# CENTRE FOR INNOVATION IN
# CAMPUS MENTAL HEALTH

# Transition from Post-Secondary to the Workforce

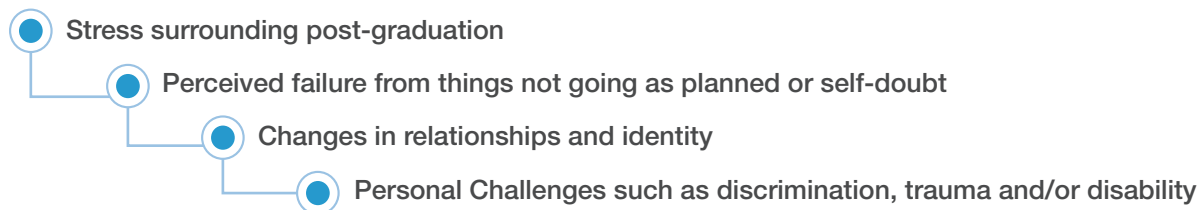## Post-Secondary Student Transition After Graduation

The transition from post-secondary (PS) education to the workforce marks a key milestone for many students as it can signify an entrance to "adulthood". However, most PS students do not feel prepared to transition out of school, as they often do not perceive themselves as being an "adult," feel frustrated and uncertain, and have low self-efficacy. This leads to feelings of stress, anxiety, depression, loss or grief as they enter a new social identity and can have a great impact on their future.

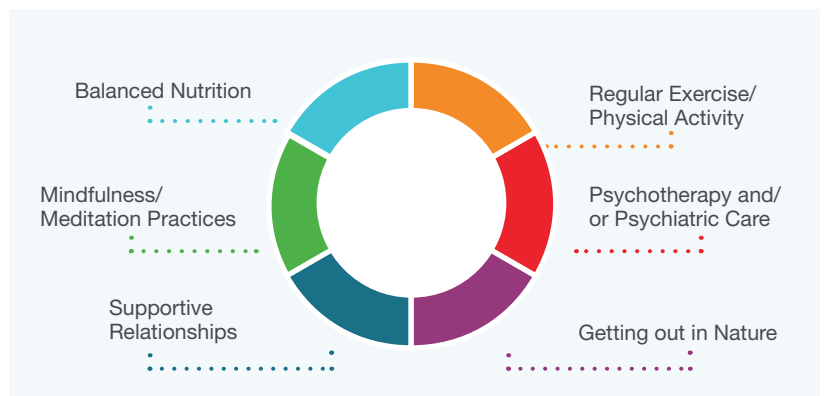Self-efficacy is one's belief in their abilities to complete a certain task or achieve a goal

## Common Challenges during the Transition Period

- Stress surrounding post-graduation
- Perceived failure from things not going as planned or self-doubt
- Changes in relationships and identity
- Personal Challenges such as discrimination, trauma and/or disability

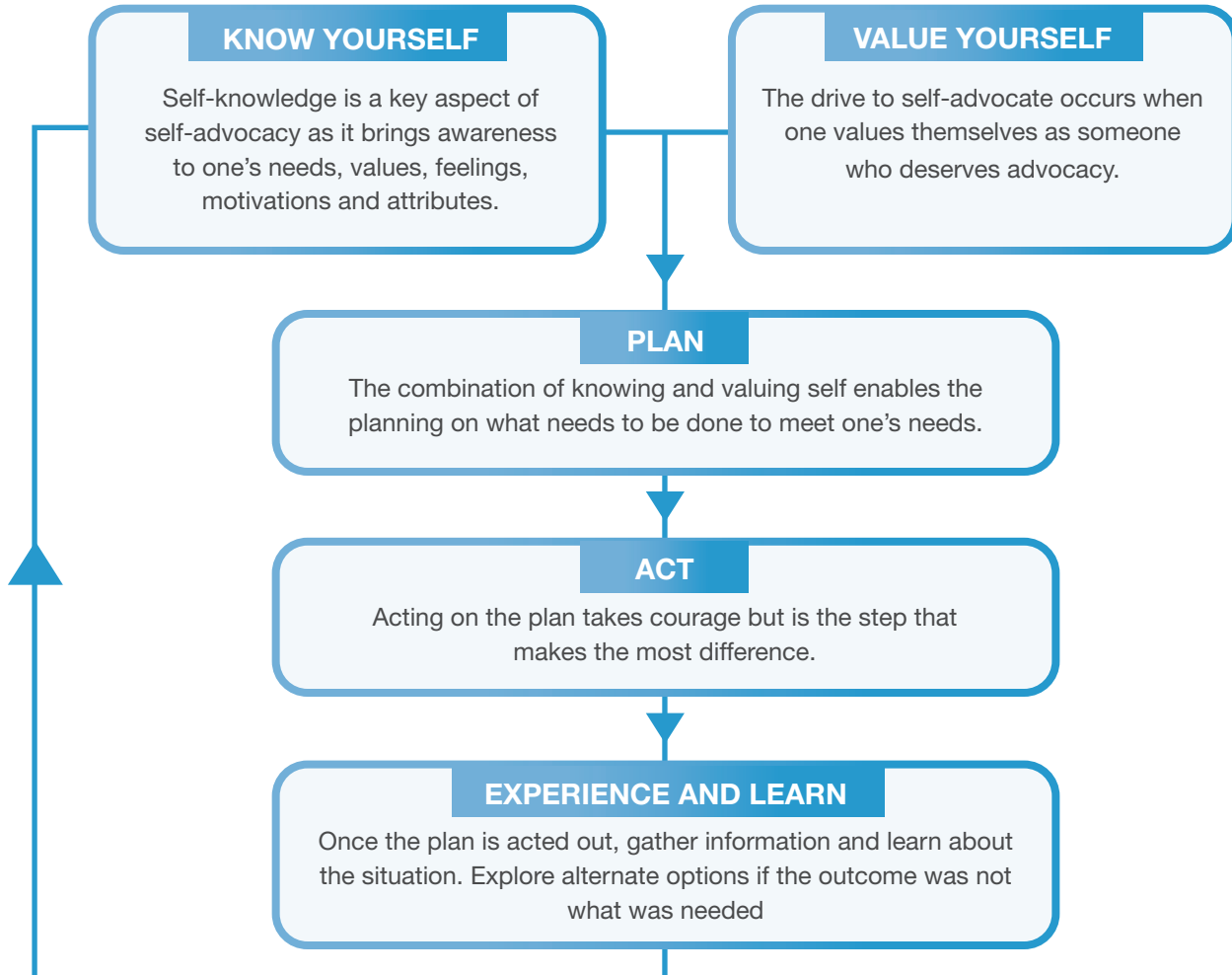## Strategies to Navigate the Transition

### Domains of Wellness
According to the Center of Youth Wellness San Francisco, the following practices have shown to be effective against toxic stress.

Balanced Nutrition

Mindfulness/ Meditation Practices

Supportive Relationships

Regular Exercise/ Physical Activity

Psychotherapy and/ or Psychiatric Care

Getting out in Nature

## Self-Advocacy

Self-advocacy is to act on behalf of one's own needs, views or interests. The transition to "adulthood" can mean that students may come across situations where they have to advocate for themselves, whether it is for salary negotiation, boundary setting or attending to the domains of wellness mentioned above. In order to do so, the Self-Determination Model can aid in the process.

**KNOW YOURSELF**

Self-knowledge is a key aspect of self-advocacy as it brings awareness to one's needs, values, feelings, motivations and attributes.

**VALUE YOURSELF**

The drive to self-advocate occurs when one values themselves as someone who deserves advocacy.

**PLAN**

The combination of knowing and valuing self enables the planning on what needs to be done to meet one's needs.

**ACT**

Acting on the plan takes courage but is the step that makes the most difference.

**EXPERIENCE AND LEARN**

Once the plan is acted out, gather information and learn about the situation. Explore alternate options if the outcome was not what was needed

## Self-Compassion

The pathway to success is never truly linear. In order to get through possible feelings of failure, imposter phenomenon or perfectionism, self-compassion can play an important role. Here are some ways:

**Practicing gratitude everyday**

**Catching unhelpful thoughts, challenging it and changing it**

**Noticing discouraging thoughts instead of believing them**

**Fostering a growth mindset**

# Grief and Mourning

The transition period can be a source of loss for many PS students as their lives depart from their norm. You may experience feelings of grief due to the loss of friends, community, support systems and student status. Psychologist, Dr William Worden's Four Tasks of Mourning provides a guide on how to deal with the grief of such losses.

**Acceptance:** Accepting the reality of the loss

**Experience:** Experiencing the pain and the emotions associated with the loss

**Adjust:** Adjusting to the new situation with the loss

**Connect:** Maintaining a connection to the loss

*Check out the CICMH infosheets on Building Strength-Based Resilience in Post-secondary Students, Stress and Anxiety, Imposter Phenomenon, and Loss and Grief during the COVID-19 Pandemic for additional information on these topics.

# Navigating the Mental Health System

Finding formal support services can be challenging for graduates after being able to access most services from one place within their school. Here are some potential ways to set up support systems during the transition:

**Family Doctor:** Health Care Connect by the Ontario Government can help Ontario residents connect with a family doctor or a nurse practitioner. Asking family or friends about their family doctor can be helpful as well. Find more information **here**.

**Local Canadian Mental Health Association:** CMHA branches in Ontario are great resources for service recommendations. Local branches can be found **here**.

**ConnexOntario:** This is a free and confidential service that provides service information for people who struggle with mental illness, substance dependency or gambling addiction. Learn more **here**.

**The Ontario Structured Psychotherapy (OSP):** This is a free, publicly funded program for adults (18+) experiencing anxiety, depression, or other anxiety-related conditions. Services include guided self-led resources delivered by a coach or clinician like the BounceBack program. Find more information **here**.

# How can campuses support graduating students?

According to a recent study, some of the potential ways for campuses to support graduating students in their transition can be:

❭ Increasing accessibility to services prior to and after graduation

❭ Paying attention and providing support to certain demographics that may have additional challenges with the transition

❭ Extending the transition period (from pre-graduation and into post-graduation) to provide time to adapt into the new role as a recent graduate. This can look like setting up programs during the final year and after graduation that address aspects of the transition that are:

- **Practical** (financial advice, information on health insurance)
- **Realistic** (Non-linear paths of success)
- **Emotional** (Stress, emotional toll and managing oneself)

❭ Creating a peer support system by matching recent alumni with mentors

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