

Promoting Mental Health in the Workplace during COVID-19: Practicing Acceptance & Mindfulness

Presented by Thrive in Your Workplace in
partnership with Dr. Nicole Andreoli, Ph.D.

About Us: Thrive in Your Workplace

Thrive in Your Workplace is a public-private partnership that helps local employers integrate mental health support into the workplace. We work with employers from across sectors and industries to shape customized workplace mental health strategies and implement workplace mental health programming.

Our goals are to promote employee mental health and connection to mental healthcare.

Today's Facilitators

Rachael Steimnitz, MPH, is a public health professional who helps organizations develop and implement health improvement programs. She currently leads content development and implementation for Thrive in your Workplace, working closely with employers across New York City. Previously, she supported various quality initiatives for Health and Hospitals Corporation (H+H), and directed trainings and programs at the State Office of Mental Health. Rachael has a BA from the New School and a Master's in Public Health in Sociomedical Sciences from the Mailman school of public health at Columbia University.

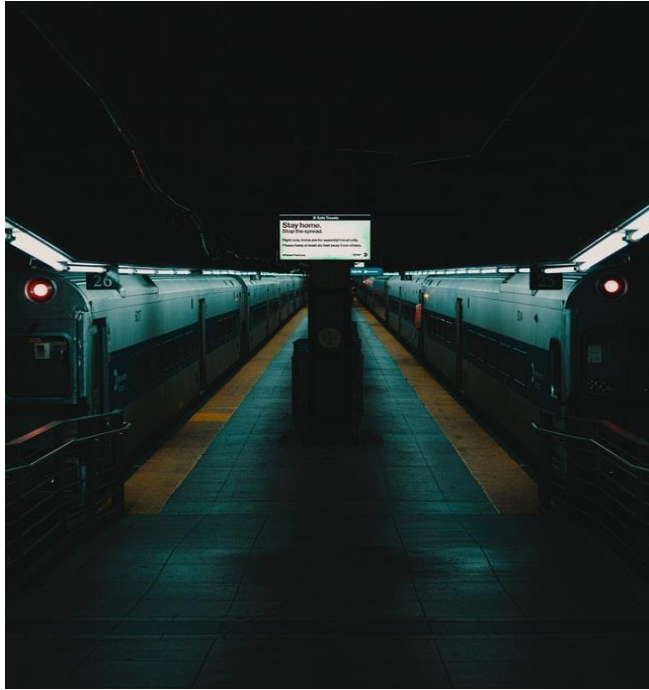
Today's Facilitators

Dr. Nicole Andreoli, Ph.D., received her doctorate in Applied Psychology and a postdoctoral respecialization degree in Clinical Psychology from Hofstra University. As a licensed clinical psychologist, Dr. Andreoli works primarily from a cognitive behavioral framework with children, adolescents, and adults to address a wide range of social, emotional, and behavioral issues. Her specialties include, but are not limited to, anxiety and depression management, relationship concerns, and transitional issues. Dr. Andreoli has an extensive background in the areas of psychological assessment. Additionally, she has conducted fitness for duty evaluations for Viacom/MTV/VH1, the Suffolk County Police Department, and as a consultant with R3 Continuum.

Agenda

- Impact of COVID-19 on Workplace Mental Health
- Recognizing Signs and Symptoms of Mental Health Challenges
- Managing your Stress and Anxiety
- Organizational Strategies to Support Mental Health
- Q & A

COVID-19 Pandemic: A Time of Uncertainty



- New York is the epicenter of the crisis
- Over **190,000** confirmed cases of COVID-19 in NYC¹
- **36 million** Americans have filed initial unemployment claims since mid-March²
- A CUNY School of Public Health survey found that only **11%** of respondents feel hopeful about the future³

Impact of COVID-19 on employee experience

- **70%** of workers feel more stressed during COVID-19 than at any other point in their entire professional career⁴
- **91%** of employees working from home reported experiencing moderate to extreme stress
- **43%** of employees have become physically ill as a result of work-related stress

Impact of COVID-19 on the workplace

- **62%** of workers reported losing at least one hour a day in productivity due to COVID-19 related stress, with 32% losing more than two hours per day⁴
- **70%** of workers agreed that employees at their company are significantly less productive because of stress and anxiety surrounding COVID-19⁴
- Healthcare providers are seeing large increases in the number of people using technology and accessing tele-mental health services⁵

“Although the world is full of suffering, it is full also of the overcoming of it.” - Helen Keller

General signs of emotional distress

- Fear and worry about your own health and that of your loved ones
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Worsening of mental health conditions
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs₆

Common mental health challenges and their symptoms

Sadness

- Normal response to upsetting, painful or disappointing experience
- Can turn into depression
- Temporary and transitory (does *not last* long)

Depression

- Irritable mood
- Decrease in interest in activities
- Feeling worthless, or excessive guilt
- Difficulty concentrating
- Symptoms last *at least* two weeks

Anxiety

- Excessive, uncontrolled worry
- Easily fatigued
- Irritable
- Restlessness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Symptoms last *more days than for at least* six months



Strategies for managing stress and promoting wellbeing

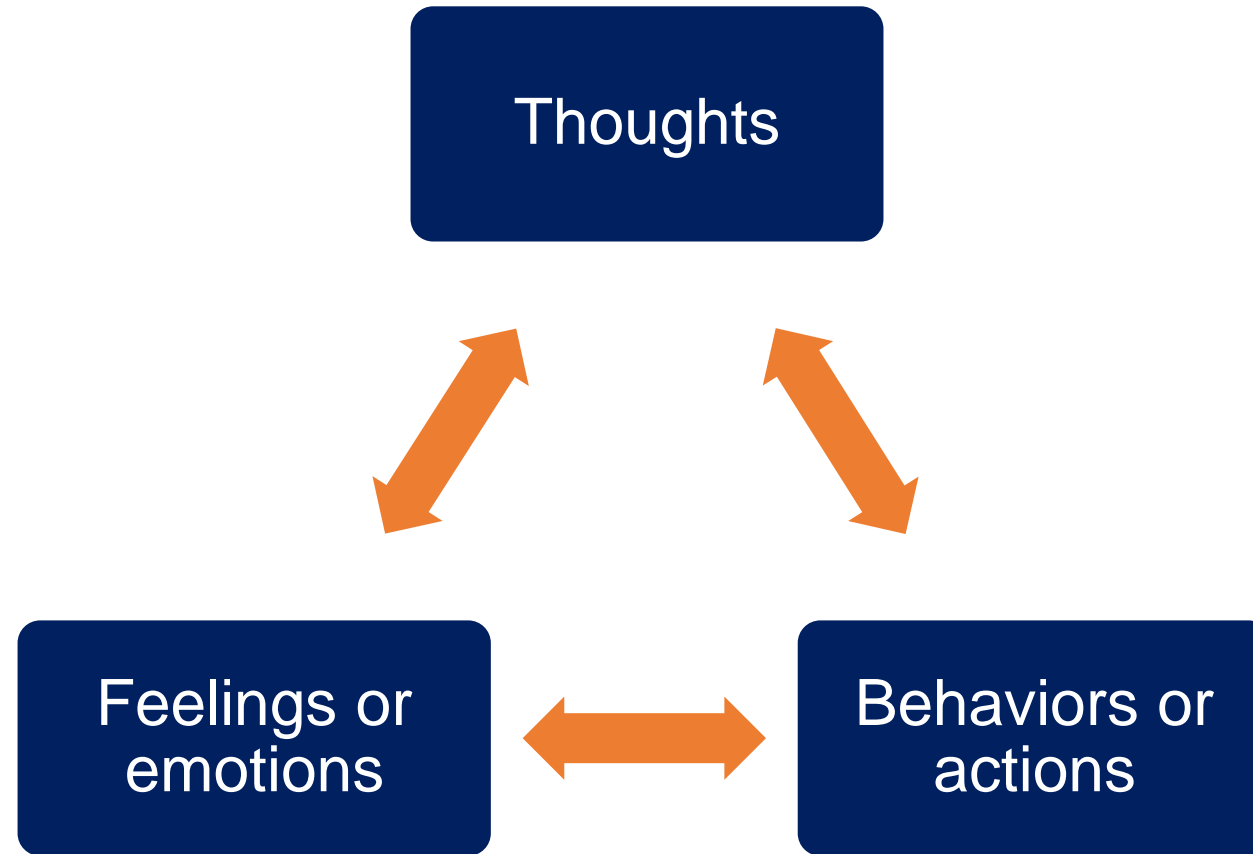
The mental health trifecta for emotional wellbeing

- Social Support: Staying connected while we are subject to physical distancing measures
- Exercise: Consistent physical activity like walking, stretching and working out
- Routine: Staying in tune with sleep patterns, eating patterns, and daily activities

Thinking about and processing emotions

- Acknowledge
 - ROLL with it (Recognize, Observe, Let Go)
- Control
 - Focus on what you can control and let go of what you can't
 - You cannot control an outcome, but you can control how you respond to it
- Accept
 - Allow ourselves to experience a negative emotion without judgement

Evaluating our thought patterns



Types of Negative Thought Patterns

- All or Nothing Thinking: Things are black and white, failing to see alternative options or “the grey area”
- Catastrophizing: Assuming the worst-case as an inevitable fact
- Mind-reading: Imagining we know, for certain, what others are thinking or fortune-telling (predicting the future with certainty)
- Labeling: Assigning labels to ourselves (or to other people)

Tips to manage negative thoughts

- Reframe
 - “I am stuck inside” to “I can finally focus on my home and myself”
- Challenge the thought
 - What is the evidence that this is true?
- Is there another possibility / explanation or possible outcome?
 - What do I know to be true *right now*?

Practicing Mindfulness

“The awareness that arises from paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally.”- Jon Kabat-Zinn⁷

Practicing Mindfulness

Key elements of practicing mindfulness include:

- Being conscious of your current experience (aware of each action you perform)
- Focusing your mind on the present, not the past or future
- Allowing your experience to occur as it is (not good or bad)

Mindfulness has been shown to:

- Improve our mood⁸ and positive emotions⁹
- Decrease anxiety¹⁰ and burnout¹¹
- Improve physical health outcomes related to heart disease and others¹²

Putting it Together: Use RAIN to manage anxiety and stress

The acronym **RAIN** is a helpful mnemonic for guiding practicing mindfulness:

- **Recognize** what is going on
- **Allow** the experience to be there, just as it is
- **Investigate** with kindness
- **Nurture** with self compassion¹³

“Regardless of where the various stressors and sources may lie, the call for help needs to start with employers, to provide the programs, services, education and training necessary to demonstrate that employees being their single greatest asset isn't just a cliché.” - Alex Gourlay and Betsy Schwartz¹⁴

Organizational approaches to promote mental health in the workplace

- Lead with compassion and model supportive workplace behavior
- Create opportunities for social support
 - Informal events, peer champions, employee resource groups
- Provide managers and staff training to identify individuals who may be struggling, to supportively discuss mental health, and to help them access resources
- Provide information about benefits, such as an Employee Assistance Program or insurance coverage

Please send us your questions through the **chat** function.

Note: Slides will be made available to registrants after the session.

How Thrive in Your Workplace can help



Thrive in Your Workplace

Redefining Workplace
Mental Health

Visit <https://thrivenyc.cityofnewyork.us/workplace> to learn more about workplace mental health or contact twp@thrive.nyc.gov to schedule a free consult.

If you or a loved one are looking for mental health support, help is available:

New Yorkers can visit the [ThriveNYC Resource Guide to Mental Health Services to Access While at Home](#) for regularly updated resources, including services tailored to the needs of aging New Yorkers, veterans, students and young people harmed by violence, crime, or abuse. Follow [@MentalHealthNYC](#) for the latest updates.

You can reach Dr. Nicole Andreoli for additional support directly through her office, Pathways Psychological Services, by contacting office_manager@pathwayspsychology.org.