

Understanding Mental Health Status and Concerns of Students

Allan B. I. Bernardo

*Distinguished University Professor, De La Salle University
Academician, National Academy of Science and Technology*



Mental health experts: Effects of COVID-19 stress enter second year

Science News

COVID-19 pandemic may have inc issues within families

Date: April 13, 2021

Source: Penn State

Summary: When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in early 2020, many families found themselves suddenly isolated together at home. A year later, new research has linked this period with a variety of large, detrimental effects on individuals' and families' well-being and functioning.

PANDEMIC FUELS MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

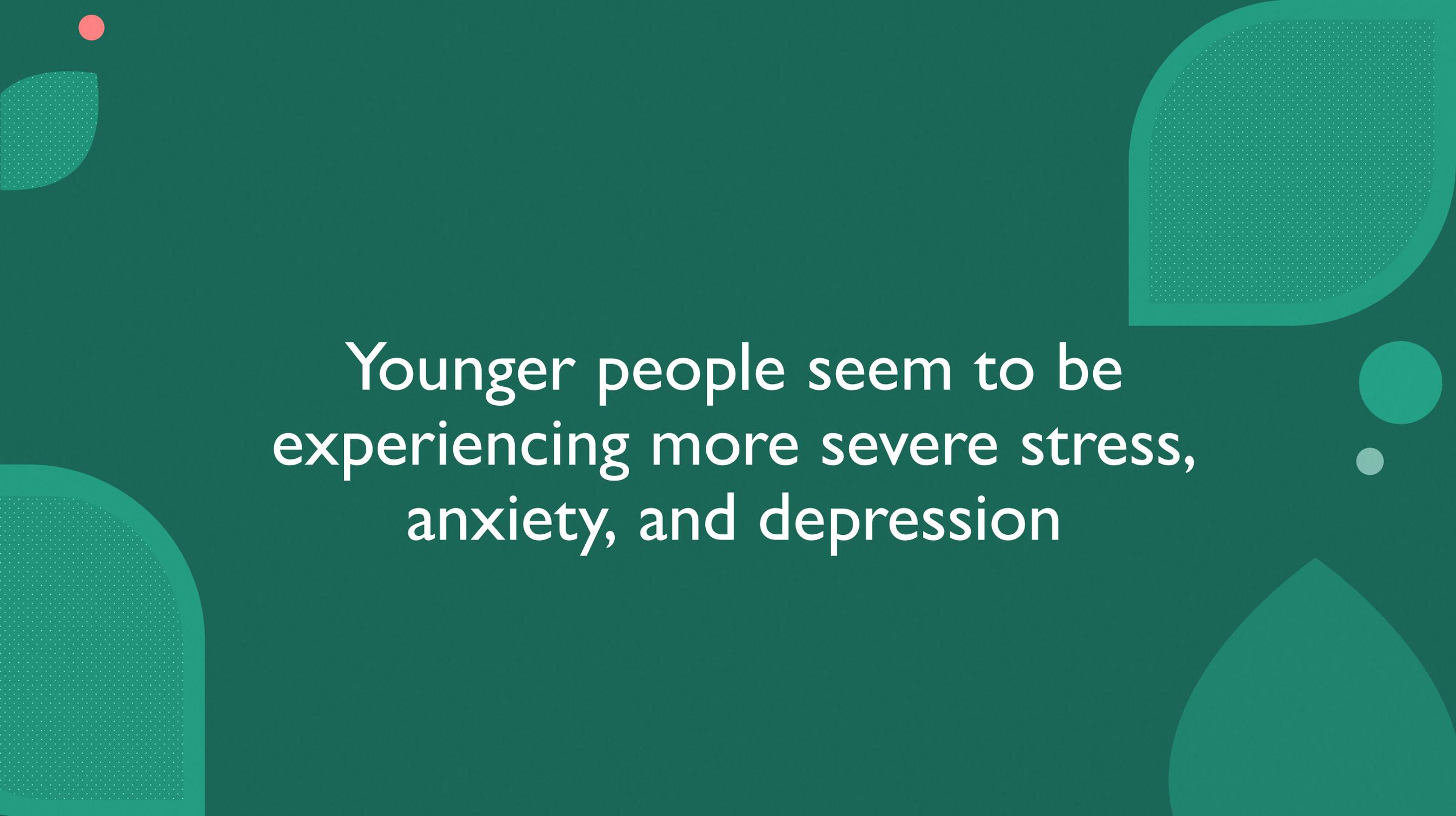
As the COVID-19 pandemic entered its second year in late March, a regional mental health survey reported widespread effects of anxiety. The Woodlands area therapists and nonprofits have reported increased demand for mental health services amid job loss and other stressors.

How the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting mental health

The World Health Organization has warned the coronavirus pandemic could have a years-long effect on mental health.

Global research:

- Studies during first wave of the coronavirus : elderly reported *less* subjective threat and *higher* emotional well-being than younger adults (Carstensen et al., 2020; Klaiber et al., 2021)
- Longitudinal study in 33 countries : Emerging and young adults reported lower unaroused positive affect and more negative affect than older adults (Reitsema et al. 2021)
- Same pattern in unpublished Philippine data

The background is a solid teal color. It features several abstract shapes: a small red circle in the top left, a teal leaf-like shape in the top left, a large teal rounded square with a dotted pattern in the top right, a teal circle and a smaller teal circle in the middle right, a teal rounded square with a dotted pattern in the bottom left, and a teal teardrop shape in the bottom right.

Younger people seem to be
experiencing more severe stress,
anxiety, and depression

Outline and aims of talk

Describe common symptoms associated with mental health problems

Clarify that experiencing these symptoms is part of what makes us human

Clarify that experiencing these symptoms does not always mean one has mental health disorders

Knowledge and understanding of these symptoms

- * why you might be experiencing it

- * what you can do when you are experiencing

What are the symptoms of anxiety and depression?

(common psychological symptoms)

Low positive affect	Depression	Feeling down-hearted, difficult to work up initiative to do things, unable to be enthusiastic, feeling meaningless, etc.
Physiological hyperarousal	Anxiety	Feeling excessive rapid breathing (difficulty), scared without a reason, dryness of mouth, panic, trembling, difficulty winding down
Negative affectivity	Stress / tension	Feeling touchy, agitated, difficult to relax, intolerant, tending to over-react to situations

Experiencing these symptoms typically arise from brain functions that allow help us to survive.



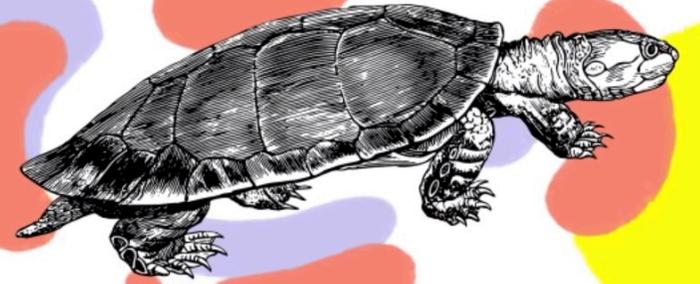
amygdala



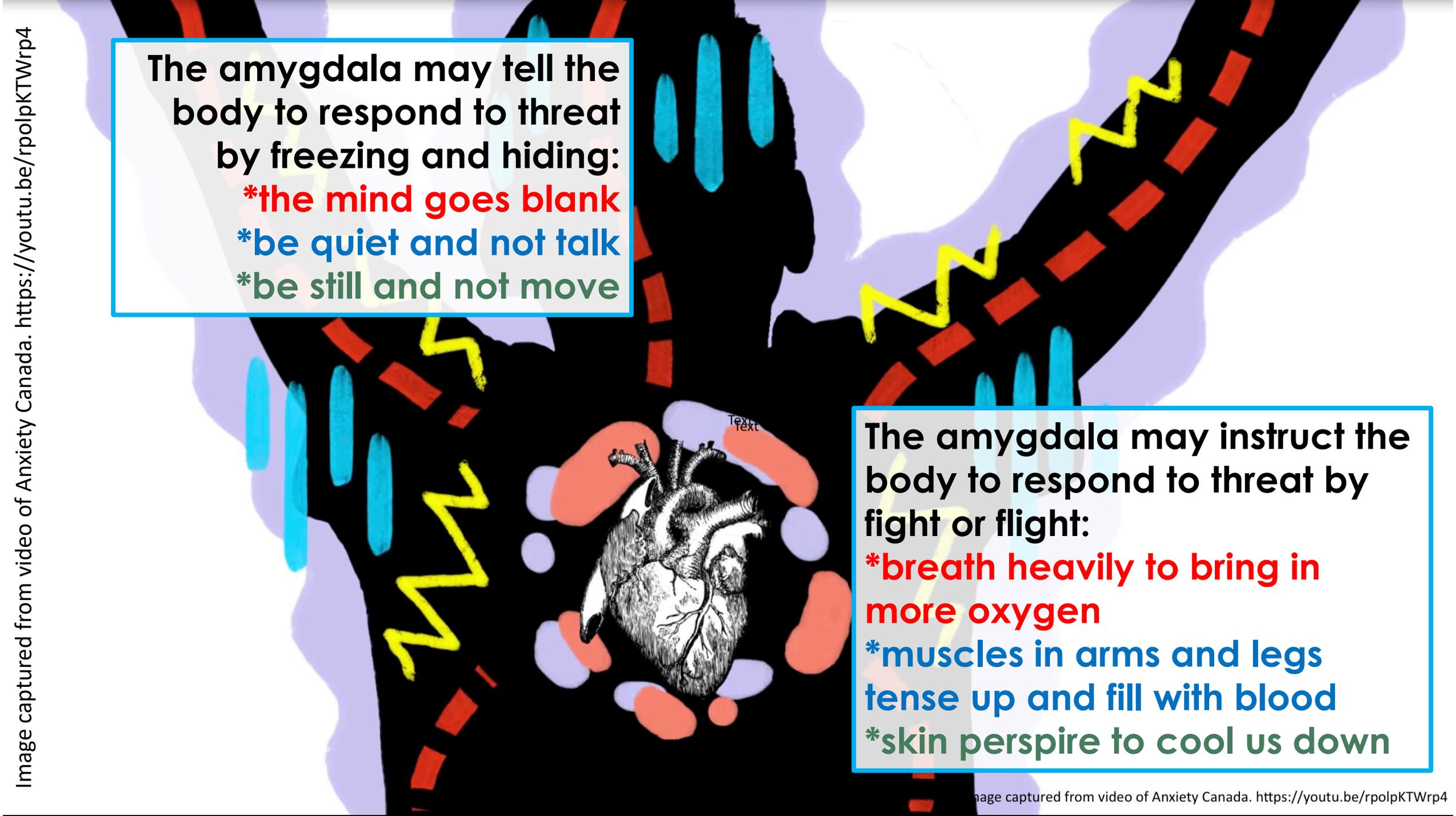
FLIGHT



FIGHT



FREEZE

A stylized illustration of a human silhouette in black. The interior is filled with various colors and patterns: blue vertical bars, red dashed lines, yellow zigzag lines, and orange and purple circles. A detailed anatomical drawing of a human heart is positioned in the center. The background is a light purple color.

The amygdala may tell the body to respond to threat by freezing and hiding:

- *the mind goes blank

- *be quiet and not talk

- *be still and not move

The amygdala may instruct the body to respond to threat by fight or flight:

- *breath heavily to bring in more oxygen

- *muscles in arms and legs tense up and fill with blood

- *skin perspire to cool us down

**But
sometimes
the
amygdala
gets it wrong**



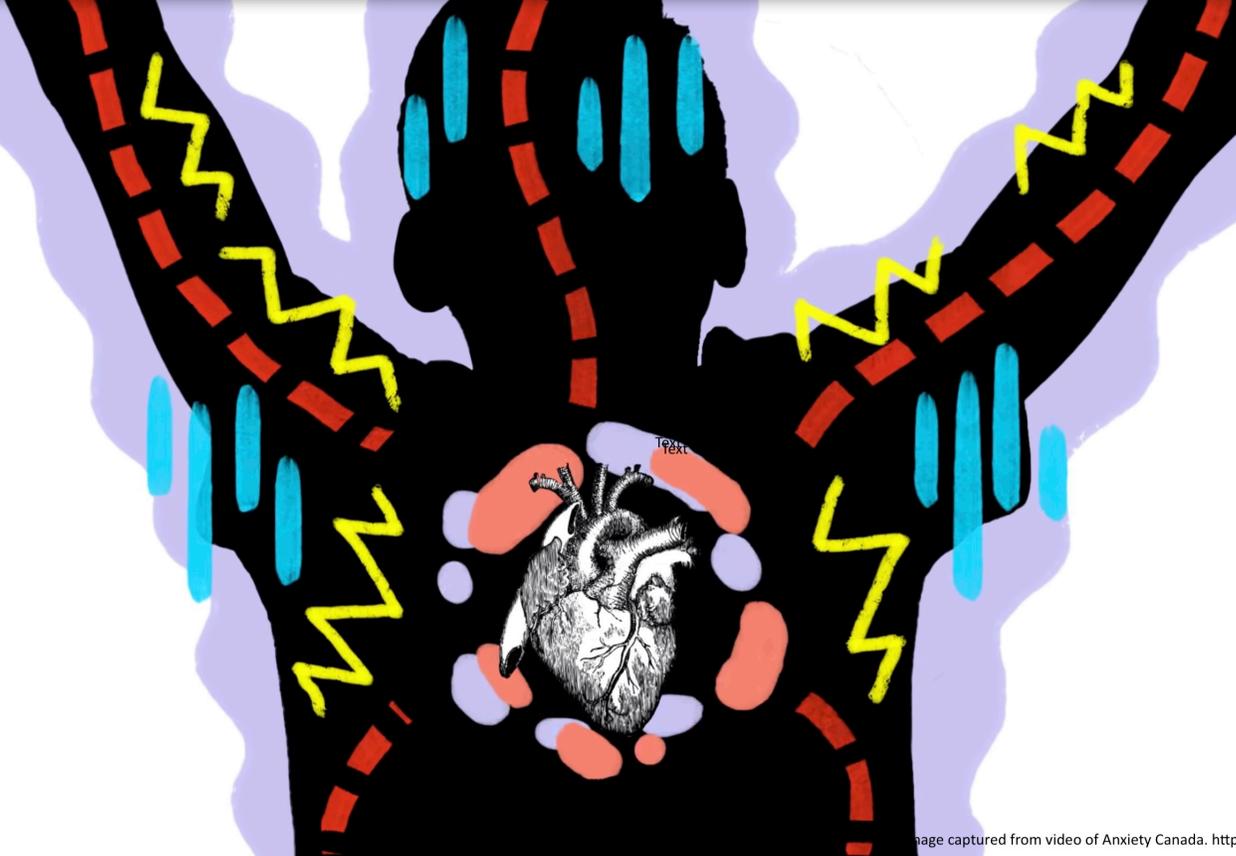


Image captured from video of Anxiety Canada. <https://youtu.be/rpolpKTWrp4>

We may experience feeling panic or scared or agitated or stuck or any of those symptoms of stress, anxiety, or depression even when there is no real threat.



“triggers”
stressful or
unfamiliar
situations and
events
that **cause**
these these
feelings



The COVID-19 Pandemic has created so much uncertainty in our lives with many unfamiliar and uncontrollable situations.

- **Stress**
Anxiety
Depression

How we should think about this?

- Our amygdala is telling us about some **possible threats** in our environment
- But amygdala may be confused about **how much threat there really is**
- We **should not simply avoid** these triggers
- Some of these triggers are actually important parts of our life
- Avoiding triggers using “safety behaviors” may prevent you from acquiring important knowledge and skills we need to grow
- But understanding the causes of our stress, anxiety, and depression symptoms can help us **manage** it.



Next speakers

- **the stressors and triggers in the lives of students during the pandemic**
- **what students can do to manage their feelings of stress, anxiety, and depression during the pandemic**