LUNCH 'N' LEARN

TAKE'N5: A Collegial Peer Support Model
to Mitigate Psychological Stress Injury in the Workplace
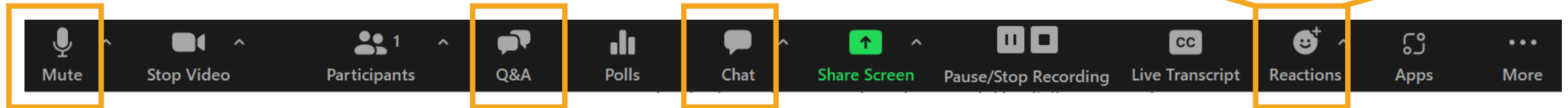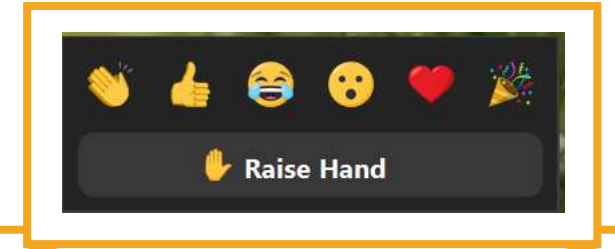
Dr. Jo-Ann Vis, Lakehead University

November 28, 2023

Alliance for Healthier Communities
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Housekeeping

- Microphones are muted by default.
- You may enter questions through the Q&A panel at any time.
- Please use the Chat function for technical assistance.
- During the Q&A period, you may use the "raise hand" function (under "reactions"), and we'll unmute you when we call on you.

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Acknowledgement of Traditional Indigenous Territories

We recognize that the work of the Alliance for Healthier Communities and our members takes place across what is now called Ontario, on traditional territories of Indigenous people who have lived here since time immemorial and have deep connections to these lands. We further acknowledge that Ontario is covered by 46 treaties, agreements and land purchases, as well as unceded territories. We are grateful for the opportunity to live, meet and work on this territory.

Ontario continues to be home to vibrant, diverse Indigenous communities who have distinct and specific histories, needs, and assets as well as constitutionally protected and treaty rights. We honour this diversity and respect the knowledge, leadership and governance frameworks within Indigenous communities. In recognition of this, we commit to building allyship relationships with First Nation, Inuit and Métis peoples in order to enhance our knowledge and appreciation of the many histories and voices within Ontario. We also commit to sharing and upholding our responsibilities to all who now live on these lands, the land itself, and the resources that make our lives possible.

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Guest Speaker

Dr. Jo-Ann Vis, PhD.

Associate Professor
School of Social Work, Lakehead University

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TAKE'N5: A Collegial Peer Support Model to Mitigate Psychological Stress Injury in the Workplace

Presented by: Dr. Jo-Ann Vis PhD

Why Research Collegial Peer Support?

- Norwest Community Health Centres (NWCHCs) provide services, including primary care, to at-risk individuals with significant health disparities and health inequities.
- Employees experienced vicarious trauma, secondary trauma, disenfranchised grief and critical incident exposure
- NWCHC wellness study results reflected other research findings concerning impact of psychological stress injury (Geisler et al., 2019)
- Collegial peer support has been shown to mitigate the effects of psychological stress injury (Lowery & Stokes, 2005; Prati & Pietrantoni, 2010)
- In response to this research, NWCHCs launched a peer support system informed by the TAKE'N5 model

Primary Occupational Trauma©
Frontline exposure experience missing in the literature as its own category

- Unavoidable occupational hazard for frontline workers

- Immediate and mirrors symptoms of Acute Stress Disorder (DSM5) and can lead to PTSI if symptoms remain unattended

- Permeates work and home

- Related to direct recipient of perceived or actual physical threat to safety, exposure to unsafe environment, sudden loss and grief

- Triggers related to work environment with the likelihood of reoccurrence due to job role – inability to stabilize ones work environment

- Remedy is self-awareness, accessing support and treatment of self

Research Timeline

APRIL 2021

Initial Meeting and Research Planning

APRIL 2021- JUNE 2021

Development of app features, materials, surveys, consent letters, and formation of peer support volunteer team

JUNE 17, 2021

Peer support volunteer team trained on the app and TAKE'N5 model

AUGUST 19, 2021

Peer support app launch day at NWCHC

SEPTEMBER 2021- JANUARY 2022

Peer support app engagement and strategy meetings

JANUARY 2022-MAY 2022

Creation of a new survey for all NWCHC employees and program implementation research to increase usage

MAY 2022- DECEMBER 2022

Implementation of survey findings and peer support program maintenance

Two components of the program

- App based technology
  - Self care resources
  - Peer contact
  - Monitoring of usage and completed support

- TAKE'N5 Training Model
  - Education concerning PSI and POT
 - Self care strategies
  - Peer support guide

Peer support in the workplace

- Common work experience
- Trusted relationship formed
- Understanding of impact of exposure to critical incidents
- Awareness of workplace resources and processes
- Professional understanding of the importance of confidentiality
- Able to assess for change in behavior
- Able to follow up

TAKE'N5 Highlights
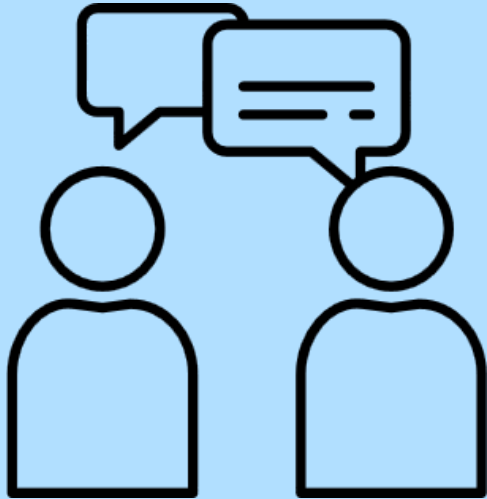
The TAKE'N5 model highlights:

1. the need to say what one went through

2. the need to do in the moment

3. the need to plan for self-care

4. the need for affirmation

5. the need for follow-up

Peer Support Strengths and Challenges: Implementation

Strengths

- 98% of the survey respondents indicated that they were aware of NWCHCs peer support program
- Survey participants stated that a need for self-care, resources, and support from their peers influenced them to download the NWCHC peer support program
- Technologically facilitated peer support presents two major benefits to employees including socialization and catharsis, while also being cost-effective for organizations (Webster et al., 2019).

Challenges

- Survey results revealed that promoting the peer support app through email resulted in low program uptake
- Results also revealed confidentiality concerns prevented employees from participating in the peer support program
- Discomfort with using technology to request peer support was another noted challenge by participants
- Participants noted they felt more comfortable reaching out to peers in person for support, rather than over technology (Jenkins et al., 2021)

Peer Support Strengths and Challenges: Sustainability and Maintenance

Strengths	Challenges
• Research supports the need for peer supporter training ((Creamer at al., 2012; Wogrin et al., 2021; Semmer et al., 2008; Mancini, 2016). • Survey responses from NWCHCs participants revealed that the majority of peers (60% 'strongly agreed' and 40% 'agreed') felt that they would be able to support their coworkers who are visibly upset after receiving TAKE'N5 peer training. • Another strength of NWCHCs peer support program is the continual monitoring of the usage of the program and connection feedback forms. • Research shows that monitoring the number of program participants is critical in sustaining peer support programs (Arora et al., 2017; Damschroder et al., 2009)	• A theme highlighted in NWCHCs survey responses and throughout the literature is the hesitancy for peers to confide in coworkers with whom they do not already have a trusted relationship (Linnan et al., 2013) • Participants of NWCHCs peer support program felt that they would prefer informal one-on-one peer support activities instead. • Studies also indicate that collegial peer support programs face issues surrounding time constraints in the workplace (Walker & Brady, 2013). NWCHCs peer support conversations took an average of 30 minutes, which may act as a barrier to providing support to peers in addition to regular job duties.

Conclusion

- The most significant finding from the NWCHCs survey results and throughout the literature is the need for peer support training (Avazani et al., 2021; Linnan et al., 2013; Vis & Tranter, 2021; Wogrin et al., 2019) regardless of the peer support method being used.
- Based on this finding, it is recommended that employees of an organization receive peer support training so that effective informal peer support can occur in the workplace.

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Thank you!

For any questions, please contact
Dr. Jo-Ann Vis at jvis@lakeheadu.ca

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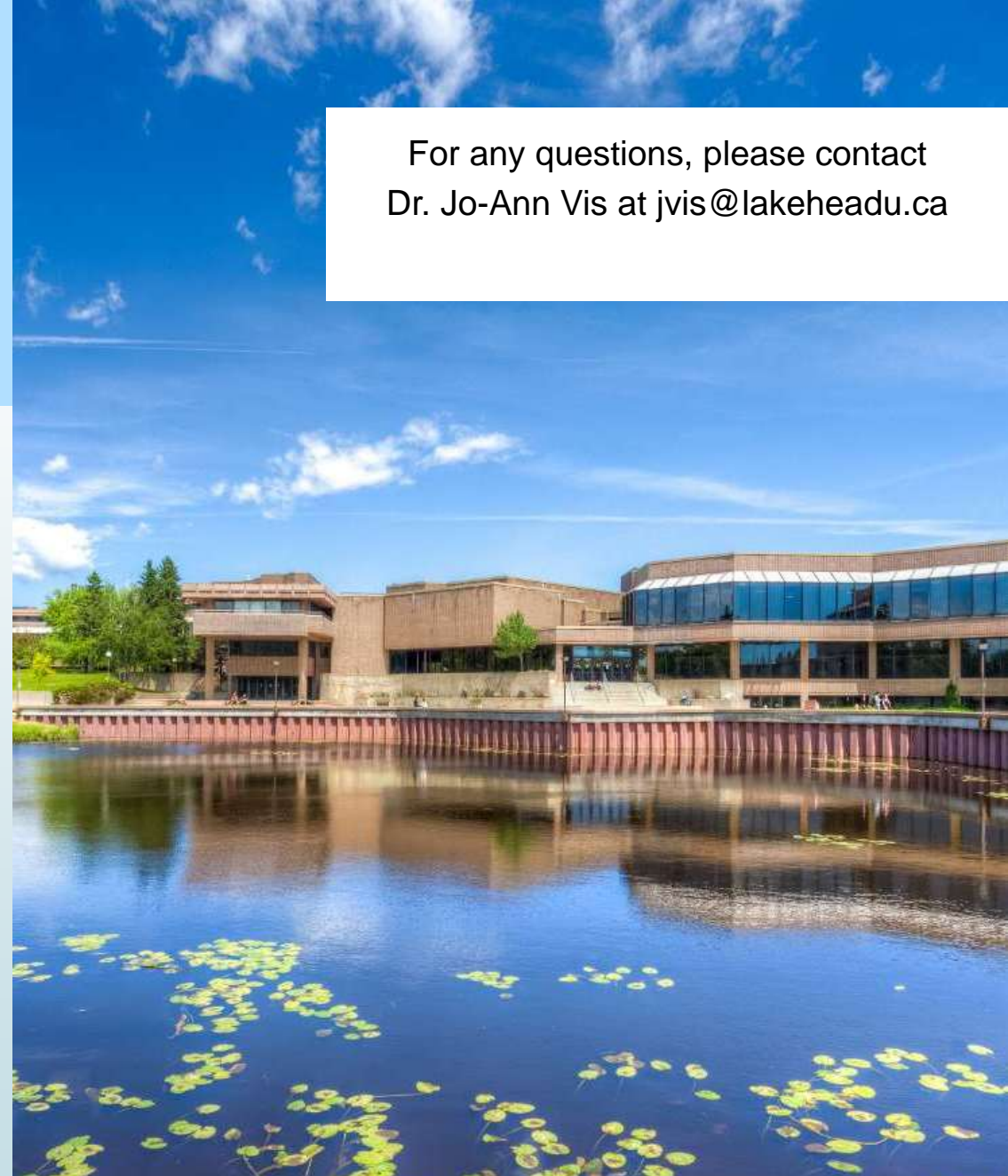
Questions & Discussion

Thank You!
Please complete our evaluation survey

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