COMMUNITY EDUCATION WEBINAR – 20th May 2020
Psychological Wellbeing and Resilience during COVID-19

Topics discussed:

• What is resilience and why do we want to have it?
• An exercise in recognizing your sources of resilience (SSRI).
• Watch your thinking – balanced thinking to promote resilient behaviour
• Optimising your mental functioning through Gratitude, Empathy and Mindfulness
• The pillars of psychological wellbeing.

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What is resilience?

• The skill or ability of accepting loss and change and overcoming setbacks

• A component of psychological wellbeing, alongside autonomy, agency, confidence and optimism.
Why is resilience important?

• Resilient people are more able to remain productive and psychologically healthy in the face of stress and change

• Resilience protects against burnout

• In COVID times, loss, change and stresses and setbacks are the new normal, therefore most people have reason to take stock of and apply their skills in this area

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SSRI – Strategies, Strengths, Resources, Insights

Workshop your approach to a difficult scenario using what exists in your personal toolkit under the headings below.

**Strategies** = What can I do? What action can I take?
E.g., Stay informed, practice hygiene, plan for possible events, find ways of working online

**Strengths** = What are the strengths that I have that I can draw upon?
E.g., Resourcefulness, optimism, willingness to try new ways of doing things, ability to process and communicate complex information, conscientiousness, connection to others, sense of humour.

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SSRI continued

Resources = What external resources (outside my strengths and my strategies) are there that might help me?
Friends, family, neighbours, community, health professionals, telephone hotlines, Centrelink.

Insights: How can I look at things? What wisdom do I have that applies to this? E.g., What is in my control, and what isn’t? What have I, or others, found helpful in similar situations before?

Credit: https://www.theschooloflife.com/melbourne/ and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_lr9MFJ6fgE

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Balanced thinking often requires reframing

- A technique used in cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) to address ‘negative automatic thoughts’ that are a feature of depression and anxiety.

- Involves consciously appraising events in a more balanced and less negative way which in turn affects our emotions. Instead of accepting an automatic negative thought as ‘truth’ we re-script our self talk into something more objective and evidence based.

- The way we perceive our experiences – the thoughts we have about them – influences our emotional, physiological and behavioural response to them.

- E.g, ‘physical isolation’ is different to ‘social isolation’
Gratitude, Empathy and Mindfulness

These three practices promote balanced thinking, positive emotions and a calm frame of mind, which help our ability to adapt and function well.

Gratitude = paying attention to what you have.

Empathy = Being of service to others has been shown to enhance the emotional wellbeing of the giver.

Mindfulness = focusing one’s awareness on the present moment, and calmly acknowledging and accepting one’s thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations. This practice promotes a calmer experience of our emotions, and puts us in a better frame of mind to make constructive adaptations to our circumstances.

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We think too much about what goes wrong and not enough about what goes right in our lives. Of course, sometimes it makes sense to analyze bad events so that we can learn from them and avoid them in the future. However, people tend to spend more time thinking about what is bad in life than is helpful. Worse, this focus on negative events sets us up for anxiety and depression. One way to keep this from happening is to get better at thinking about and savoring what went well.

Martin Seligman, *Flourish*
What is psychological, or mental wellbeing?

• Not simply the absence of mental – ill health
• In popular literature, sometimes referred to as ‘happiness’ or ‘flourishing’.
• Psychological or mental wellbeing is a state which enables people to reach their full potential and productively contribute to their communities (World Health Organisation 2019)
• People who have high levels of resilience tend to have high levels of psychological wellbeing.
Psychological wellbeing is protected and promoted by:

- Adequate sleep
- Eating well
- Exercise
- Connection with others
- Doing things we enjoy/can be absorbed in
- Doing things that matter (purpose)
- Doing things that give us a sense of competence

*Think of these things as a daily diet for your psychological health, aiming to tick off most things most days*
Facts about exercise

- Increasingly prescribed as a frontline treatment for mood disorders such as anxiety and depression, especially in UK and Canada
- Also evidence it improves self-esteem, mood, memory and attention
- Used in treatment of Alzheimer’s and ADHD.
- Positive mental wellbeing effects may be to do with production of endorphins, endocannabinoids and the reduction of stress hormone cortisol
- Also provides opportunity for mindfulness, absorption, sense of competence and connection.
- *Lancet Psychiatry* study 2018: Study of exercise habits of 1.2 million Americans. People who exercised had 43.2% fewer days of poor mental health than those who did not exercise. This was a much larger ‘effect’ than variables such as education or income.
- Studies of comparing the benefits of different types of exercise indicate that moderate to vigorous intensity several times per week is optimal.
Routine

- **Routine** will help you achieve your ‘psychological nutriments’ and optimize your daily life.
- Habit makes it easier to accomplish things.
- Will reduce your stress levels/mental burden and promote a sense of control in a time of uncertainty.

- Write the schedule of your ideal day that incorporates most if not all of the following components of psychological wellbeing – what exercise, connection to others etc looks like for you.
Q & A

Type up your questions in the Q & A menu located at the bottom of your screen.
NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH HELPLINE
1300 643 287

If you have any questions, we are here to help you!

JOIN ANXIETY SUPPORT GROUP
Tonight at 7pm next one Wed June 15th at 7pm

Learn more: https://www.mhfa.org.au/CMS/support-group-for-anxiety

Email: supportgroup@mhfa.org.au

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