



First Nations Health Authority  
Health through wellness



# Mental Health, Wellness & Self-Care during wildfire season

(and everything else that's been going on for the last year & a half)



August 10, 2021

Dr. Nel Wieman

A/Deputy Chief Medical Officer (A/DCMO)

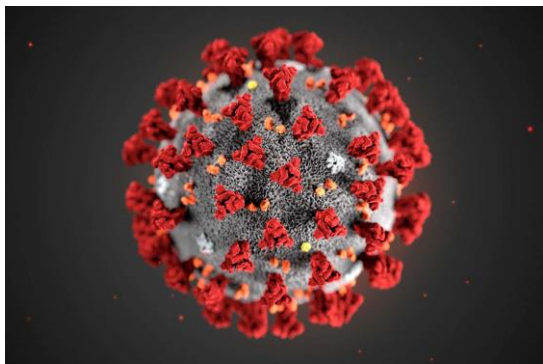
First Nations Health Authority



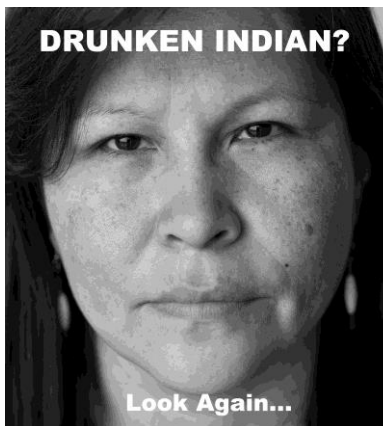
# Acknowledgements



I am Indigenous not on my ancestral territory and I respectfully acknowledge the land on which I work, live and play is the traditional, ancestral and continually occupied territory of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the unceded homelands of the x<sup>w</sup>məθkwəyəm (Musqueam), Sḵwḵwú7mesh (Squamish), and sə́ilwətał (Tseil-Waututh) Nations.



# 2020-2021



**DRUNKEN INDIAN?**

Look Again...



**TAMARA FIRST CHARGER (KAINAI)**

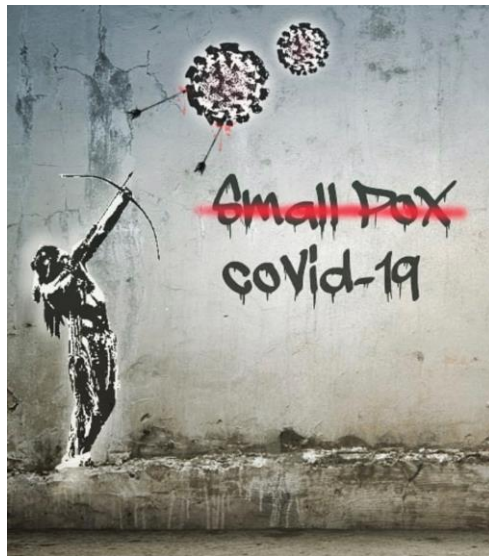
A mother, sister, aunty, daughter, strong, fierce, independant woman, pow wow dancer, educator, volunteer and internationally known for her fry bread.

KC Adams, The Perception Series





# Stress, Anxiety, Trauma & Depression



Steven Paul Judd

- Unpredictability/uncertainty
- Loss of control
- History & trauma of past pandemics/experiences/wildfires
- Racism in the health care system/other systems
- COVID “fatigue”/ 4<sup>th</sup> wave
- Vaccines: hesitancy/confidence
- Isolation / loss of social interaction
- Evacuation: alerts and orders
- Grieving losses: people/places/things
- Short- & long-term instability
- What is “normal” now & into the future?





# Stress



- Stress is a normal human reaction
- When you experience changes or challenges (stressors), your body produces physical and mental (emotional & intellectual) responses
- Stress responses help your body adjust to new situations
- Stress can be positive – keeping us alert, motivated and ready to avoid danger

## Types of stress responses

### POSITIVE



A normal and essential part of healthy development

EXAMPLES  
getting a vaccine,  
first day of school

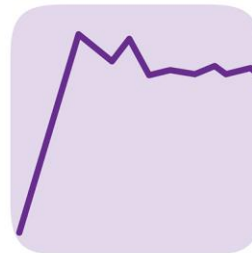
### TOLERABLE



Response to a more severe stressor, limited in duration

EXAMPLES  
loss of a loved one,  
a broken bone

### TOXIC



Experiencing strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversity

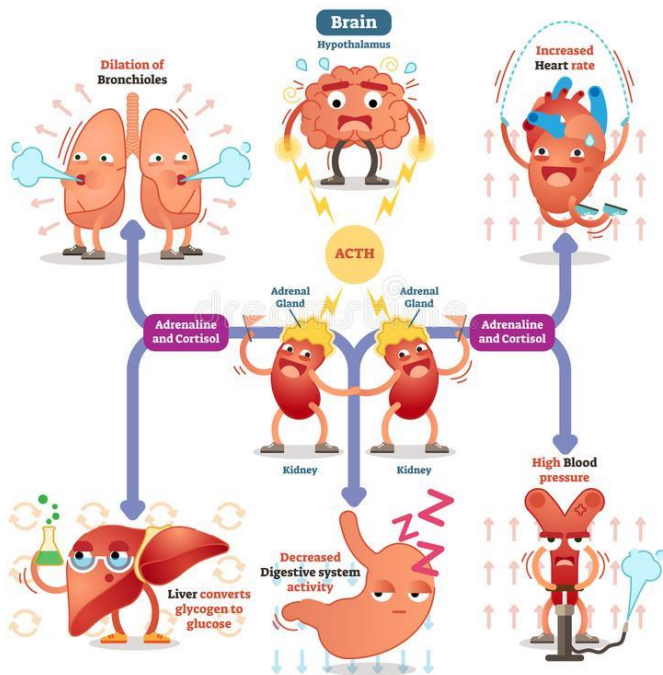
EXAMPLES  
physical or emotional abuse,  
exposure to violence

- Stress becomes a problem when stressors continue without relief or periods of relaxation
- When we have chronic (long-term) stress, continued activation of the stress response causes wear & tear on the body

<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/11874-stress>



## STRESS RESPONSE SYSTEM



# Stress

- Stress response: “fight-or-flight”
- Physical symptoms include: aches & pains, chest pain, racing heart, exhaustion but trouble sleeping, headaches, high blood pressure, muscle tension, jaw clenching, stomach problems, weak immune system
- Emotional/mental symptoms: anxiety, panic attacks, irritability, sadness, depression
- People sometimes try to manage chronic stress with unhealthy behaviours including: drinking too much/too often, gambling, overeating/eating disorder, compulsive sex, shopping, internet browsing, smoking, using substances (cannabis, OTC meds, prescription meds or illicit drugs)



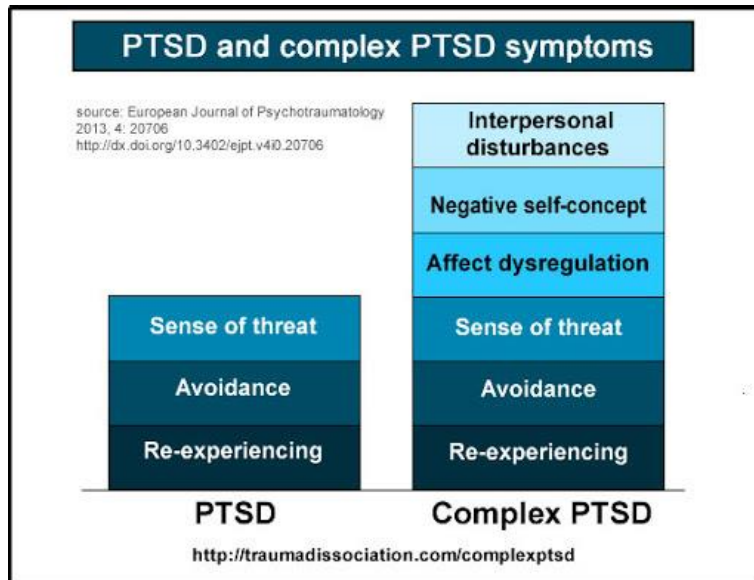
# Anxiety & Anxiety Disorders

- Different type of anxiety disorders: panic disorder (with or without agoraphobia), social anxiety, generalized anxiety, specific phobias and **post-traumatic stress disorder (including complex PTSD)**
- Impairment in daily functioning in all or most spheres
- Symptoms sustained for a period of time
- Children & youth: may manifest in behavioural issues



# Complex PTSD

- Core symptoms of PTSD: re-experiencing, avoidance/numbing, hyperarousal
- c-PTSD:
  - Emotional dysregulation: heightened reactivity, hyperarousal, chronic suicidal ideation, self-harm behaviours, substance use
  - interpersonal difficulties: trouble sustaining relationships, avoidance of or little interest in relationships, intense relationships
  - alterations in attention & consciousness: dissociations, nightmares, flashbacks
  - adversely affected belief systems: shame, guilt, self-doubt, low self-worth
  - somatic symptoms: medically unexplained symptoms, chronic pain, chronic fatigue







# Symptoms of Depression

- **Depression: feeling, thinking & physical symptoms**
- Feelings of sadness, tearfulness, emptiness, hopelessness
- Irritability, frustration, anger
- Loss of interest or pleasure in most or all normal activities
- Anxiety, agitation, restlessness
- Feelings of worthlessness, guilt, focusing on past failures, self-blaming
- Slowed thinking, speaking or body movements
- Trouble thinking, concentration, making decisions and remembering things
- Frequent or recurrent thoughts of death, suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts or completed suicide
- Sleep disturbances: insomnia or sleeping too much
- Reduced appetite & weight loss; or increased appetite & weight gain
- Tiredness, lack of energy, small tasks take greater effort than usual
- Unexplained physical problems – eg. headaches, back pain, muscle aches
- Interfere with daily functioning in most or all spheres
- Are present for a sustained period of time



# Signs of Substance Use Disorder

- Loss of interest / apathy / complacency
- Physical signs
- Change in physical appearance
- Discovering evidence of use – eg. drug paraphernalia
- Rapid mood swings
- Reclusive and private behavior
- Rapid change in what is considered “normal” for the individual
- Erratic behaviours
- Other behaviours: defensiveness, anger
- Sleep habits



# Front-line workers during COVID-19

- “we are running a marathon, not a sprint”
- Fatigue, stress, frustration, discouragement, “burnout”
- Need to try to maintain work-life balance
- Looking after our own health: physical, emotional, mental & spiritual
- Anxiety for our families & communities – eg. front-line workers
- “we are not working from home – we are working, during a pandemic, at home”



# Stress Management

- Think of what you have accomplished, not what you didn't get done
- Set goals for the day, week & month
- Gratitude
- Accept you can't control everything
- Learn to say "no"
- Stay connected with people who add to your life, not take away from it
- Stress can be short-term or long-term so working on management techniques can help mitigate potentially harmful consequences
- Long-term stress can cause physical & emotional symptoms and unhealthy behaviours
- You should seek medical attention if you are feeling overwhelmed, if you are using drugs or alcohol to cope or if you have thoughts about hurting yourself
- Treatment of stress, anxiety, depression and trauma can sometimes include assessment, prescribing medicines, talk therapy or spending time with Elders





# 50 STRATEGIES TO MANAGE YOUR ANXIETY

**TAKE A BREAK FROM TECHNOLOGY** @BELIEVEPHQ

**ENGAGE IN SOMETHING PLEASURABLE**

**ENGAGE IN SOME EXERCISE**

**LIMIT THE AMOUNT OF ALCOHOL YOU DRINK**

**CHALLENGE YOUR THOUGHTS**

**JOURNAL YOUR WORRIES**

**WORK ON YOUR PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS**

**TAKE A DEEP BREATHE AND COUNT BACKWARDS**

**PRACTICE SOME DEEP BREATHING**

**UNDERSTAND WHEN YOU START CATASTROPHIZING**

**PRACTICE SOME SELF CARE**

**ACCEPT THAT YOU HAVE ANXIETY**

**TALK TO SOMEONE ABOUT YOUR ANXIETY**

**FOCUS ON THE PRESENT MOMENT**

**LIMIT THE AMOUNT OF CAFFEINE YOU HAVE**

**HAVE A BATH**

**DOWNLOAD AN APP**

**WHY NOT TRY DOING SOME YOGA**

**JOIN AN EXERCISE GROUP**

**BUY A MINDFULNESS COLOURING BOOK**

**LEARN WHAT YOUR TRIGGERS ARE**

**LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW YOUR ANXIETY AFFECTS YOU**

**COUNT TO TEN SLOWLY**

**TRY SINGING**

**LEARN SOME PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION**

**SET ASIDE SOME TIME TO WORRY**

**PRACTICE SOME MINDFULNESS**

**TRY ENGAGING IN RATIO BREATHING**

**LISTEN TO RELAXING MUSIC**

**IDENTIFY THINKING ERRORS**

**ASK YOURSELF: WHAT'S THE WORST THAT CAN HEPPEN**

**REDUCE YOUR STRESS LEVELS**

**MANAGE YOUR TIME EFFECTIVELY**

**COME UP WITH AN ALTERNATIVE THOUGHT**

**BUILD A MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT NETWORK**

**TRY TO KEEP THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE**

**FOCUS ON THINGS YOU CAN CONTROL**

**TAKE A BREAK**

**EXPLORE SOLUTIONS TO OVERCOME YOUR WORRIES**

**MAKE SURE YOU ARE EATING A BALANCED DIET**

**TEST OUT THE VALIDITY OF YOUR THOUGHTS**

**VISUALISE A SAFE PLACE**

**RECOGNISE THE SIGNS OF YOUR ANXIETY**

**CALL A FRIEND**

**MAKE SURE YOU ARE GETTING PLENTY OF SLEEP**

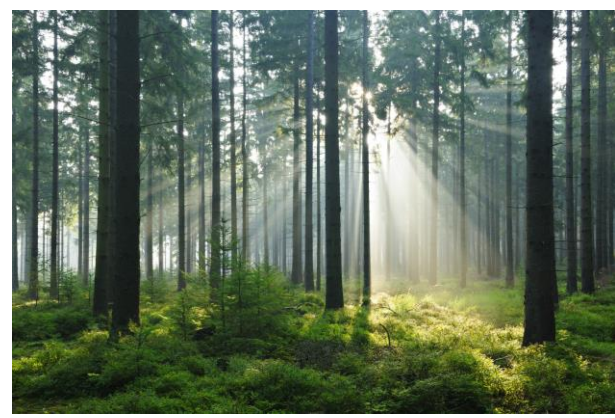
**PRACTICE IMAGERY TO REDUCE AROUSAL**

**DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK FOR HELP**

**LOOK AFTER YOURSELF**

**DISTRACT YOURSELF**

**SLOW DOWN WHAT YOU ARE DOING**



- <https://www.anxietycanada.com/>
- <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-topics/anxty>
- <https://cmha.bc.ca/documents/anxiety-disorders/>
- <https://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/node/1228>
- <https://www.bcalm.ca/>
- [https://bouncebackbc.ca/#gf\\_3](https://bouncebackbc.ca/#gf_3)



# How to hack happiness chemicals

## Dopamine Reward

- complete a task
- do a self care activity
- eat food
- celebrate a little win

## Oxytocin Love

- Play with a dog
- Play with a baby
- Holding hands
- Hugging
- Give someone a compliment

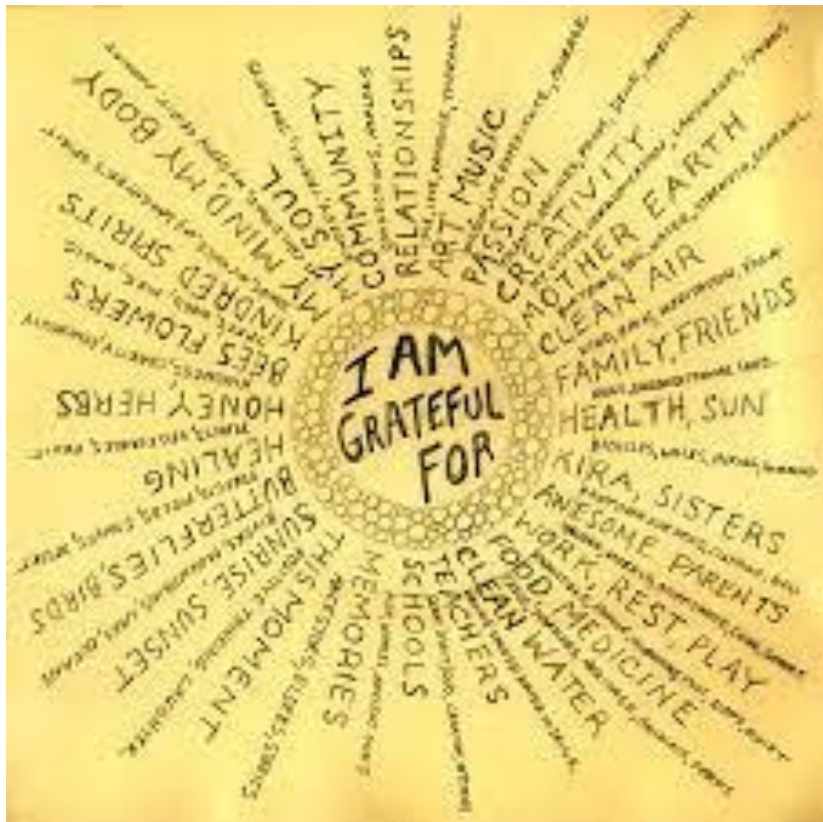
## Serotonin Mood

- Meditate
- Running
- Sunshine
- Walk in nature
- Swim
- Cycle

## Endorphin Pain killer

- Laughing exercise
- Watch comedy
- Dark chocolate
- Exercise

Note: electronics not on these lists..... ♡



**Mind**  
Monitor how much news you consume and replace scrolling with something that can nourish your mind.

- Listen to a Native Podcast (All My Relations is a great one!)
- Read a poem (Joy Harjo is amazing!)
- Try out an Indigenous recipe (some can be found on Donell Barlow's website!)



# “Burnout”

## STRESS

## VS. BURNOUT

✓ Characterized by over-engagement

Characterized by disengagement ✓

✓ Results in a loss of energy

Results in a loss of motivation ✓

✓ Primarily takes a physical toll

Primarily takes an emotional toll ✓



Burnout is the accumulation of unchecked stress over long periods . You can have stress without burnout, but you cannot have burnout without stress











- What is “burnout”? It’s a mental health issue.
- Under chronic stress, feeling emotionally exhausted or feel that you are unappreciated and overwhelmed even though you continue to work hard
- S&S: decreased energy & efficiency, low motivation, increased errors, fatigue, headache, irritability, increased frustration, suspicion, more time working with less accomplished
- Severe burnout can lead to: sarcasm/negativity, self-doubt, decreased physical health, depression, increased use of substances
- Failure to recognize current situation is damaging to one’s health & that change is needed
- Prevention strategies: reprioritize work/life demands, learn new skills for efficiency, take breaks, connect with others, engage in “life” outside of work

# Self-care



## Types of Self-Care

<p><b>Physical</b></p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sleep</li> <li>Stretching</li> <li>Walking</li> <li>Exercise</li> <li>Nutrition</li> <li>Yoga</li> </ul>	<p><b>Emotional</b></p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stress Management</li> <li>Coping Skills</li> <li>Compassion</li> <li>Therapy</li> <li>Journaling</li> </ul>	<p><b>Social</b></p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Boundaries</li> <li>Support System</li> <li>Positive Social Media</li> <li>Communication</li> <li>Friends</li> </ul>	<p><b>Spiritual</b></p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time Alone</li> <li>Meditation</li> <li>Prayer</li> <li>Nature</li> <li>Sacred Space</li> </ul>
<p><b>Personal</b></p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hobbies</li> <li>Creativity</li> <li>Goals</li> <li>Identity</li> <li>Authenticity</li> </ul>	<p><b>Space</b></p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safety</li> <li>Healthy Environment</li> <li>Stability</li> <li>Clean Space</li> </ul>	<p><b>Financial</b></p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Saving</li> <li>Budgeting</li> <li>Money Management</li> <li>Paying Bills</li> <li>Boundaries</li> </ul>	<p><b>Work</b></p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time Management</li> <li>Work Boundaries</li> <li>Breaks</li> </ul>

BlessingManifesting



# Workplace Strategies for Better Mental Health and Wellness

- 25-/50-minute meetings
- Email autoreply: eg. *“My working hours and your working hours may be different. Please do not feel you need to reply outside of your normal working hours.”*
- Separating from work when you work from home
- Reduce screen fatigue
- Energizing/healthy break activities
- “unplug” from work when you can
- Walking meetings
- Take vacation, personal, sick days





**<https://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/environmental-health/wildfire-information>**

**<https://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/ehealth/virtual-doctor-of-the-day>**

**<https://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/ehealth/virtual-substance-use-and-psychiatry-service>**

**Website:**  
**[www.fnha.ca/GoodMedicine](http://www.fnha.ca/GoodMedicine)**  
**email: [wellness@fnha.ca](mailto:wellness@fnha.ca)**





# HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH

@BELIEVEPHQ

www.BelievePerform.com



**LOVE**  
Be there for your child and show care and love



**EXERCISE**  
Encourage play, exercise and sport



**BEHAVIOUR**  
Keep an eye out for any changes in behaviour



**SUPPORT**  
Regularly support, encourage and praise your child



**REST TIME**  
Help your child to manage stress by building in some rest time



**BE PROUD**  
Tell your child that you are proud of them



**PATIENCE**  
Be patient. Don't pressure your child



**HELP**  
Don't be afraid to seek help from professionals



**FEELING**  
Get to know how your child is feeling



**EDUCATE**  
Educate yourself about mental health problems



**PROBLEM SOLVING**  
Help your child to effectively problem solve



**LISTEN**  
Make sure you take time to listen to what your child has to say



**COPING**  
Help your child to learn some simple coping skills such as relaxation



**SYMPTOMS**  
Be aware of signs and symptoms



**CONVERSATION**  
Encourage your child to engage in conversation



**ENVIRONMENT**  
Provide a positive environment for your child where they can thrive



<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/managing-your-health/mental-health-substance-use/child-teen-mental-health>

<https://www.childhealthbc.ca/tiers-service/completed-modules/mental-health-services-children-and-youth>

<https://kelymentalhealth.ca/>

<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/mental-health-substance-use/resources/kids-help-phone>

<https://kidshelpphone.ca/get-involved/our-impact/in-the-community/british-columbia>

<https://kidshelpphone.ca/get-involved/first-nations-inuit-and-metis/>



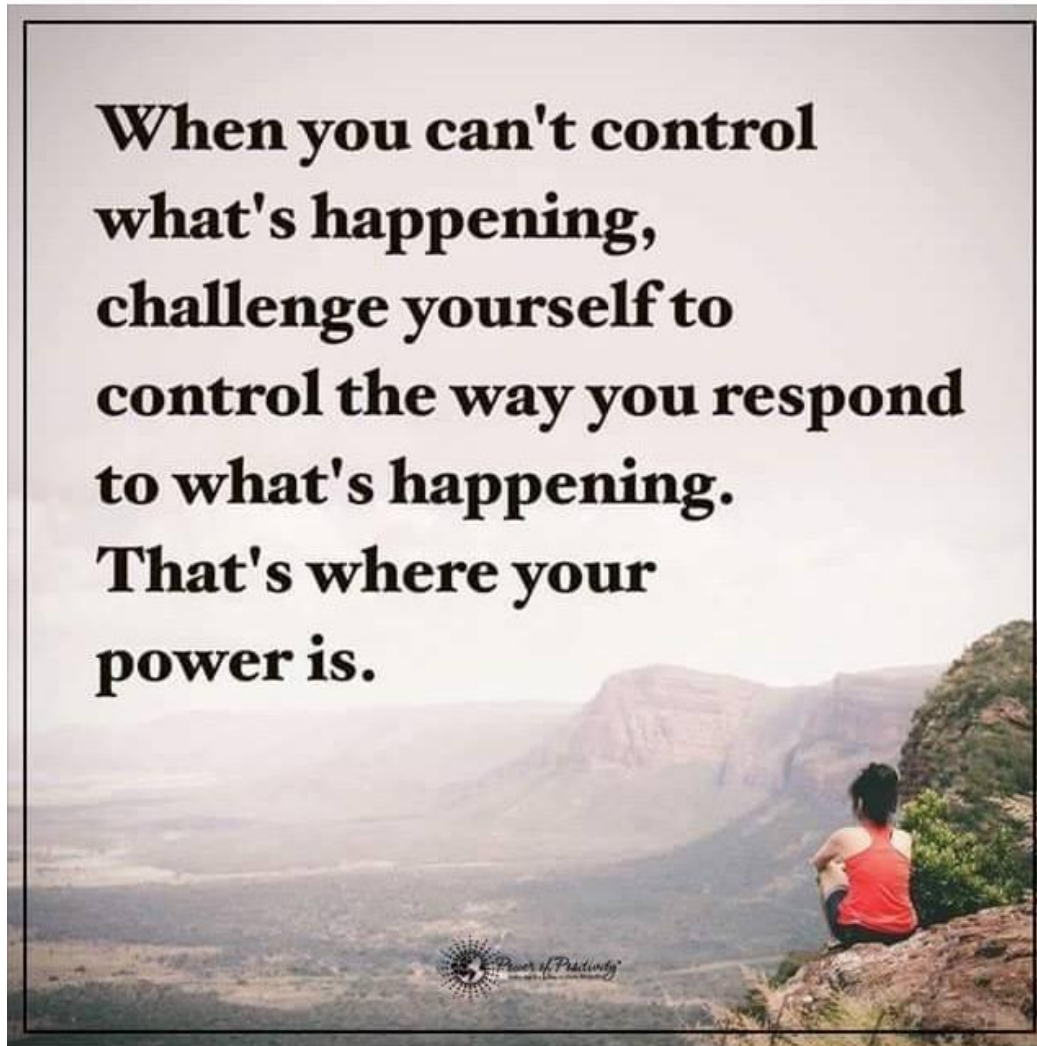
# Other helpful resources:

- FNHA mental health & wellness resources: <https://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/communicable-disease-control/coronavirus/public>
- Wellness Together Canada: [https://www.google.com/search?q=wellness+together+canada&rlz=1C1GCEB\\_enCA828CA830&oq=wellness&aqs=chrome.1.69i57j0i67i131i433i457j0i67l3j69i60l3.2420j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8](https://www.google.com/search?q=wellness+together+canada&rlz=1C1GCEB_enCA828CA830&oq=wellness&aqs=chrome.1.69i57j0i67i131i433i457j0i67l3j69i60l3.2420j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8)
- Public Health Agency of Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/publications/diseases-conditions/taking-care-mental-health/taking-care-mental-health-eng.pdf>
- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health: <https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-health-and-covid-19>
- Canadian Mental Health Association: <https://cmha.ca/news/covid-19-and-mental-health>
- BC Division – CMHA: <https://cmha.bc.ca/covid-19/>
- Mental Health Commission of Canada: <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/covid19>
- BC Virtual Mental Health Supports During COVID-19: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/managing-your-health/mental-health-substance-use/virtual-supports-covid-19>



# Conversations & Questions?

**When you can't control  
what's happening,  
challenge yourself to  
control the way you respond  
to what's happening.  
That's where your  
power is.**





# Thank you! Meegwetch!

