



MHPSS Bulletin

March-April

A bulletin to connect people, networks, and organizations across British Columbia, fostering the sharing of resources and building knowledge in the field of mental health and psychosocial support in emergency settings. Past issues of the bulletin and recordings of Lunch and Learn webinars will be available on our website using the button below.

[Provincial Psychosocial Services](#)

Education & Learning Opportunities

New! Public Online Course (Free) by Provincial Psychosocial Services

- [Eco-Anxiety and Climate Distress](#): Learn about ecological/ environmental stress and distress, how it affects you and your community, and ways to mitigate it.
- [Getting Through Tough Days](#): Learn about how stress affects you and practical ways that can help you get through those particularly tough days.

All courses and trainings listed in this Bulletin are voluntary and intended to provide additional learning opportunities. They do not replace or fulfill any mandatory training requirements set by an organization.

Lunch and Learn Webinar

April 1 at Noon-1pm

Dr. Connor Gallik, COMPASS Program

The Compass Program at BC Children's Hospital is a provincial mental health and substance use consultation service for professionals supporting children and youth up to age 25. Compass connects callers with an interdisciplinary team of mental health

specialists who provide consultation on things like clinical approaches, resource navigation, strategies for responding to mental health concerns, and medication-related questions. In addition to consultation services, the Compass Program offers education and training to build capacity and strengthen mental health supports within communities across the province. **Link:** [Compass BC](#)

Speaker

Dr. Connor Gallik, PhD, is a Registered Psychologist with the COMPASS Program at BC Children's Hospital, where he works with children, adolescents, and families across British Columbia. He has a particular clinical and professional interest in supporting transgender and gender-diverse youth, as well as strengthening mental health care through evidence-based and affirming practice. Dr. Gallik brings experience from both inpatient and community mental health settings and is passionate about collaboration, education, and capacity-building for health-care providers. Since relocating from Seattle, he is pleased to call Canada home and is committed to advancing accessible, compassionate pediatric mental health care.

Please register in advance but feel free to share the invitation. This session will be recorded and sent out to registrants as well as hosted on our [website's education page](#) which also contains past bulletins and past Lunch and Learn recordings.

<https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/0c633bcb-706c-4455-8848-7084b790b7ca@31f660a5-192a-4db3-92ba-ca424f1b259e>

Email Nikki to get added directly to the distribution list for all future webinar invitations edu.pps@phsa.ca

2026 VCH/ FH Seasonal Readiness Webinar for NGOs

Vancouver Coastal Health and Fraser Health invite you to join the annual heat and wildfire smoke preparedness webinar to help your organization prepare for the upcoming season.

Feel welcome to share this event with other people supporting community during heat and wildfire smoke events. The webinar will be recorded for those who are unable to attend.

Agenda:

Fraser Health and Vancouver Coastal: Health impacts, updates, recommendations,

and resources.

SRO-Collaborative/ UBC: New report on indoor temperatures in SROs and community recommendations.

Provincial Psychosocial Services, PHSA: Climate anxiety training and resources.
Presenter: Dr. Nikki Fowler, RN

VCH Public Health: Hot tips from the outreach teams.

Q & A with a regional Medical Health Officer. An opportunity for VCH and FHA to answer your questions and to better understand how we can support non-governmental organizations during extreme heat and smoke events.

[Click to Register](#)

Engaging and Useful Links to Explore

To learn more about **managing the news and uncertain times**, check out [How News Consumption Affects Mental Health: Finding a Balanced Approach | CMHA North and West Vancouver Branch](#)

This is a great resource on a wide range of wellness and mental health issues, published by **Health Canada** and the **Public Health Agency of Canada**.
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/topics/mental-health-wellness.html>

The number of **people experiencing homelessness** is growing across Canada. You can learn more about their struggles, resilience, barriers, and the urgent need for action at [The Homeless Hub | Library of Resources on Homelessness](#)

Finding Balance in a World of Difficult News

Author: David Hutton

This article has been edited with the use of AI (ChatGPT)

It often feels as though there is very little positive news on television these days. With recent events such as the Tumbler Ridge February 10th tragedy, the conflicts in places like Ukraine, Gaza and Iran, as well as concerns closer to home such as tariffs and the rising cost of living, the news can sometimes seem continuous and overwhelming. We now understand that repeatedly watching distressing images and absorbing a steady stream of negative news can affect how we feel. At the same time, it can be difficult to

step away—even when we recognize that taking a break might be good for us. So I thought this might be a helpful reminder for all of us—myself included.

Research suggests that our reactions to distressing news are partly rooted in how our brains are wired. Human beings naturally pay more attention to potential threats than to positive information—a tendency often described as *negativity bias*^[1]. Neuroscience research shows that brain regions involved in threat detection, particularly the amygdala and related networks, respond quickly to signals of danger, helping us rapidly identify and react to potential threats^[2]. While this response is helpful from an evolutionary perspective, it also means that repeated exposure to distressing images or stories can activate stress responses even when we are far removed from the events themselves.

Modern news media can intensify this effect because we are often exposed to distressing events repeatedly and in vivid detail. Research examining media exposure following crises has shown that high levels of news consumption are associated with increased anxiety, stress, and post-traumatic symptoms among the general public^[3]. Studies following major disasters have also found that repeated viewing of graphic or emotionally intense news coverage can amplify collective stress responses^[4]. In other words, even when we are not directly affected by an event, constant exposure to distressing news can still have a real impact on how we feel.

One of the challenges is that the impact of media exposure can creep up on us gradually. Many of us follow the news because we care about what is happening in our communities and around the world. Yet when difficult events dominate the headlines day after day, the steady stream of troubling information can begin to shape our mood and outlook without us fully noticing. We may find ourselves checking updates repeatedly, scrolling through stories late at night, or leaving the news playing in the background.

At the same time, it is important to remember that the news does not always reflect the full picture of what is happening in the world. News coverage tends to focus on dramatic or troubling events, while acts of kindness, resilience, and community support often receive far less attention. Research has shown that exposure to more balanced or constructive information—including stories highlighting resilience and cooperation—can both enhance emotional wellbeing and encourage positive actions^[5]^[6]. Making a conscious effort to also notice and seek out these kinds of stories can help restore a more balanced perspective.

The good news is that there are practical steps we can take to protect our wellbeing while still staying informed. Mental health experts often recommend setting gentle boundaries around media consumption—for example, checking reliable news sources once or twice a day rather than continuously throughout the day^[7]. Taking breaks from screens, spending time outdoors, engaging in physical activity, and connecting with friends or family can help calm the nervous system and restore balance.

For me, writing this is also a reminder to pause and reflect on my own habits. Staying informed matters but so does looking after ourselves. When the news begins to feel

overwhelming, it may be helpful to step back for a while, take a breath, and reconnect with the world immediately around us. Difficult events may dominate the headlines, but they are not the whole story of our communities or our lives.

[1] Soroka, S., Fournier, P., & Nir, L. (2019). Cross-national evidence of a negativity bias in psychophysiological reactions to news. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *116*(38), 18888–18892.

<https://www.pnas.org/doi/full/10.1073/pnas.1908369116>

[2] Kredlow, M. A., Fenster, R. J., Laurent, E. S., Ressler, K. J., & Phelps, E. A. (2022). Prefrontal cortex, amygdala, and threat processing: Implications for stress and PTSD. *Neuropsychopharmacology*, *Jan*;47(1): 247-259

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41386-021-01155-7>

[3] Garfin, D. (2025). Media matters: Media exposure during collective trauma: Challenges and opportunities. International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies.

<https://istss.org/media-matters-media-exposure-during-collective-trauma-challenges-and-opportunities-dana-rose-garfin-phd/>

[4] Holman, E. A., Garfin, D. R., & Silver, R. C. (2024). Graphic media images and collective trauma. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *121* (29).

<https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.2318465121>

[5] Baden, D., McIntyre, K. & Homberg, F (2019) The impact of constructive news on affective and behavioural responses. *Journalism Studies*, *20* (13), 1940–1959. (doi:10.1080/1461670X.2018.1545599).

[6] McIntyre, K. E., & Gibson, R. (2016). Positive News Makes Readers Feel Good: A “Silver-Lining” Approach to Negative News Can Attract Audiences. *Southern Communication Journal*, *81*(5), 304–315. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1041794X.2016.1171892>

[7] Kesner L, Juričková V, Grygarová D, Horáček J. Impact of Media-Induced Uncertainty on Mental Health: Narrative-Based Perspective. *JMIR Ment Health*. 2025 Jun 13;12:e68640. https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12175740/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Definitions

Psychosocial: The term ‘psychosocial’ refers to the dynamic relationship between the psychological dimension of a person and the social dimension of a person. The *psychological* dimension includes the internal, emotional and thought processes, feelings and reactions, and the *social* dimension includes relationships, family and community network, social values and cultural practices. ‘Psychosocial support’ refers to the actions that address both psychological and social needs of individuals, families and communities. (Psychosocial interventions. A Handbook, page 25.)

The title "MHPSS" in this bulletin refers to a broad approach to mental health and psychosocial support in emergencies. It does not signify the endorsement or inclusion of specific services or organizations.

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