The Mental Health Support Network:
Navigating the pipelines to get the help you need

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Outline and Objectives:

1. What is mental health and the signs/symptoms that it needs support?
2. Why is this topic so important/relevant at a safety conference?
3. Who’s who in the zoo? What do they do?
4. What are the costs, access routes, and referral processes.
5. You know best: self empowerment, autonomy, and advocacy.
6. Barriers and benefits to the mental health support network.
7. Key take aways.
There is so much more to health and safety than our bodies.

Our mind is the control center for our body, our choices, our reactions, and our health.

Let's keep it safe too!
Mental health is…

- **KEY** to well-being. How we **feel, think, act, and interact** in our world.
- Our ability to be our best, “**thrive**”.
- **Coping** well with life, and **contributing** to our community.
- **Not** about avoidance of problems or achieving perfection.
- **Feeling good** and **feeling capable** despite challenges.
- Bigger than the presence or absence of mental illness.

www.cmha.ca
More signs of good mental health

- Good self esteem and **confidence**.
- Strong and **supportive connections** and relationships.
- **Self care** practices to nurture a healthy body and mind.
- Able to take stressful situations in stride. **Resilience!**
- Overall **positive attitude** about self, others, and life. Can put negative thoughts aside when they pop up.
- **Laughter**. Purpose. Love. Motivation.
Signs that mental health is struggling and needs support

- Too much stress
- Relationships are conflicted and disconnected
- Major life transitions
- Grief and loss
- Illness, pain, low energy, and other health problems
- Sleep, diet, and exercise issues
- Concentration, performance, memory, etc.
- Negative, pessimistic, struggling to see the positives
- Possible mood disorders (depression, anxiety, bipolar, PTSD).
- Over use/abuse of substances or other harmful behaviors.
- “I’m not myself”
Mental health, mental illness, and just plain health!

People with mental illness can have good mental health, and people without mental illness can have poor mental health.

Emotional stress is the major cause of many illnesses, from cancer to autoimmune conditions, and many chronic diseases. The brain and body systems that process emotions are intimately connected with the hormonal apparatus, the nervous system, and in particular the immune system. *When the Body Says No, Mate, 2003.*

Mental and emotional pain and suffering impacts physical pain and suffering (disease and illness). We cannot separate our health into compartments. *Everything is connected.*
Why is this topic so important? **Issues with System Cohesion**

- The mental health support network **IS NOT** a well-oiled machine. It can feel disjointed and even frustrating. Pathways to access support can feel confusing.

- The various players *may or may not* work with other supports to promote referrals, follow up, and a well-rounded approach to overall wellness: lack of cooperation/coordination between the players involved.

- This is especially challenging when it comes to issues and illnesses that are far less “visible”, the issue is more easily hidden, and pushed aside to worsen to a risky or crisis state.
Why is this topic so important? The costs are high.

- People off work on mental health and stress leaves are increasing.
- Whether its occupational stress or personal stress there are still huge productivity costs, financial costs, personal costs.
- Poor mental health impacts individuals, families, marriages, workplaces, communities. Huge impact on children; what is learned through their environment – generational effects.
- Sometimes people become very ill and even die when they don’t get the help they need: **Substance abuse and the opioid/overdose crisis.**
Why is this topic so important? **Substance Use and Overdose**

**Community Action Team (CAT):** A collaborative network addressing the drivers of substance use in Campbell River. 5th highest per capita OD rate in BC, 2017.

High employment in industry/trades was identified as 1 of 6 factors driving SU.

**What’s the relationship between industry/trades work and substance use?**

- Physically demanding work, riskier work, more accidents, more injuries and prescribed opiates for pain management, more self medicating, more exposure to fatalities and first responder trauma/PTSD.

- Working away from home (11% in CR): strain on family and relationships, reduced access to entertainment, reduced continuity of health care and pain management.

- Employees may not know where to go for help, or won’t ask given shame, stigma, fears.

- Small companies/contractors lack access to benefits, OHS, EFAP, etc. – no where to turn.

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What is the Mental Health Support Network?

- A vast array of helping professionals with different types of education and training, WHO ALL CARE AND WORK TO SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH in their own way.

- Sometimes they work collaboratively with other professionals, sometimes they work quite independently.

- It’s NOT clearly defined – it’s NOT obvious – the best route to take and supports to access are not unanimously agreed. That’s why I’m talking about it.
Who are the players in the MH support network?  
Who’s who in the zoo, and what do they do?

- Medical Doctors
- Naturopathic Doctors
- Counsellors and Psychotherapists
- Social Workers
- Addictions/Mental health/Detox & Rehab Counsellors
- Psychologists
- Psychiatrists

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Who are the players in the MH support network?
Who’s who in the zoo, and what do they do?

Medical Doctors or Physicians, MD, GP...

- Are a great starting place to seek help with any mental health concern.

- Free (MSP) and easily accessible to make an appointment. Walk-in clinics as needed. Emergency as needed.

- Can help with assessment, diagnosis, medications, other treatment planning, and necessary referrals.
Who are the players in the MH support network?  
Who’s who in the zoo, and what do they do?

Counsellors and Psychotherapists, RCC, CCC, MSW...

- A great starting place to seek help with any mental health concern.

- Possibly free if covered through your EFAP or group insurance benefits. Otherwise, private costs of $100/hour and up.

- FACT BC making great strides toward establishing a College of Counselling Therapists in BC under the Health Professions Act, to regulate the profession for the health and safety of the public.

- Employ a relational process based on the ethical use of competencies to facilitate human change. Address wellness, relationships, personal growth, mental health, and psychological distress.

- Can help with assessment, some diagnoses, treatment planning, counselling therapy, and necessary referrals.  [www.ccpa.ca](http://www.ccpa.ca) [www.bcacc.ca](http://www.bcacc.ca)
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Social Workers, MSW, RSW...

- Often found in public sector (MCFD) or non profit community agencies, but can be private counsellors as well. Some SW are counsellor/therapists, some are not – depending on their training.

- Free if public sector/government office, non profit, or EFAP, otherwise private and $100/hour and up.

- Well governed by the BC College of Social Workers.

- Can help with assessment, some diagnoses, treatment planning, sometimes counselling therapy, and necessary referrals.

  www.bccollegeofsocialworkers.ca  www.bcasw.org
Who are the players in the MH support network?

*Who’s who in the zoo, and what do they do?*

**Addictions/Mental health/Detox & Rehab Counsellors**

- Often found in public sector (Island Health, Mental Health and Substance Use) or non-profit community agencies (shelters, transition houses, detox facilities), but can be private as well (high cost treatment centers).

- A mix of education, training, and skill sets — ideally an employer has vetted their training and abilities and hired accordingly, or check for degrees/registrations (see previous slides).

- Can help with assessment, treatment planning, sometimes counselling therapy, and necessary referrals.
Who are the players in the MH support network?  
Who’s who in the zoo, and what do they do?

Naturopathic Doctors, ND

- Are a great starting place to seek help with any mental health concern, based on your preference for approaches to illness and wellness.

- Hold and under graduate degree, and a 4 year naturopathic medicine degree.

- Possible coverage through group insurance benefits, or fee per visit. Not covered through MSP.

- Regulated by the College of Naturopathic Physician’s of British Columbia [www.cnpbc.bc.ca](http://www.cnpbc.bc.ca)

- Can help with assessment, diagnosis, medications, other treatment planning, and necessary referrals.
Who are the players in the MH support network?

Who’s who in the zoo, and what do they do?

Psychologists, R.Psych.

- Hold a Doctoral Degree in Psychology.
- Assess (psychometric testing) and diagnose behavioral, emotional, cognitive, and mental disorders. *May* use psychotherapy in treatment.
- Found in: schools, hospitals, health clinics, jails, businesses, courts, social welfare agencies, rehab centers.
- *May* be free if in public sector or if covered by insurance/benefits. Private pay $200/hour and up.
- Regulated by the College of Psychologists of British Columbia [www.collegeofpsychologists.bc.ca](http://www.collegeofpsychologists.bc.ca)
Who are the players in the MH support network?
Who’s who in the zoo, and what do they do?

Psychiatrists

- Hold a Medical Degree and a 5 year residency in Psychiatry, regulated by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC.
- Treat mental illness such as (not limited to) depression, bipolar, schizophrenia, anxiety, psychosis, addiction.
- Can prescribe medications for mental illness and may combine them with psychotherapy.
- Generally accessed through GP referral, or MH counsellor referral. Wait lists are often long.
- Generally free covered through MSP. [www.psychiatrybc.ca](http://www.psychiatrybc.ca)
Summary: things to consider when choosing a mental health professional.

- Do they do assessment and diagnosis?
- Do they prescribe medications?
- Are they specialized and experienced with counselling/psychotherapy?
- What will I have to pay?
- What is the access or referral route and how long will it take?
You know you best:

Knowing when its time to seek help. Be honest with yourself, and listen to the people that care about you.

Challenge personal or workplace culture of “suck it up” or “tough it out”.

Educate yourself about your options for seeking help, and offering help to others. Knowledge is power: Empower yourself!

Exert autonomy over your treatment plan: you have a say! Trust your gut! What FEELS right to you, what feels most helpful?

Self-advocate, use your voice, make choices for your mental health.
Barriers to accessing MH supports:

- Personal beliefs, assumptions, misconceptions, generalizations
- Stigma, stigma, stigma
- Workplace culture around supporting mental health
- Money, and other costs
- **Fears and worries:**
  - Confidentiality, anonymity, small town...
  - Opening a well sealed can of worms.
  - Negative self stigma/labelling; weak, failure, nuts, crazy....
  - Guilt: letting people down, can’t handle it, needing time off work.
  - Stress involved in addressing the issue: time off, appointments, effort toward change, easier to avoid.
Benefits of receiving support:

**INCREASED**
- Feeling well, feeling better
- Cognitive functions
- Energy
- Resilience and coping skills
- Education around effective self care and prevention
- Success as a person, partner, parent, employee, etc.

**DECREASED**
- Stress
- Irritability
- Substance use and other self harm or addictive behaviors
- Medical issues and health concerns
- Symptoms of depression, anxiety, etc.
You can play an important role in the MH network at your workplace:

Employers, HR, safety reps, EFAP reps, caring co-workers, can all help to support mental health by:

- Talking about the importance of a healthy workplace and following through on initiatives to make it happen (ex. Mental health first aid)
- Keeping informed about resources and supports, and spreading the word.
- Model approachability, trust, confidentiality, compassion.
- Make health and wellness information readily available to employees, and strive to reach family members as well (ex. posters, newsletters, business cards, webinars, online courses, lunch and learns).
- Don’t ignore the signs. A “head in the sand culture” is NOT SAFE or HEALTHY.
SHARE IT. DON’T WEAR IT.
IT’S TIME TO SPEAK UP ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH.
Key take aways:

- Be self-aware, and observant of others: Identify signs and symptoms and know when it's time to seek help.

- Know who to call – take the first step to accessing MH support (GP, EFAP)

- You are the expert. Be discerning about your MH care, trust your gut as to what feels good and helpful.

- Once you feel better, STAY BETTER: maintenance and prevention through……

- THE 5 KEYS TO SELF CARE: nutrition, sleep, exercise, connection in relationships, reduced addictive and harmful behaviors.
Resources for supporting MH in the workplace

(Google to access the websites)

- Guarding Minds at Work.
- CMHA: Not Myself Today.
- CMHA of BC: Safe and Sound training.
- CCOHS: Healthy Minds at Work.
- Workplace Strategies for Mental Health.
- Upper Island Counselling, EFAP
- Mental Health First Aid
- CMHA: Workforce Mental Health Collaborative
- BC First Responders Mental Health.
- Here to Help (mental health and substance use).
- Working Through it (video resources).
- Island Health; Mental Health and Substance Use

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I welcome your comments and questions.

Thank you for having me.

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~ Kelsi Baine ~