

# Building Resilience: One Step at a Time

## Psychological PPE: Your Own PPE

*Personal protective equipment (PPE) is specialized equipment worn by an individual to protect them from contracting or spreading infectious agents. PPE is essential because it allows healthcare workers to feel safe when they are doing their job.*

***PPE protects workers' physical health, but what about mental health and wellbeing?***

**Psychological PPE** is the awareness that healthcare workers need to be knowledgeable and have access to resources and strategies to protect their mental welfare. Let us not forget that not all stress is negative. It is the balance of knowing when it is too much. Just like knowing what level of PPE is necessary for the situation. Sometimes it will be an awareness of potential risk, and other times it will be full protective clothing and respiratory equipment.

### **Why is psychological PPE necessary?**

- Protects us from stress and other harmful behaviors
- Improves self-care, resilience, work ethic
- Reduces burnout and fatigue
- May minimize more severe mental health conditions

### **How is it similar to Medical PPE?**

- It is an easier concept for staff to understand and integrate because of previous knowledge about medical PPE.
- Just like medical PPE, you can't order psychological PPE the day you need it. You must be prepared with psychological PPE strategies before encountering stressors.
- Medical PPE expires, and so does psychological PPE—you need to check in with yourself like how you would check the seal of a mask or type of PPE for the situation you are in.

### **Examples of Psychological PPE**

*These are some examples of strategies to be incorporated into everyday routines to improve resilience and prevent burnout.*

- Practicing mindfulness, meditation, express gratitude
- Develop or utilize support buddy systems in the workplace
- Connect with friends and family—laugh, play, be lighthearted
- Take breaks during work and also outside of work
- Take care of your body—nourish yourself, exercise, hydrate, work on sleep hygiene
- Talk to professionals when you are not sure, feel alone, need help

**I will try these psychological PPE strategies to protect myself from stress and burnout:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Additional Resources**

- [BC Medical Journal article expands on idea of peer support groups as psychological PPE](#)
- [BMJ, medical leadership journal, explains importance of psychological PPE during COVID-19 pandemic](#)