COVID-19 Transitions: Managing Stress and Anxiety

Presenters: Dr. Keith Dobson, PhD
Moderator: Deborah Yedlin

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Welcome

• Moderator: Deborah Yedlin

• Submit questions through the Q&A feature; we’ll answer as many as possible

• Available on-demand
Dr. Keith Dobson, PhD

- Professor of clinical psychology who leads UCalgary’s Depression Research Laboratory. His research interests are in clinical psychology, cognitive behaviour therapy, depression and psychopathology.
Factors associated with increased stress and anxiety

- Uncontrollability
- Unpredictability
- Personal Importance

Stress
Risk Factors for Mental Illness

- Models of risk and resilience evolve over time.
- Established factors exist in multiple domains:
Biological Risks

• Genetic risk
• Familial transmission
• Neural structures
• Neurobiology (neurotransmission)
• **Sleep dysregulation**
• **Autonomic Nervous System arousal**
• **Gender**
Psychological Risks

- Schemas, beliefs, assumptions
- Information processing biases
- Pessimism
- Negative explanatory style
- Rumination
- Avoidant problem-solving
- Avoidant/escape behaviors
Social Risks

- Parental psychopathology/parenting style
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- Attachment
- Negative life events (e.g., loss, unemployment, illness)
- Couple and relationship issues
- Low levels of social support
- Stress generation
Protective factors for mental health; Building resiliency

1. Balanced and recuperative temperament.
2. Physical well-being / regular sleep.
3. Coping strategies.
4. Social and personal competence.
5. Positive peer relationships.
6. Positive family relationships.
What Can We do in Canada?

- Increased surveillance and assessment
- Ongoing self assessment
- Reduce risks and increase resilience
- Ask friends and family
- Check in with GP or EAP service
What Can We do in Canada?

Mental Health Continuum Model

- **Healthy**
  - Normal fluctuations in mood
  - Normal sleep patterns
  - Physically well, full of energy
  - Consistent performance
  - Socially active
  - No trouble/impact due to substance use

- **Reacting**
  - Nervousness, irritability, sadness
  - Trouble sleeping
  - Tired/low energy, muscle tension, headaches
  - Procrastination
  - Decreased social activity
  - Limited to some trouble/impact due to substance use

- **Injured**
  - Anxiety, anger, pervasive sadness, hopelessness
  - Restless or disturbed sleep
  - Fatigue, aches and pains
  - Decreased performance, presenteeism
  - Social avoidance or withdrawal
  - Increase trouble/impact due to substance use

- **Ill**
  - Excessive anxiety, easily enraged, depressed mood
  - Unable to fall or stay asleep
  - Exhaustion, physical illness
  - Unable to perform duties, absenteeism
  - Isolation, avoiding social events
  - Significant trouble/impact due to substance use
What Can We do in Canada?

• Maintain routines as much as possible (eat, sleep, work)
• Exercise
• Get outside
• Watch your self-talk; note especially worry or rumination
• Turn down the media noise
• Schedule activities:
  • Set specific short and long-term goals in the areas of productivity and enjoyment, every day.
What Can We do in Canada?

- Keep social contact, even when physically distant
- Practice acceptance and gratitude
- Do something for others if at all possible: “find a cause”
- If in doubt, check it out.
  - Public Health Agency of Canada
  - Health Canada
  - Provincial Ministries of Health
  - World Health Organization
Treatments That Work

- Validated treatments should be the first approach, but no one treatment is “the best”
- Most validated treatments have about equal outcomes
- Combining treatments might improve outcomes, especially for more severe cases of mental health problems
- If one treatment does not work, another may
- Earlier treatment is associated with better outcome
- Conduct risk assessments when indicated
- Go to [https://www.nice.org.uk](https://www.nice.org.uk) for guidelines
What Can We do in Canada?

- Lots of validated online resources, many free.
- Ensure health information and resources are from a reputable organization or provider.
- If necessary, get professional help.
The University of Calgary has a robust and well-developed Mental Health Strategy: https://www.ucalgary.ca/mentalhealth

Guiding principles:

**Caring**- actively supporting and promoting the mental health, well-being, and success of the campus community. We are an inclusive community promoting education, understanding, and awareness.

**Collaborative**- We leverage and contribute to local, national, and international evidence and perspectives to strengthen our collective capacity to support mental health.

**Resilient**- building capacity to strengthen ourselves; to inspire further growth and innovation in promoting and supporting mental health.

**Responsive**- responsive to the mental health needs of the campus community.

**Continuously Improving**- committed to a culture of continuous improvement in the domain of mental health.
What Can We do at the University of Calgary?

- **Student Wellness Services**: Access mental health support during campus closures by calling 403-210-9355.
- Learn new coping skills and strategies at your own pace with online wellness workshops and learning.
- For 24/7 mental health support, call Distress Centre at 403-266-4357 or Wood’s Homes Community Support team at 403-299-9699.
- Concerned about another student? E-mail the Student at Risk team at sar@ucalgary.ca.
- The Taylor Institute is offering resources and training to promote learning and well-being delivery during COVID-19.
What Can We do at the University of Calgary?

- **Staff Wellness:** A mental health consultant is available 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. by phone or email - 403-220-2918.
- For 24/7 mental health support, call:
  - Distress Centre - 403-266-4357 or
  - Wood’s Homes Community Support - 403-299-9699
- **Homewood Health** provides 24/7 mental health support; call 1-800-663-1142
- The **Taylor Institute** is offering resources and training in course delivery during COVID-19
UCALGARY Mental Health Resources

• **Student Wellness Services**
  • Starting this fall is **single session counselling**, a 90-minute appointment providing access to the help students need when they need it. To access call 403-210-9355.

• **Staff Wellness**
  • New workshop, **Building Resilience Through Connection**, will help attendees identify healthy coping strategies, like social supports, in response to stressors

• **UFlourish**
  • Build positive mental health, resiliency and community connection at UCalgary through a month of online and in-person workshops, seminars, and events. **October 13 – November 13.**
Some Community Resources

Health Link Alberta
- Health information and advice. 811 or 866.408.5465.

Mental Health Help Line
- Free, 24/7 telephone service which offers help for mental health concerns for Albertans. 1.877.303.2642 (toll free within Alberta).

Calgary Distress Centre
- Free confidential crisis intervention, professional counselling and referral services to help you prevent and overcome crisis. 403.266.4357

Addiction HelpLine
- Information, support, crisis counselling and referrals. 1.866.332.2322

First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line
- 24/7 crisis intervention and counselling. 1.855.242.3310

YWCA: Domestic Violence Crisis Line
- Information, referrals and services 403.266.0707