

# IIMHL & IIDL Briefing

## Leadership: innovations within a health crisis: Covid-19

Janet Peters 7<sup>th</sup> April 2020

This briefing describes innovations by our member countries to assist them, and other countries and organisations to better support staff during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Five key innovations are described with links for further information.

### 1. The Wellbeing Trust

The Well Being Trust is a national foundation in the US dedicated to advancing a vision of a nation where everyone is well—in mental, social and spiritual health. <https://wellbeingtrust.org/> Led by clinical, community, and policy innovators, Well Being Trust brings an ecosystem approach to prevention, treatment, and recovery for mental health and substance misuse issues, while prioritizing an upstream focus on resilience and well-being in communities.

Many people are alone in quarantine, consuming media all day. Others are trapped in homes with abusers and dysfunction. Alcohol and drug use is rising. In France, reported cases of domestic violence are up by about a third<sup>1</sup>.

Well Being Trust CEO Tyler Norris points to a curve behind that of COVID-19. Every one-percentage-point increase in unemployment leads eventually to a 3.5 percent increase in opioid addiction, so the pandemic's economic effects alone will exacerbate our drug and mental health problems down the road.<sup>2</sup>

Listen to Tyler's podcast: on "**Covid-19 and mental health**" follow the link below. <https://denver-frederick.com/2020/04/01/tyler-norris-ceo-of-well-being-trust-discusses-covid-19-and-mental-health/>

Video "**What is Covid-19?**": <https://youtu.be/HjO8IU7Hb6A>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/02/opinion/mental-health-coronavirus.html>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

## 2. Harvard Business Review: “That discomfort you are feeling is grief”

Scott Berinato sets out his view that “If we can name it as grief, perhaps we can manage it”.

He turned to David Kessler for ideas on how to do that. Kessler is the world’s foremost expert on grief. He co-wrote with Elisabeth Kübler-Ross [\*On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief through the Five Stages of Loss\*](#). His new book adds another stage to the process, [\*Finding Meaning: The Sixth Stage of Grief\*](#). Kessler also has worked for a decade in a three-hospital system in Los Angeles. He served on their biohazards team. His volunteer work includes being an LAPD Specialist Reserve for traumatic events as well as having served on the Red Cross’s disaster services team. He is the founder of [www.grief.com](http://www.grief.com)

Kessler shared his thoughts on why it’s important to acknowledge the grief you may be feeling, how to manage it, and how he believes we will find meaning in it. The conversation is lightly edited for clarity To read the full piece follow the link below:

<https://hbr.org/2020/03/that-discomfort-youre-feeling-is-grief>

## 3. Student Volunteer Army (SVA) in New Zealand



The **Student Volunteer Army (SVA)** is a New Zealand student movement born from a [Facebook](#) page started following the [2011 Christchurch earthquake](#). The network has no military affiliation and is focused on facilitating community action through youth engagement, preparing for disasters and service.<sup>[1]</sup> The clubs and volunteers are supported by the [Volunteer Army Foundation](#) (VAF).

The founder and leader is Sam Johnson, a university student who now has a full-time job as head of the SVA following his graduation from Canterbury University. Disaster responses have still been maintained in the club's skill set, with important roles being played by the SVA in response and in the aftermaths of such major events as the 2016 Kaikoura earthquake, 2017 Port Hills fires, Christchurch mosque shootings as well as various floods<sup>[6]</sup>

Find out more by watching a **TV interview of Sam Johnson launching the high school initiative in February 2020.**

<https://www.tvnz.co.nz/one-news/new-zealand/student-volunteer-army-scheme-hits-secondary-schools>

In March 2020 the Student Volunteer Army launched a national volunteer response to support people impacted by COVID-19.

They did this by supporting essential services across Aotearoa through volunteering and are providing:

- childcare for the tamariki of healthcare professionals and
- we've built a grocery store system for those aged over seventy (& the families of healthcare workers).

The focus of these efforts is to help where they are most needed.

### **Facebook page**

<https://www.facebook.com/StudentVolunteerArmy/>

### **On national TV on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020**

<https://www.facebook.com/StudentVolunteerArmy/>

## **4. In Canada an inspiring movement emerges in response to the coronavirus**

### **Washington Post David Moscrop reports:**

As the number of confirmed Covid-19 cases increases around the world, some people are struggling to keep themselves mentally and physically safe and stable. Some individuals and communities are having a tougher time than others, especially the marginalized.

In Canada, with more than 2,000 confirmed coronavirus cases to date, this challenge has led to the emergence of the “caremonger” movement. Caremongering is cast as the antithesis in name and spirit to fearmongering. Instead of singing doomsday dirges, caremongers are coming together to form networks to support their communities including people who are stuck at home, financially precarious or otherwise in distress.

Groups have sprung up across the country, many organizing through social media platforms. They vary in form and size, from a handful of members to thousands. Some distribute food and supplies while others coordinate and run errands for those unable to do them. And some serve as a platform to organize volunteers.

Amara Possian, Seneca College professor and campaigns director at 350.org, has started one such group in Toronto and worked with other organizers to create how-to guide for setting them up. According to her, there are two sorts of groups now: mutual aid groups and neighborhood pods. The former are “primarily city-wide” and “organized virtually over Facebook,” she says. The latter are “groups of 5 to 30 people who are working to support one another.” Some of the larger Facebook groups are also organizing pods. For more, check this link:

<https://www.iimhl.com/files/docs/20200406.pdf>

## 5. Mental Health Commission of Canada

The Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) leads the development and dissemination of innovative programs and tools to support the mental health and wellness of Canadians.

In times of high anxiety and stress, it's more important than ever to safeguard your mental wellness. That includes stemming the tide of non-essential information and paring down your news consumption.

At the Mental Health Commission of Canada, their commitment is to share credible information and resources about maintaining mental health during this time of crisis, and supporting people managing a mental illness in this new context.

The resources are grouped as follows:

- What's new
- Updates from the MHCC
- Multimedia
- MHCC Covid-19 resources
- External resources
- Ask the experts

<https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/covid19>

With guidance from Dr. Keith Dobson, clinical psychologist and professor at the University of Calgary, the MHCC has compiled the following tips to help Canadians protect their mental health as they strive to safeguard their physical well-being and that of their loved ones.

<https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/news-article/13920/choosing-sources-information-carefully-critical-covid-19-mental-well-being-says>