
BE WELL

TAPPING THE BREAKS
DURING A PANDEMIC



ISSUE . 2

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WELCOME...

Through this bi-weekly newsletter, I hope to offer you useful, current information and resources to help support your personal and professional wellbeing so that you can focus on the many other important pieces going on in your life right now!

There are a few key points that I am basing the content and ideas that I share with you. Firstly, some of the most meaningful steps towards nurturing wellbeing are small changes that we can build on over time. Secondly, stress has a way of crossing terrain from one area of life into another. Therefore the many areas of our life are interdependent and strengthening one area has positive effects on the others.

Perhaps most relevant to the current pandemic, is the idea that we are less prone to stress and burnout when we feel like we have the skills, resources and support we need to respond to our workplace and personal demands in a meaningful way. That goes for parents, students and staff alike!

I have put together some ideas and resources for communicating with staff, students and families about COVID-19.

I welcome all thoughts, feedback and topic request for future issues, and am grateful to be part of such an amazing and strong community!

~Sincerely,

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MENTAL HEALTH WEEK May 4-10th.

Visit the [Canadian Mental Health Association Website](https://www.mentalhealthweek.ca) to learn more about the history and significance of Mental Health Week! In short, it's about stopping the stigma, taking care of ourselves and each other, and creating a culture of openness and adeptness with all things mental health!



Use #GETREAL to create a culture of Connection around Mental health!

I'm fine, thanks.



What I really mean is:



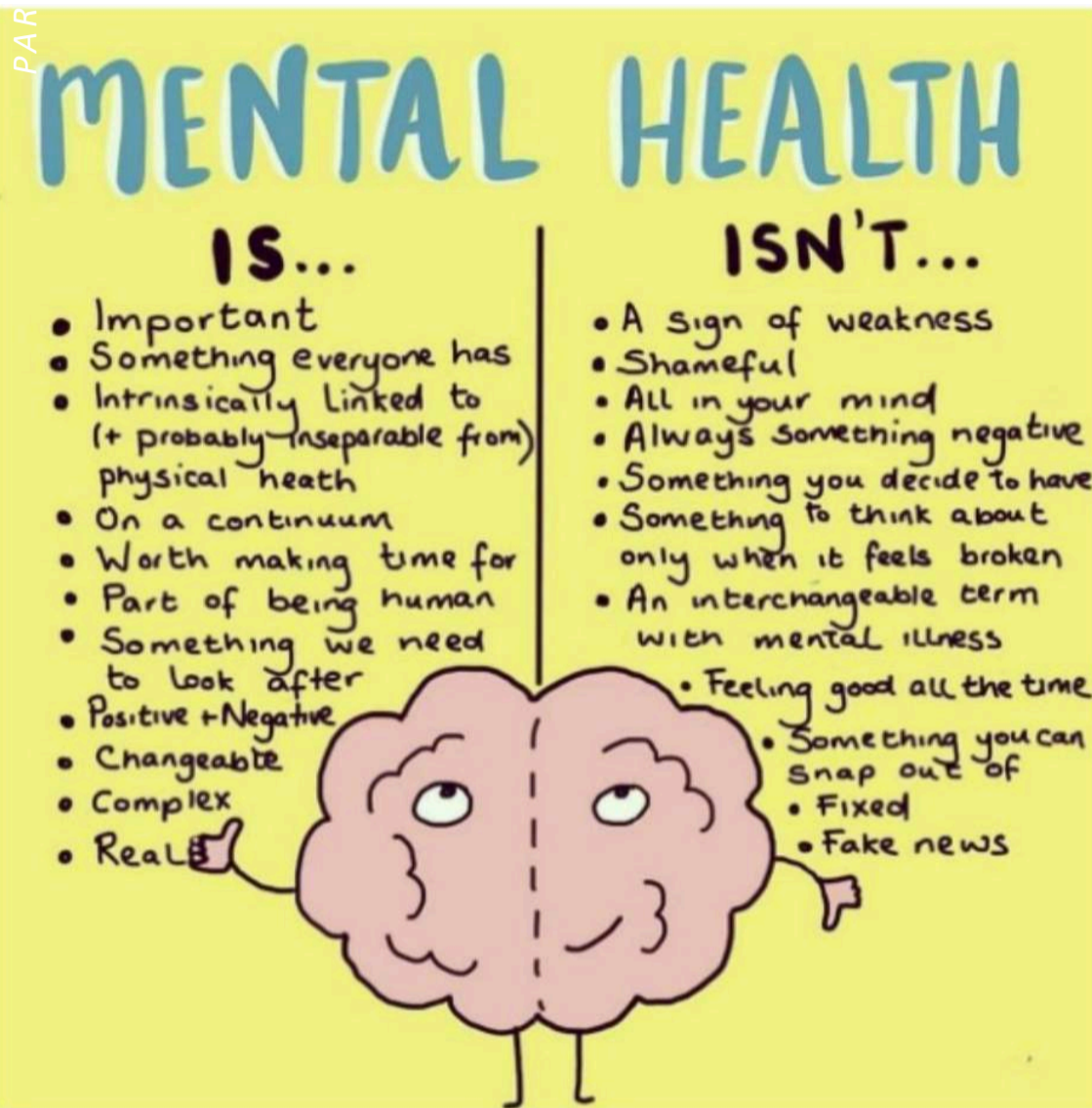
WE CAN HELP BREAK THE STIGMA WHEN WE:

1. Normalize conversations surrounding mental health.
2. When you ask someone "how are you", actually mean it! (and answer with something other than just 'fine' or 'good').
3. Don't take someone's mental health or your mental health as a joke.
4. Learn about the different resources offered for mental health help in our community.
5. Reach out when you need help. (see resources at the end).

PARTICIPATE IN VIRTUAL MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK!

1. Post a picture of you on any social media platform using these hashtagS! #mentalhealthmatters #mentalhealthawareness #yacmentalhealthweek #endthestigma
2. Put a yellow heart on your house window or car window. Try to find as many hearts in the community as possible, but be sure to follow the social distancing guidelines.
4. Watch this TED Talk about the stigma surrounding mental health: [HERE](#)
5. Deliver a Random Act of Kindness to someone (social distancing still applies!)
Ideas include: pick up litter, leave a kind note at your friends door, paint rocks with encouraging words to put around your neighbourhood (or do the same with chalk), donate money to a cause important to you, and many more that you can find on our social media.

WE CAN LOOK TO EACH OTHER



SELF-CARE = SURVIVAL

Each of these play an important role in mental health, but proactive self-care will help you stay healthy and well, while reactive self-care is more like a backup generator. There when we need it, but not great to rely on regularly!

1. Proactive Self Care: when practicing self care is more of a routine that you follow and taking care of yourself on a regular basis. This helps to maintain your mental and physical health.

2. Reactive Self Care: signals from your body which forces you to take care of yourself. For example, stress or lack of sleep can sometimes cause you to get sick, this is a sign from your body telling you to take a break to take care of yourself.

3. Physical Self Care: Physical self-care can be any type of activity that improves your mental and physical well-being. Examples include: eating healthier, taking time out of your day to do your hair or have a bath, and exercising regularly.

MENTAL HEALTH VS MENTAL ILLNESS

Everyone has mental health. Mental health is the state of your mind and your feelings. People's mental health changes from day to day and varies throughout each individual. Mental illnesses are health conditions that affect a person. Some examples include anxiety, depression, post traumatic stress disorder and more.

MENTAL WELLNESS / WELLBEING

Is a term I prefer because I think it represents a wide range of functioning, has less stigma tied to it, and conveys a feeling of strength and optimism. Next issue I will be breaking this term down further and exploring the many dimensions of wellness.

Now more than ever we
Need compassionate
leadership to strengthen our
mental health immune system.

-Peter Senge

What a way to look at it! Something about the concept of the immune system offered me a new way of thinking about and talking about mental health. We need to value caring for our "mental health immune system" as a key part of our overall immune system!

I think one powerful way is to show that we value our mental health immune system, is to **adopt a shift in perspective.**

When you embrace the idea that our mental health is an important part of our overall health, that message spreads through how interact with the people around us.

CHANGING THE PACE...

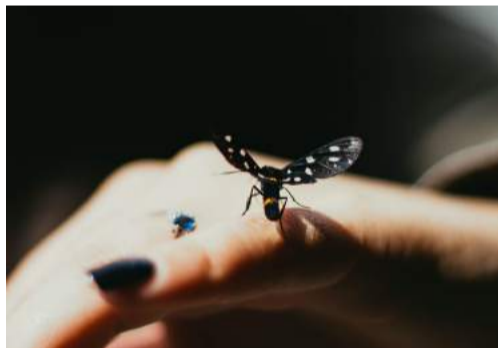
Recently I've noticed people are pacing themselves, as they should be! Our best chance at finding balance when things are shifting so rapidly around us, is by slowing down and finding our anchors. *Plant your feet, find your center, get grounded* there are so many ways to say it! This 2:47 clip shows what finding calm in chaos can look like: [THE NINJA AND THE FLY](#)

OUR STUDENTS NEED US & WE NEED EACH OTHER TO:

M O V E S L O W L Y

In Issue one we talked about the stress response and how people instinctually respond differently to situations like a pandemic that tend to turn on our safety systems fight, flight, freeze responses. This week, we are going to look more closely at how we can better understand what is driving our responses and what we can do to pace ourselves and find a healthy balance between forward motion and staying planted. Slowing down is harder for some people than others and that's okay!

Some of our safety systems tell us that we need to speed up in times of crisis. Others find that they "go offline" and naturally slow down when stress surfaces. I'm ALWAYS a fan of looking at our responses in a way that considers how our actions help us now or have helped us in the past. When we are kind to ourselves through this process, we can become better friends with the responses that help us, and more easily let go of the ones that are harmful.



I WANT TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE PEOPLE THAT DON'T GET TO SLOW DOWN RIGHT NOW. THE ESSENTIAL WORKERS, AND EVERYONE WHO LOGISTICALLY CANNOT SLOW DOWN.

HERE, I AM SPEAKING TO THOSE OF US WHO NEED TO FIND A RHYTHM FOR ENDURANCE, NOT SPEED.

Going by patterns of past global crises including pandemics, we can expect that the resulting mental health needs will far surpass the resources currently available. It is critical that we prepare for this by pacing ourselves, prioritizing our own wellbeing and be willing to speak up about how we are faring through this.

Just like the flight attendant tells us in their safety speech at the start of every flight. We MUST put our own oxygen masks on first in times of crisis. This means before we help our neighbor or even our child, we need to have our oxygen in place. When we don't, our chances of going unconscious while trying to help someone else is exceptionally high. Then no one gets what they need to survive!

OUTTER OBSTACLES

TO TAPPING THE THE BREAKS

There are legitimate pressures for many of us right now, that go beyond our regular duties and responsibilities. I'm of the mind that in order to maintain mental health, we must take the reins. Two of the most important ingredients we need to make this happen right now are clear directions and defined boundaries.

CLEAR DIRECTIONS AND BOUNDARIES create a sense of trust and safety. According to a large body of literature on the psychology of pandemics, increased inability to tolerate uncertainty is a risk factor for prolonged pandemic related distress. The thing is, we can increase our sense of certainty by giving and receiving clear messages around our expectations and boundaries. This might mean asking for clarification from those we have responsibilities to in our personal and professional lives. It might also mean being figuring out what we need during this time and making that known in a helpful way.

SO MANY PEOPLE I CARE ABOUT
HAVE TOLD ME THEY FEEL LIKE
THEY'VE BEEN SIGNED UP FOR AN
INVISIBLE RACE.



This is not a race, it's our new reality, don't get pulled into the whirling currents around you!

ANDY PUDDICOMBE maker of Headspace explains more about this [HERE](#)



PRACTICAL IDEAS

Expectations and boundaries are important topics across all areas of mental wellness, but they are the building blocks for remaining resilient and recovering from traumatic events. Some people may feel psychologically unimpacted by the pandemic, and others may feel like their world is unravelling. Both of these groups will benefit from clear expectations and boundaries, but they are essential components for those who are struggling. Here is a tried and true formula:

1. I FEEL...anxious / nervous / worried

(pave the way for open communication by being open)

2. WHEN YOU...aren't clear on expectations during COVID

(be specific and objective, describe as concretely as you can)

3. I NEED... clarification on how to handle "x"

(again, be specific and honest about what you need from them)

4. IF NOT... I won't be able to do what you want me to

(tell them how it will effect the situation if your need isn't met)

Practice this formula with friends, family, students & colleagues.

use the feelings wheel from issue one for the first step!

REMEMBER: IT'S OKAY NOT TO FEEL OKAY RIGHT NOW!!!

INNER OBSTACLES

TO TAPPING THE THE BREAKS

If you tense up when you hear the words “slow down” take a moment to close your eyes and ask yourself: “what is the worst thing that will happen if I tap the breaks?”

I'll fall behind and never catch up.

People will think I am not productive.

I will look weak.

I will fail people that are counting on me.

I won't be setting a good example.

Nothing should slow me down.

I have to keep up.

My value depends on being productive.

I need things to feel normal.

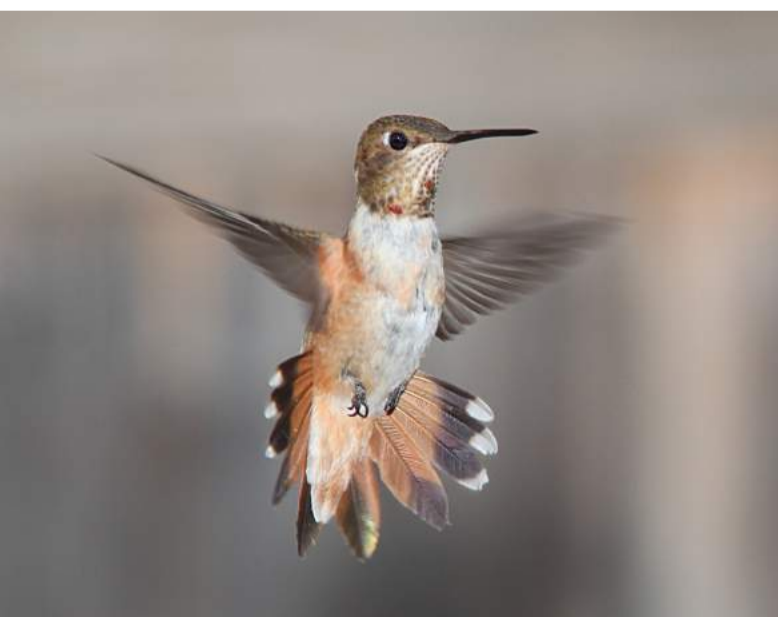
If I don't keep busy, I get anxious.

MOST OF US REQUIRE MORE REST & RECUPERATION TIME RIGHT NOW. THAT IS A NORMAL HUMAN NEED DURING TIMES OF INCREASED STRESS.

IF WE DON'T WILLINGLY GIVE OUR BODY AND MIND WHAT IT NEEDS, IT WILL TURN TO REACTIVE SELF CARE MENTIONED ON P.5 AND FIND A WAY TO TAKE IT! THIS LOOKS LIKE BURNOUT, DEPRESSION & EVEN PHYSICAL PAIN.

IF YOU FEEL AN INNER PULL TO KEEP UP YOUR USUAL PACE THIS MIGHT MEAN:

- You cope with anxiety by staying so busy you don't have time to think about stuff that stresses you.
- In your household growing up, slowing down was a sign of weakness, rather than an aspect of self-care.
- You believe your productivity is what makes you valuable as a person.
- You have genuine concerns about “falling behind” or becoming overwhelmed if you slow down.
- Your safety systems is telling you that if you sprint and do as much as you can this will end faster



PRACTICAL IDEAS

You know yourself better than anyone else ever could, and some of these questions might have complex answers that take time to sort through.

HERE ARE SOME IMPORTANT REMINDERS YOU CAN READ OR REMIND YOURSELF IF YOU DECIDE TO TRY AND MOVE MORE SLOWLY:

1. My worth is NOT based on how productive I am.
2. Other people might need me to slow down, and that is also a valid need during this pandemic.

3. Slowing down is also a skill and now is a good time to practice, even if it's uncomfortable.

HERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU CAN DO:

1. Practice slowing down in small doses. Trying assigning slightly less than you feel comfortable.
2. Acknowledge the biological and psychological reasons to move at a gentle pace right now.
3. Try spending time on hobbies and activities that feel meaningful and fulfilling.
4. If you MUST stay busy, work on things that don't depend on or demand anything from other people (i.e. planning ahead on future projects, professional development etc.)

TODAY'S TOOL

PACING WITH INTENTION

Whether you have decided to move more slowly with the people around you, or you have realized that the current in your own mind is sweeping you up, the UCLA Mindfulness Research Center website houses some of my favourite free resources!

It is completely free, offers an audio file as well as a transcript for reading to yourself or when guiding others.

You can select meditations between 3-19 minutes in duration, and the department has a podcast as well as online classes and events.

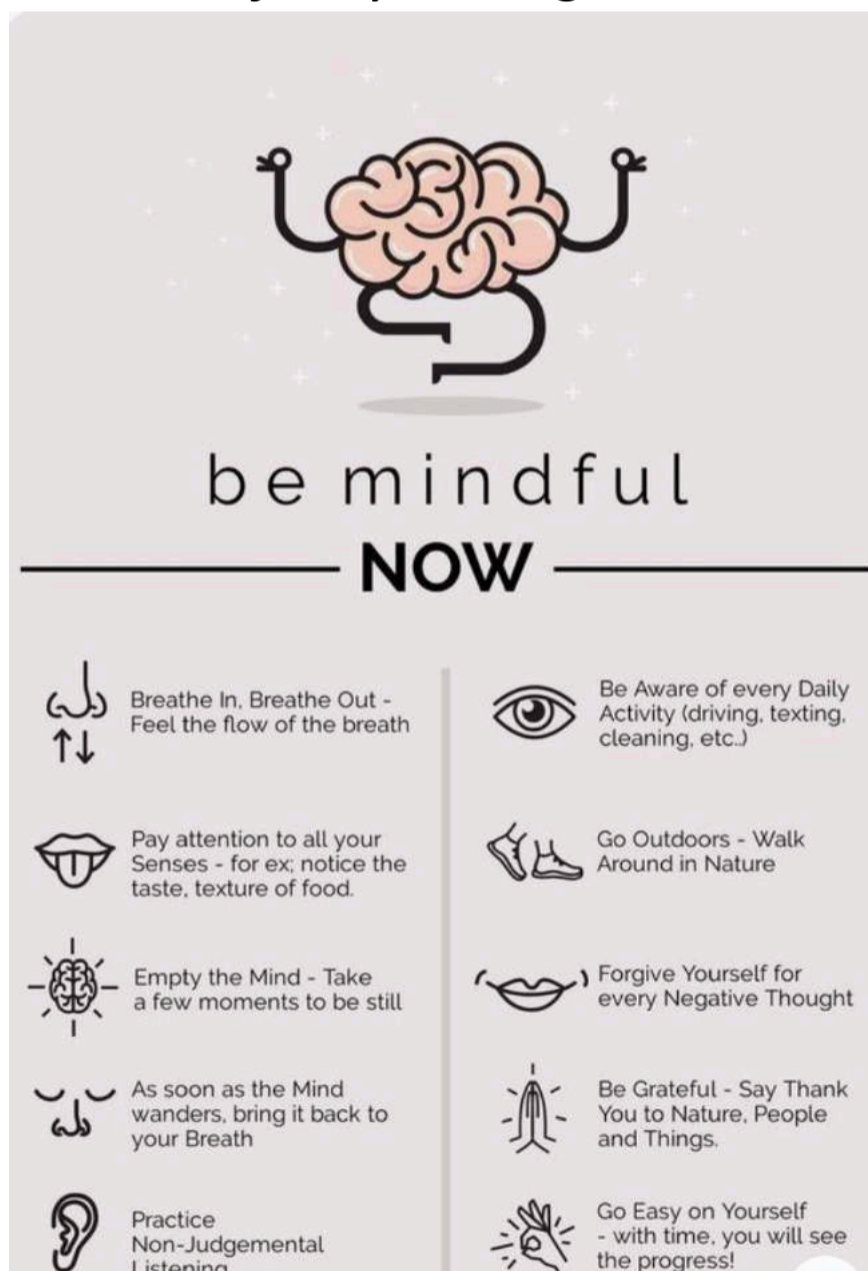
If you can't sleep or past meditation attempts have been frustrating for you, I recommend either of the **body scans**. If you are frustrated with yourself or others or have been feeling blue, I recommend the **Loving Kindness Meditation**, If you need to unwind or re-set the breath meditations are a great option, and if you aren't sure what you need or you just want it all, then the **Complete Meditation Instructions** will not disappoint!

Follow this link to check it out!

[HERE](#)

If setting aside time to follow a guided meditation isn't for you right now, not to fret!

HERE ARE
SOME
ACTIONS YOU
CAN TAKE
TO BUILD
IMPORTANT
PAUSES
INTO YOUR
EVERYDAY
LIFE.
NO EXTRA
TIME NEEDED!



GET REFRESHED

WITH A STRAWBERRY
ITALIAN CREAM SODA



I don't know about you, but I have seen some stellar and much appreciated work going in at my local grocer! The staff are showing so much dedication doing endless disinfecting on top of their regular duties.

The range of options in the fresh department have been more limited than I am accustomed to, but the apples, oranges and strawberries are stocked in abundance! I chose this drink to honour the one green and growing strawberry forming in my yard.

I've always liked rootbeer floats, but didn't think of putting cream in my soda until attempting to replicate a Starbucks drink. It was delicious! I can see so many ways to substitute this drink into the most stringent food requirements. For example, coconut milk instead of dairy, reducing the sugar or using alternate ways of sweetening.

How To Make Italian Soda [LINK TO ORIGINAL ARTICLE](#)

Ingredients

12 oz Fresh or Frozen Strawberries Washed and Hulled

1/4 Cup Granulated Sugar

1 Liter Club Soda

3/4 Cup Heavy Cream

Whipped Cream Optional

Instructions

In a food processor or blender combine strawberries and sugar.

Pulse for 30-60 seconds or until strawberries are smooth and the sugar is well incorporated.

Let the puree stand for 10 minutes to allow the sugar to dissolve.

Fill half of a 16 ounce cup with crushed ice.

Pour about 1/3 cup of fresh strawberry puree over the ice.

Pour club soda over the top until it is almost full.

Next, pour in about 1-2 tablespoons of heavy cream.

You can gently stir it with a straw. Prevent from over stirring or else you will make your soda flat.

Top with whipped cream and serve with a straw.

**Taking care
of yourself
is productive.**

**JOIN ME NEXT WEEK FOR
USING THE WELLNESS WHEEL
TO FIND BALANCE, EVEN
DURING A PANDEMIC!**

FEATURED RESOURCES

Safer Schools Together Remote Sessions: SST is offering several complimentary remote training sessions for Parents, Students, School Administrators, Community Partners, and Law Enforcement Officials. More information [HERE](#)

My Hero is You, Storybook for Children on COVID-19: This children's book was shared by Dr. Nancy Spencer-Poitras, Superintendent of Schools for Northland School Division in Alberta. It's a story for children regarding the COVID-19 written for the World Health Organization. [HERE](#)

The Canadian Centre for Child Protection (Canadian Centre): Resources to help keep families, schools, child-serving organizations, and, children safe. Children who are at home will potentially have more unrestricted time online. The Canadian Centre, through Cybertip.ca, is urging families to have conversations about internet safety and implement strategies to ensure digital well-being. For more online safety considerations: [HERE](#)

Interim Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools (jointly developed by IFRC, UNICEF, and WHO): This document provides clear and actionable guidance for safe operations through the prevention, early detection and control of COVID-19 in schools. Read [HERE](#)

Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies - COVID-19 Resources: Collection of resources: [HERE](#)

Foundry BC Supports for Youth: Offering free, confidential virtual drop-in counselling sessions by voice, video and chat to BC's young people ages 12-24 and their care-givers. No referral or assessment is required. Their service offerings will expand to include primary care and peer support. To access service, call 1-833-FØUNDRY (FØUNDRY with a zero! or 1-833-308-6379) to book an appointment. Learn more at foundrybc.ca/virtual promotional materials Email online@foundrybc.ca with any questions about Foundry's virtual services. [MORE INFO HERE](#)

SOGI Support for LGBTQ2S+ Students: The ARC Foundation is launching an All Educators Page with a COVID-19 section to share relevant resources, tips for successful virtual GSAs, how students can control their display names on virtual platforms, tips for engaging with parents, and much more. The ARC team is available to work with you. Please contact Andrew Poon andrew@arcfoundation.ca. Additional information available at www.SOGleducation.org or www.arcfoundation.ca.

Canadian Mental Health Association Resources: <https://cmha.bc.ca/covid-19/>