

PSYCHOSOCIAL DISASTER NETWORK

A Virtual Hub for Psychosocial Disaster Preparedness and Recovery

FEBRUARY 2021



Hello PDN! How is everyone doing? We hope you are staying safe and being well. Have you seen our online community on Basecamp? Click [here](#) to join!

This newsletter edition contains information on emergency tips, social isolation and loneliness, community development, workday exercises, and more.

ALBERTA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY: HOW CAN YOU PREPARE FOR EXTREME COLD?

Winter in Alberta has been fairly mild this year, but colder temperatures tend to sneak up on us. Here is a [tweet](#) from the Environment and Climate Change Canada Twitter page. Everyone in Alberta should know how to stay safe in these life-threatening conditions.

Take one minute to watch this [video](#) for some tips on how you can prepare for extreme cold to reflect the week we just experienced. Prepare now so you don't get caught in the cold.



RESOURCES

[Age-friendly Communities and Social Connectedness](#)

[Alberta Council of Women's Shelters](#)

[Anti-Racism Framework](#)

[Caring Dads: Helping Fathers Value their Children Program](#)

[Calgary Community Development Learning Initiative](#)

[Changing Thinking Patterns](#)

[COVID-19 and Eating Disorders Blog](#)

[Get Prepared: 60 Second Emergency Tips](#)

[Home Not Alone: LBGTQ2S+ Isolation Support](#)

[Human Dignity Conference](#)

[Métis Nation of Alberta](#)

[Mini-guide to Help Employees' Mental Health Through Winter](#)

[Mindfulness Course for Healthcare Workers](#)

[Together Alberta](#)

[Virtual School Tips](#)

[Work-Life Wellness and Remote Work](#)

To sign-up for our online community on Basecamp, please click this link: <https://3.basecamp.com/4684623/join/K4X4iSQQ1yza>.

To subscribe, ask questions, or share resources, email: Shanelle and Becky at HPDIP.MH.EarlyID@ahs.ca.



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NEW! SOCIAL ISOLATION AND LONELINESS

The pandemic has been a challenging time especially for those experiencing social isolation and loneliness. The [toolkit](#) created by Alberta Health Services provides important information on social isolation and loneliness for organizations.

Please share this toolkit widely and use it as a tool to support your community. The [poster](#) provides resources and information for individuals.



UPCOMING TRAINING AND WORKSHOPS

Dates	Workshop	How to Register
Ongoing	Psychosocial Disaster Learning Series: Chapter 1: Psychosocial Needs During a Disaster Chapter 2: PFA in Disaster Response Chapter 3: The Four Principles of PFA Chapter 4: Self-Care During a Disaster Chapter 5: Principles in Action	Community access: https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/info/Page17072.aspx AHS staff access: MyLearningLink
Ongoing	Psychological First Aid (PFA) for a Pandemic – General Webinar	https://www.strathcona.ca/community-families/well-being-and-mental-health/psychological-first-aid/
Ongoing	Learn how to manage stress in challenging times Free, virtual AHS workshops help identify and transform stress	https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/news/psa/ne-psa-amh-heartmath-online-sessions.pdf
March 2 nd , 2021	Transform Your Stress (Condensed) - Psychosocial Response to Disaster – Part 1	AHS: visit MyLearningLink
March 5 th , 2021	PFA for a Pandemic – Child, Youth & Family Version	https://register.rockyview.ab.ca/public/courses.cfm
March 17 th , 2021	PFA for a Pandemic – General Webinar	AHS: visit MyLearningLink Community: email Becky: HPDIP.MH.EarlyID@ahs.ca
March 23 rd , 2021	Transform Your Stress (Condensed) - Psychosocial Response to Disaster – Part 2	AHS: visit MyLearningLink
April 14 th , 2021	PFA for a Pandemic – Child, Youth & Family Version	AHS: visit MyLearningLink Community: email Becky: HPDIP.MH.EarlyID@ahs.ca

If you would like to organize a closed workshop for your group/community, please email: HPDIP.MH.EarlyID@ahs.ca.

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Preventing and recognizing burnout and compassion fatigue while working with older adults



While all health service providers (HSP) are vulnerable to the impacts of burnout and compassion fatigue, those working with older adults have unique stresses that may make them at greater risk.^{1,2,3} HSP caring for older adults are managing a heavy workload, often with staff shortages and a lack of social support or recognition.^{3,4} Additionally, many older adults have declining physical and mental health that requires a lot of support to meet their needs.^{1,4} With COVID-19, older adults' needs are even greater as they are at a greater risk of experiencing severe illness and longer periods of social isolation.^{5,6}

What is burnout?

Burnout is a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion related to continued stress at work.^{7,8} Burnout can lead to other health implications, such as headaches, digestive disorders, anxiety or depression.⁴ It is often a slow process that happens in stages:⁹

1. Mental and physical exhaustion by one's work
2. Indifference and cynicism towards clients and work
3. A feeling of professional failure and helplessness
4. A feeling of personal failure and self-hatred
5. Complete burnout: feeling numb and performing tasks without commitment.

Before experiencing complete burnout, HSP may experience "presenteeism." Presenteeism is when you are physically at work, but are unable to perform at your normal capacity.¹⁰ This may be due to physical or mental illness or other reasons, such as perceived lack of support at work, work-life conflict or stress. Presenteeism has been associated with poorer physical health and mental well-being.¹¹

What is compassion fatigue?

Compassion fatigue is the cost of witnessing and absorbing others' pain and suffering at work.^{12,13,14}

It is important to address as it can lead to mental health problems, such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety or depression.¹³

While burnout can affect any profession, compassion fatigue is experienced by those in caring professions who are exposed to the traumatic experiences of the people in their care.^{2,8} Compassion fatigue can emerge suddenly and result in a sense of helplessness.¹² It can be hard to spot the signs.⁸



Compassion fatigue can also affect nonpaid caregivers, such as family members and friends.

The Regional Geriatric Programs of Ontario developed the [Caregiver Strategies Handbook](#) as a resource for caregivers.

What are some of the signs and symptoms of compassion fatigue?^{11,15}

- Difficulty focusing or making decisions
- Feeling irritable, anxious, overwhelmed or detached
- Increase use of alcohol or other substances
- Headaches
- Sleeping problems
- Nausea
- Depression



The [Professional Quality of Life Scale \(PROQOL\)](#) is a validated self-administered assessment tool that measures burnout and compassion fatigue for people who work in helping professions.¹⁶ It is a screening tool that is designed to understand how one is feeling, as experienced over the last 30 days.

Note: The PROQOL should not be used as a diagnostic tool. If you have concerns based on your scores, you should discuss them with a physical or mental health professional.

How can I avoid burnout and compassion fatigue?

Practise self-care^{14,17}

- Get enough sleep
- Exercise regularly
- Eat healthy foods
- Practise mindfulness
- Set SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely) self-care goals
- Schedule time for the activities that bring you joy

Seek help

- Be aware of the signs and symptoms of burnout and compassion fatigue⁹
- Use formal supports, such as your family doctors or employee assistance program (EAP), which many employers provide for free, confidential support
- The Government of Ontario has provided a [list of supports for HSP during COVID-19](#)

Lean on your support system¹⁷

- Connect with your coworkers or supervisor
- Ask for support from your friends and family

Set boundaries

- Work towards establishing a work-life balance^{8,9}
- Set emotional boundaries – balancing compassion with professional distance¹⁴
- Recognize boundaries may change over time¹⁴
- If possible, limit your caseload or end the workday with a positive activity¹⁷
- Limit friends and family's expectations for you to solve their problems since you work in a helping profession¹⁷



Agency leadership and managers have an important role to play in building a supportive work environment through policies and procedures and promoting available resources.^{2,6,7} For example, creating manageable workloads, improving coordination among teams, supporting self-care activities, engaging team members in decision making, providing recognition, and offering flexible schedules, enough time off and professional development opportunities.^{2,3,4,7}

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BACK PAIN relief

chair edition

DAREBEE WORKOUT @ darebee.com

Hold each pose for 20 seconds.



cat pose



cow pose



seated eagle pose



figure 4



seated twist



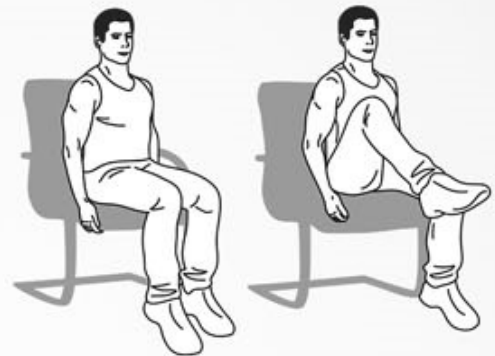
forward bend

chair cycle

DAREBEE WORKOUT @ darebee.com



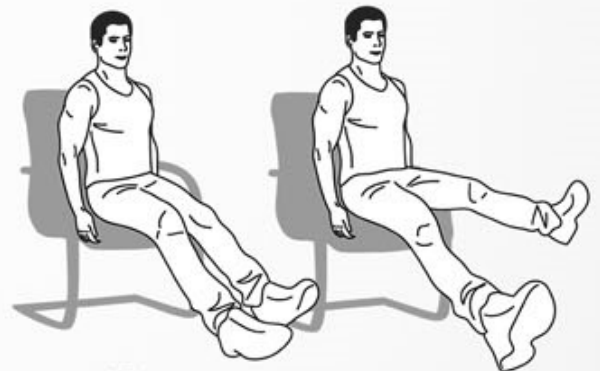
20 cycling



10 knee-ins



20 cycling



10 leg extensions



20 cycling



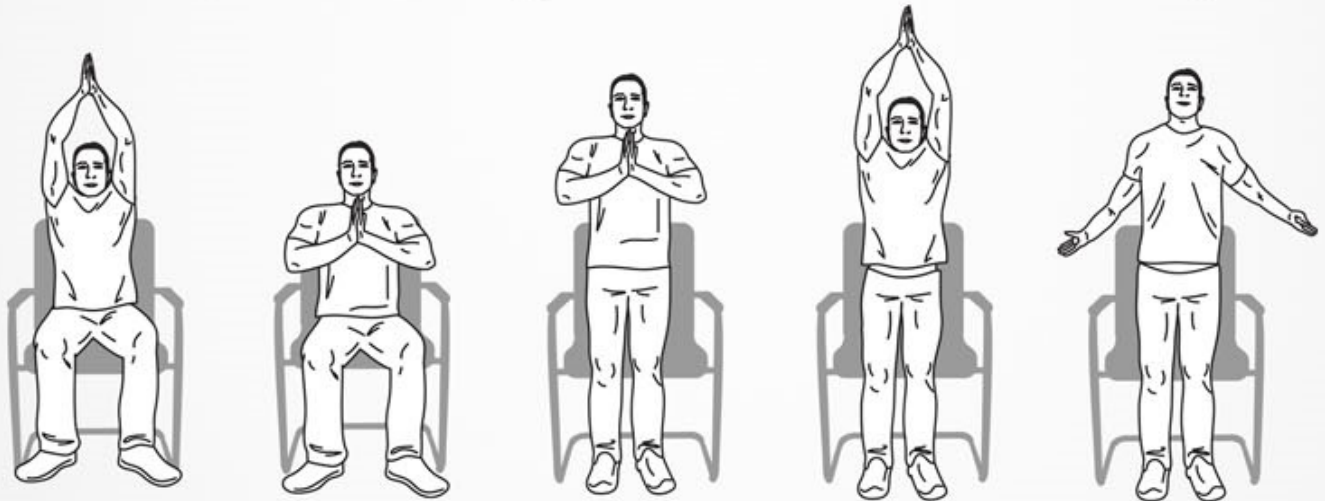
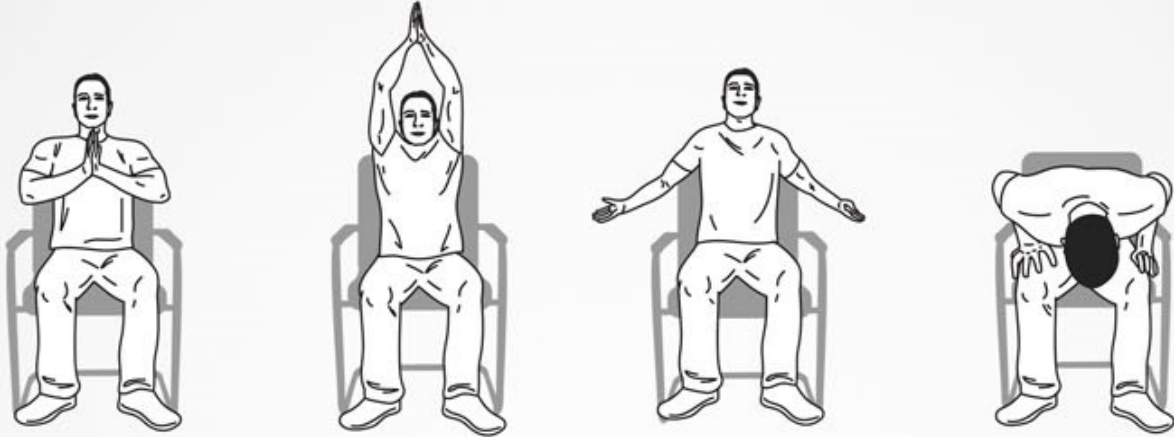
10 slow kicks

Sun Salutation

DAREBEE WORKOUT © darebee.com

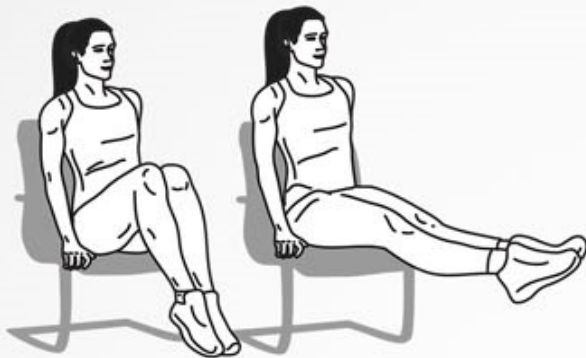
chair edition

Hold each pose for 10 seconds and move to the next one.

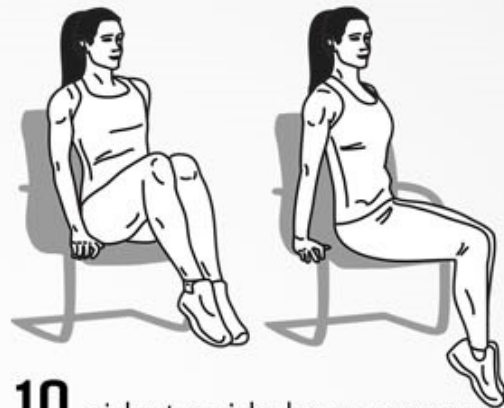


chair abs

DAREBEE WORKOUT © darebee.com



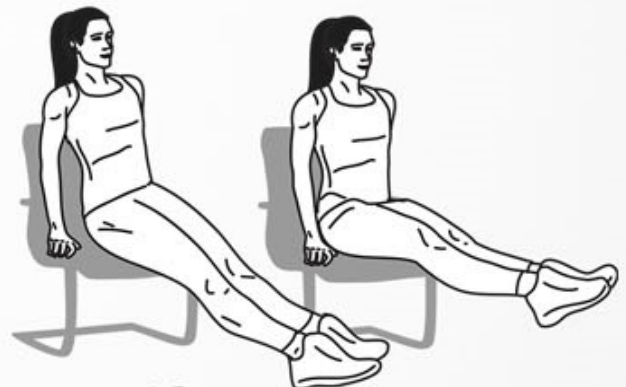
10 crunch kicks



10 side-to-side knee sweeps



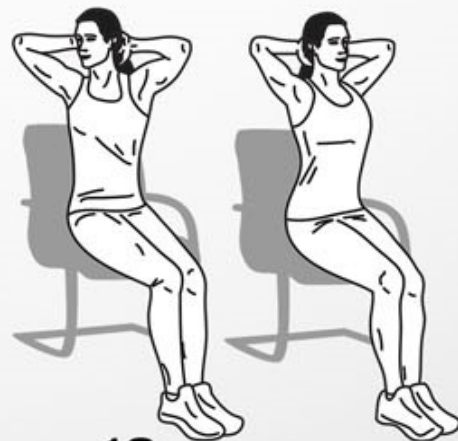
10 knee-to-elbows



10 leg raises



10 cycling crunches



10 sitting twists

How you can respond to domestic violence during COVID-19



If you or someone you love is facing domestic abuse, here are a few suggestions that may make this uncertain time feel a little bit safer:

Create a safety plan.

A safety plan is a personalized, practical plan that includes ways to remain safe while in a relationship, planning to leave, or after you leave. Women's shelters safety plan with survivors, friends, family members, and anyone who is concerned about their own safety or the safety of someone else.

You and your partner may be told by either or both of your employers to work remotely to limit physical interaction. Having a safety plan laid out can help you to protect yourself during this stressful time. When a mother is at risk, her children should also be considered at risk, particularly when families are spending more time together during COVID-19. Safety planning that considers children is often recommended but can be more complicated. Connect with a shelter to safety plan with their trained professionals. Keeping a mother safe is recognized as the best way to keep children safe.

Here are some resources for thinking about general safety planning:

- [Creating a Safety Plan](#)
- [Planning for Safety with Families](#)
- [Safety Planning with Children and Youth](#)

During COVID-19, consider the sanitation protocols suggested by health authorities and recommended physical distancing in your community in your planning. It could mean survivors reaching out to more trusted friends, family, colleagues, or neighbours than they normally would to increase avenues to get help and/or support safer escapes in emergencies.

ACWS member shelters are doing everything they can to stay open and support survivors in a safe and responsible way. You do not have to stay in a shelter to get help from one. You can call a shelter to get counselling and support with safety planning.

You can call **1-866-331-3933** to speak with a women's shelter for help creating your safety plan.

Set up a safe signal with someone you trust.

Consider setting up a coded text message that you send to a parent or sibling, such as "we are out of milk", or, "the kids are having fun", that is really a request for them to call 911. Creating a signal with a neighbour, such as lowering the blind in a certain window, as a signal for the neighbour to call 911 is another example.

When someone is in immediate danger, contact police. Even if they are in quarantine or self-isolating due to illness – the police will respond.

Support defusing strategies.

No one is ever responsible for the abusive behavior of another person, yet people living in domestic violence are often already experts at employing defusing strategies to try to minimize the impacts of the abuse and protect their loved ones.

Understand that the current situation may be used to justify an abuser's need to control others and may worsen the abuse in the home. Consider if there are additional ways to help keep the calm - especially things that those outside the family might do to help. Encouraging opportunities for exercise outside, communicating about a non-violent entertaining Netflix series or movie, sharing boardgames or online activities to help keep children occupied, etc. may help de-escalate conflict.

It is rarely acknowledged, but we know that people living in abusive situations use many kinds of survival and resistance strategies. Domestic violence can tragically escalate to homicide, and thus, Crisis Intervention Workers suggest that survivors say and do whatever they need to do to keep themselves and their families safe. These may look like: avoiding arguing near the top of a staircase, avoiding fights in the kitchen where there are many sharp objects, etc.

- [Read more about these ideas here is a resource about resistance.](#)

Practice self-care.

COVID-19 is causing uncertainty for many people and getting through this time while experiencing abuse can feel overwhelming. Taking time for your health and wellness can make a big difference in how you feel. For example, go for walks to get out of the house on a regular basis.

- [Learn more about how to build in self-care while staying safe](#)

If you're a friend or family member of someone experiencing abuse, you may not be able to visit them in person. Seeing someone you care about being hurt is stressful. Remind yourself that you can't make decisions for someone else, but you can encourage your loved one to think about their wellbeing, safety plan, and practice self-care while they are in their home. You can set up a safe signal with them if they are in danger (e.g., a coded text message or a signal from the window).

Reach out for help.

While people are encouraged to stay at home, you may feel isolated from your friends and family. Even if you are isolated, try to maintain social connections online or over the phone, if it is safe to do so, and try to stick to your daily routines as much as possible.

You don't have to stay in a shelter to get support from one. Shelters offer counselling and support to women in the community as well, and shelters can help you find a safe place to stay.

*If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call **911**.
To speak with a women's shelter, call our 24/7 hotline at **1-866-331-3933**.
To locate a shelter near you, visit acws.ca/shelters or sheltersafe.ca.
If you suspect a child is at risk, you must report it. **1-800-387-5437 (KIDS)***

Adapted from sources: the National Domestic Violence Hotline & Sherry Hamby Ph.D. via [Psychology Today](#). Families Thrive, Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter, Government of Alberta, Government of British Columbia Department of Justice, and with consultation from Alberta shelter experts.

2020-04-08