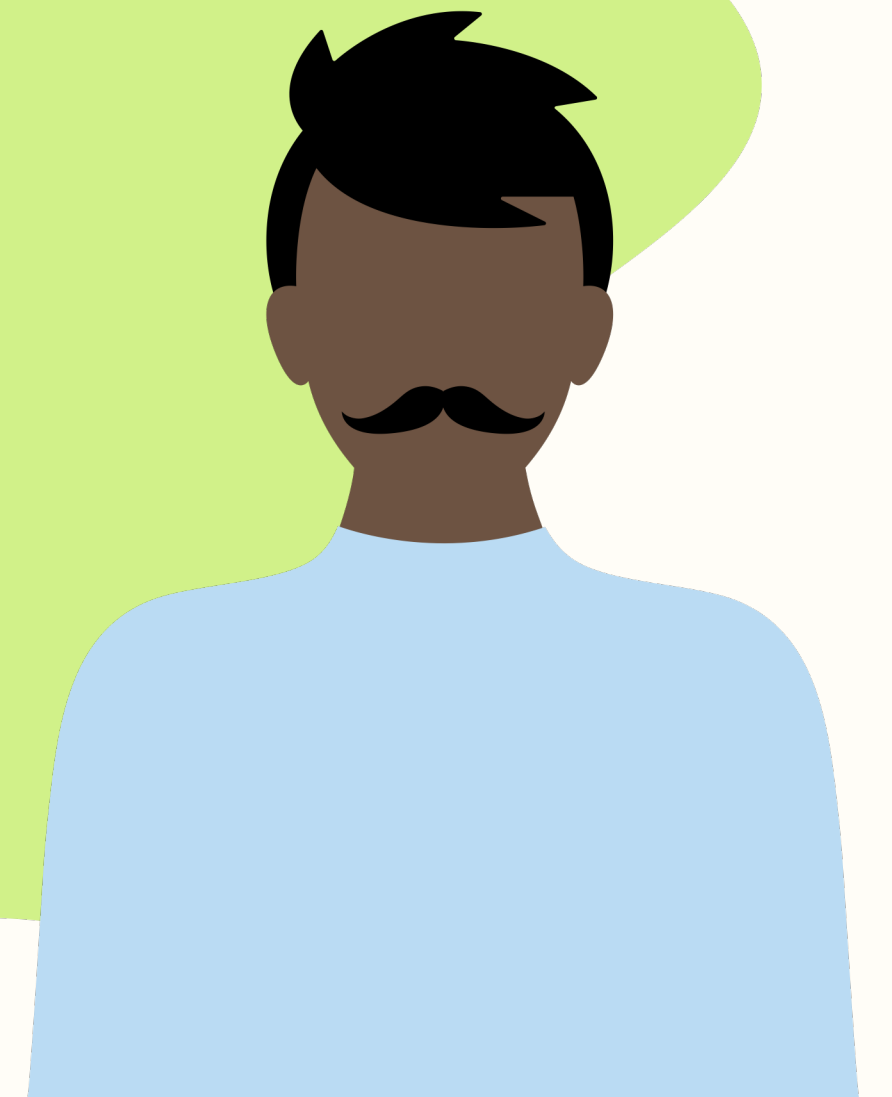


Now



Where are you at ?

Check-up from the neck up



WHERE AM I AT?

**I AM
I CAN
I CHOOSE**

- Connections to others are perceived as a source of comfort and safety
- Challenges are perceived with flexibility and openness
- Compassion, curiosity, creativity are easily accessible

**I HAVE TO
I DON'T HAVE A
CHOICE**

- Fight or flight
- Going into "action mode" provides a sense of safety
- Challenges are perceived with some rigidity and lack of openness
- Hyperactivation of the nervous system
- Irritability and anxiety

**I CAN'T
ANYMORE
I GIVE UP**

- Submit or freeze
- Disconnecting from self/others provides a sense of safety
- Challenges trigger helplessness, disengagement, "what is the point"
- Hypoactivation of the nervous system
- Depression, shame, dissociation

Discussion-activity

In which colour do you spend the most time?

What triggers you to go into yellow or red?

What helps you stay in green?

WHERE AM I AT?

BURNOUT

- When work-related stress leads to **DEPLETION**
- Related to workload, resources available, perceived level of control, and recognition/rewards.
- Linked to low satisfaction, poor performance, increase error rates, poorer quality of care delivered to patients

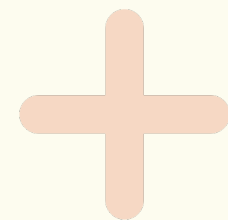


WHERE AM I AT?

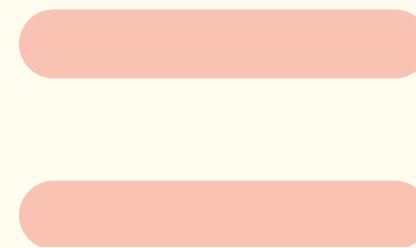
COMPASSION FATIGUE

- Should be called "empathy fatigue"
- Repeated exposure to the suffering of others (for ex., traumatic situations, intense emotional reactions, failures)
- Nature of the work not workload per se
- Compassion fatigue (can't give more of myself) and vicarious trauma (shifts your beliefs/views of self/others/world)

Empathic
individual in
caregiver role



Prolonged
repeated
Exposure to
suffering



**Erosion of
caring
Disconnect
from
self/others**



WHERE AM I AT?

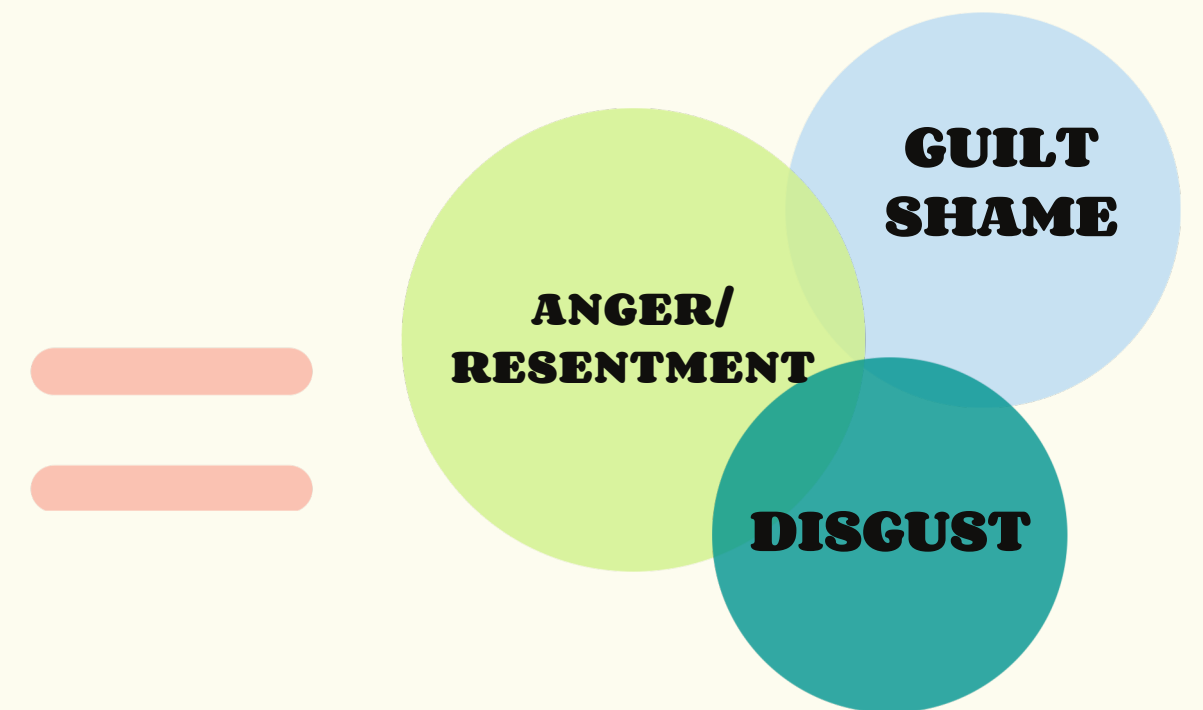
MORAL INJURY OR DISTRESS

"perpetrating, failing to prevent, bearing witness to, or learning about acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations."

- Shale (2020) classifies moral injuries in the following:
 - Harm, losses, exploitation, emotion

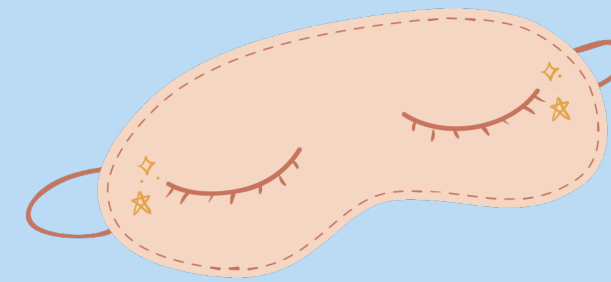
- Deciding who lives or dies
- Having to enforce policies or make decisions contrary to beliefs/values
- Deaths or complications resulting from services being deferred or stopped
- Prioritization of physical health over mental health
- Having to choose btw helping the greater good and well-being of one's family

When normative expectations or personal values/beliefs are violated by action or inaction, by self or other.



Need more arguments to implement self-care?

- Why is it that despite knowing what strategies are important to help with our well-being, we find ourselves doing the opposite?





Common pitfalls

Some ideas about why , despite knowing what is best, we struggle to implement self-care or get stuck.



Word of caution:
Not all about time



Our brains get in the way

Wired to avoid suffering

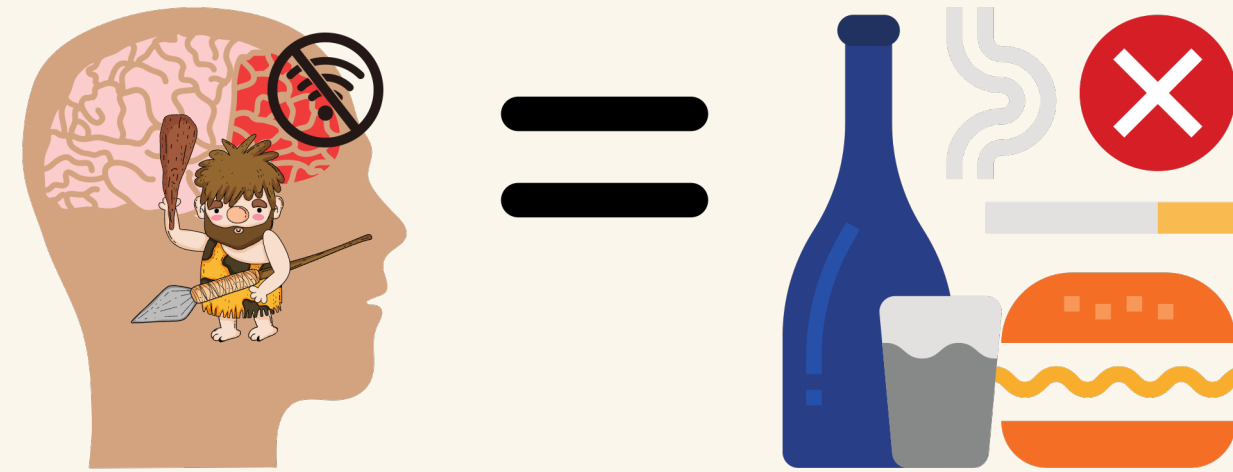
Self-care generally requires some amount of effort and energy.



Wired for survival

Our brain wants us to survive the present moment, not necessarily be happy. Therefore, it will attend and prioritize what is perceived as a threat first.

Low energy = low self-control



- Ego depletion leads to low self-control (low will power)
- Emotional distress also leads to decrease prefrontal cortex capacities :
 - PFC: Involved in emotion regulation, planning and impulse-control
 - When exhausted or stressed, the prefrontal cortex goes "offline"
 - Has limited resources ; when stressor is chronic and very little time for re-energizing, it can be hard to recharge.
- The pandemic is taxing from a prefrontal standpoint: mental load
 - Some groups may be more at risks than others (i.e., women, individuals who are being discriminated against, individuals in vulnerable contexts)

Other obstacles



What is self-care ?

- Self-love
- Self-growth
- Indulgence



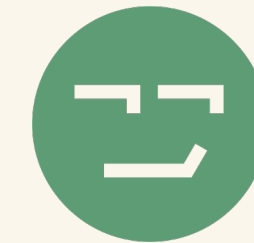
Perfectionism

- Can give false sense of control but leads to feeling like a failure.
- Leads to unrealistic expectations and goals that are mostly not achievable.



Comparing self to others

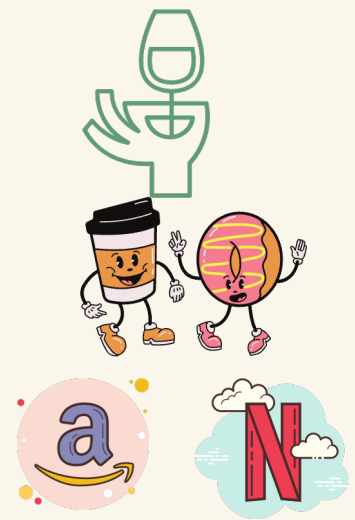
- Can leave us feeling ashamed (even if we don't have all the information)



Getting stuck in cynicism

- Can provide temporary relief or a sense of cohesion, but is also a predictor of burning out
- Negative impact on health
- Decrease openness, empathy
- Can be a sign of compassion fatigue
- Can generalize to other areas

Other obstacles



Avoiding painful emotions

- Not allowing yourself to feel the hurt and pain and seek what feels good in the moment.



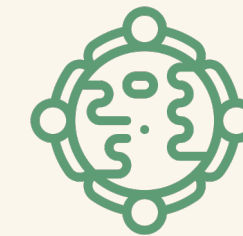
Wearing the wrong mask

- Pretending to yourself and others that all is good, that you are fine because because of shame, heighten sense of responsibility or fear of being a burden.



Overcompensation ; Self-sacrifice

- Putting the needs of others first and feeling guilty if you set boundaries or say no.



Systemic and cultural variables

- Pressure of performance and economic gains.
- System-level difficulties that impact well-being.

Discussion-activity

What is your main
obstacle to self-
care?

What do you find
the most difficult
to implement ?



Tips and tricks

Perfection is not a requirement...and
warned against



First step

Letting go of the shame and guilt of NOT doing the things you tell yourself you SHOULD be doing



- SHAME
 - We often believe that we can shame ourselves to submission.
 - That this is what "motivates" us
- Caution: not going to get rid of it
 - "Protector" that has gone on overdrive
 - Most likely was useful in the past or has provided you with some success, but with time = leaves you feeling not good enough and keeps you from reaching out to others.

Check "within"

With curiosity and non-judgement.

Ask yourself:

1) What is going on inside of me?

-What is my body telling me (am I tensed, relaxed, agitated)?

2) What does it feel like inside of me?

-Does it feel good/bad inside? Comfortable/uncomfortable?

-Try to see if you can connect a word, image, or even colour to your inner experience

-Notice what happens when you do so (do you get calmer/agitated)

3) Try to see if you can identify if this is a reactive experience (secondary emotion) or a primary one.

-What is really going on inside of me?

-Am I reacting to something deeper? Am I being triggered by a raw spot for me?

-What do I truly need in this instance?

-Is what I am showing others consistent with what goes on inside of me?

4) Offer yourself compassion, kindness, and acceptance



Exercise from: Joannis, M. (2020). Psychological First Aid for Frontline Health Care

Providers During COVID-10: A Quick Guide to Wellness.

Self-Compassion

Offer yourself compassion, kindness, acceptance



Put your right hand on your heart/chest and gently rub in small circles. Feel the heat that gets generated. Try other nurturing gestures (rubbing your arm, hugging yourself).



Take a self-compassion break* and say to yourself:

- This is a moment of suffering
- Suffering is part of the human experience (I am not defective for feeling this way, all human beings have moments of suffering)
- Express kindness to yourself (may I be kind, patient, understanding with myself).



Bring to mind one or several of your personal allies (your inner gang members). Remind yourself that you are loved and that others have your back.

Tips and Tricks

Other Strategies



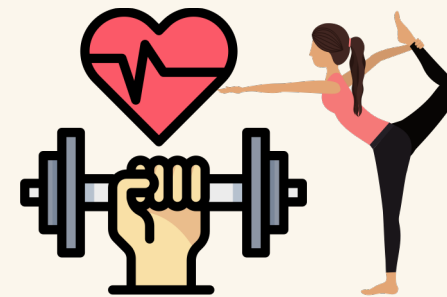
Gratitude



Social support



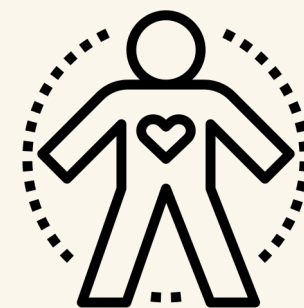
Going back to WHY (what matters, what brings meaning, what do you value)



Physical exercise



Stretch, take a 5 min break



Mindfulness



Nutrition et hydratation



Good sleep hygiene

Other Strategies : be courageous not a super hero

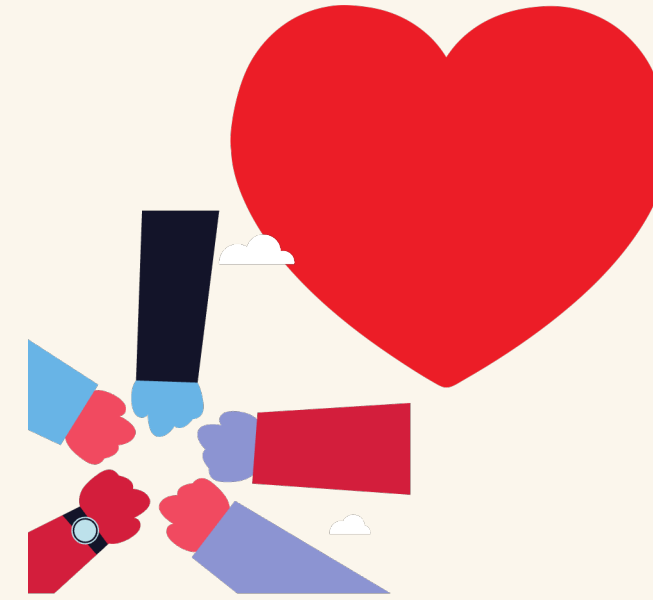
FROM



Superhero

- Never vulnerable
- Can do everything despite the odds against them
- Need little support

TO



Courageous

- Going back to what **MATTERS** to you
- Having pride that you are living a life in line with your values
- Accepting that vulnerability is part of being a courageous individual

Discussion-activity

Based on what is important to you, what would you like to implement in the next 2 months?

Who could be your accountability buddy?



Thank you!

Recommended readings

Psychological First Aid for Frontline Health Care Providers During COVID-19: A Quick Guide to Wellness



Hamilton Health Science: the resilience support toolkit

<https://www.hamiltonhealthsciences.ca/covid19/staff-physician/hhs-resources/resilience-support-toolkit/>



Recommended readings

On courage

<https://brenebrown.com/>

To help understand why changing your habits is difficult

Healthy Habits Suck: How to Get Off the Couch and Live a Healthy Life. . . Even If You Don't Want by Canadian psychologist: Dr [Dayna Lee-Bagglely PhD](#)

Questions/comments?

