

# Tactics for maintaining Mental Fitness during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Connection

Dr. Bill Howatt

President, Howatt HR  
Chief Research Workforce Productivity,  
Conference Board of Canada

Jesse Adams, MSc

Chief Learning Officer, Howatt HR



# Agenda

**1**

**Refresher: Charging our Battery**

**2**

**Micro-skill of the Day: Connection**

**3**

**Actions for today**

**1**

**Refresher: Charging our Battery**

**2**

**Micro-skill of the Day: Gratitude**

**3**

**Actions for today**



Recall, we are like batteries and each day we may start at a different level of charge



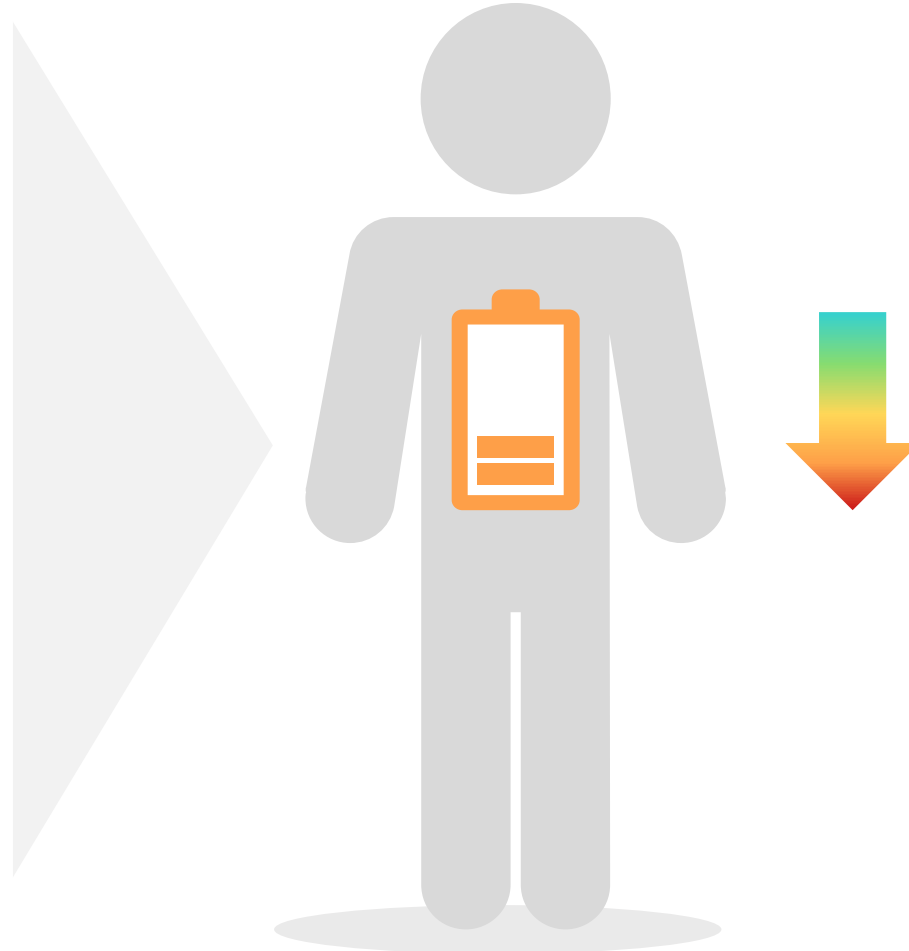
# A person's resilience charge can drain as a result of personal and situational stressors

## Example energy drains

### Personal stress

Stress      Bullying  
Burnout      Anxiety  
Harassment  
Chronic issues  
Gossip      Workload  
Distrust      Depression  
Injuries      Accidents

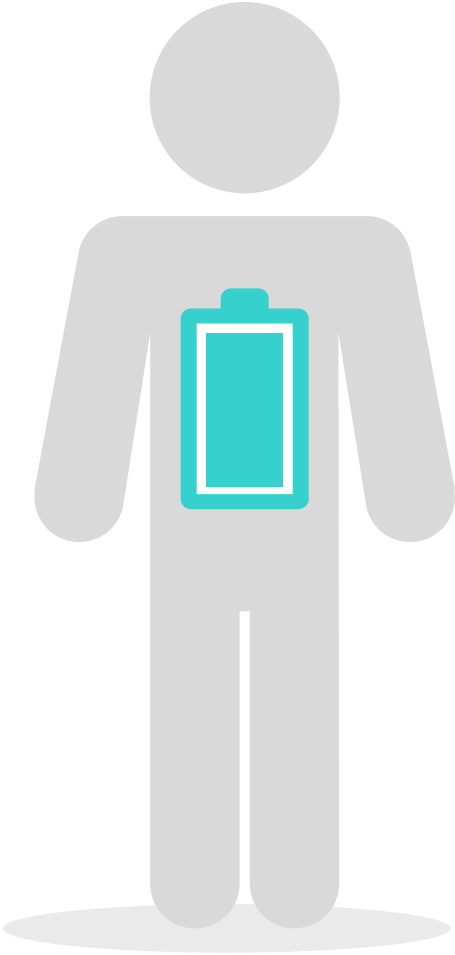
### Situational stress



**Low** coping  
charge / resilience

# Positive personal habits and environmental support can charge your resilience

Regained coping charge / resilience



## Example energy boosters

### Personal habits

- Physical activity
- Workplace policies
- Positive thinking
- Relationships
- Nutrition
- Financial planning
- Manager effectiveness
- Sleep
- Work-life blending

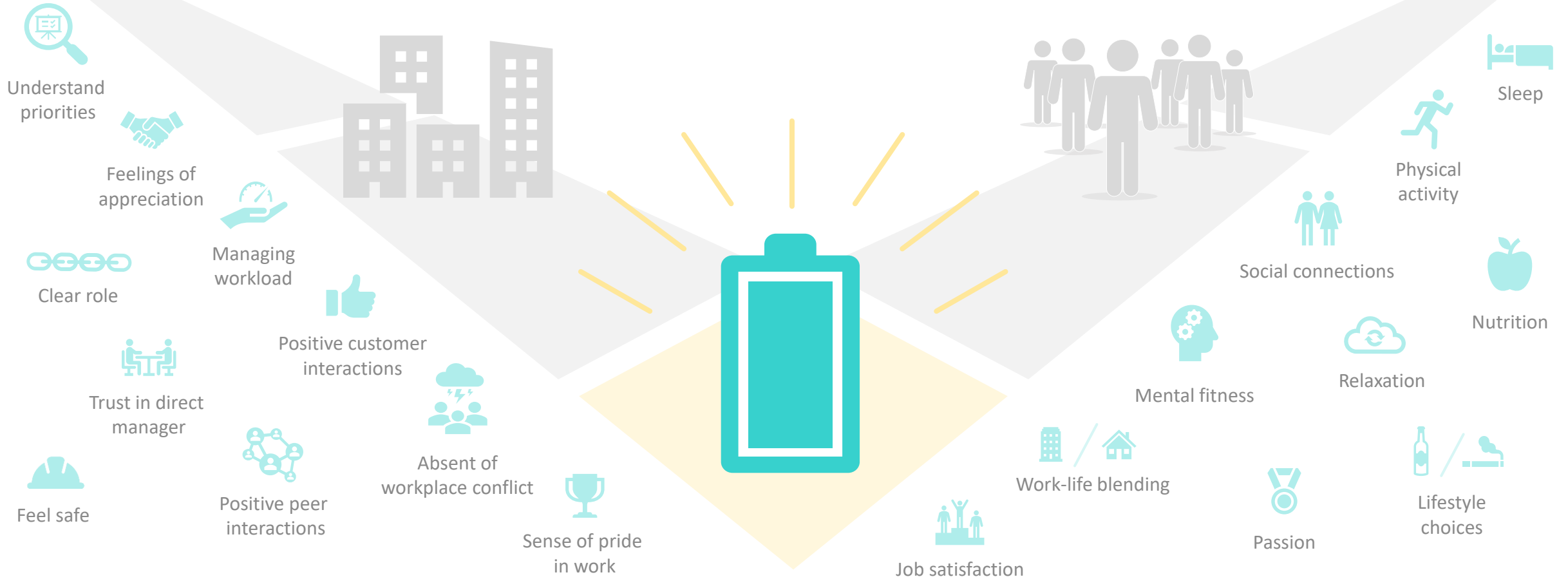
### Environmental support

# Resilience is built through joint responsibility

## Employer Actions

+

## Employee Actions



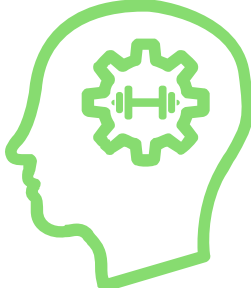
# Maintaining Mental Fitness: Micro-skills

- Micro-skills are small behaviours or cognitive skills you can add to your life to support mental fitness
- They are skills that can be applied to all areas of your life:
  - Physical
  - Mental health
  - Personal life
  - Work experience





# Jesse's Mental Fitness Plan



	Mental Fitness	Physical Health	Social Connection
<b>Daily</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family thank yous</li> <li>• Article or book reading</li> <li>• Podcast</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intense activity</li> <li>• Eat vegetables</li> <li>• Sleep routine</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner check-in</li> <li>• Connect with team in the am</li> <li>• Whatsapp messages</li> </ul>
<b>When needed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect with a psychologist</li> <li>• Stress first aid</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Massage therapy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Quarterly meeting”</li> </ul>

**1**

**Refresher: Charging our Battery**

**2**

**Micro-skill of the Day: Connection**

**3**

**Actions for today**



# What is social connection?

- The feeling that one is loved and cared for by others, esteemed and valued, and part of a belong to a group.
- This is a basic psychological need, essential component of life satisfaction, and the central element of human evolution.
- Our “default network” is auto-programmed to focus on social thinking (e.g., interpret other’s thoughts and feelings)\*.

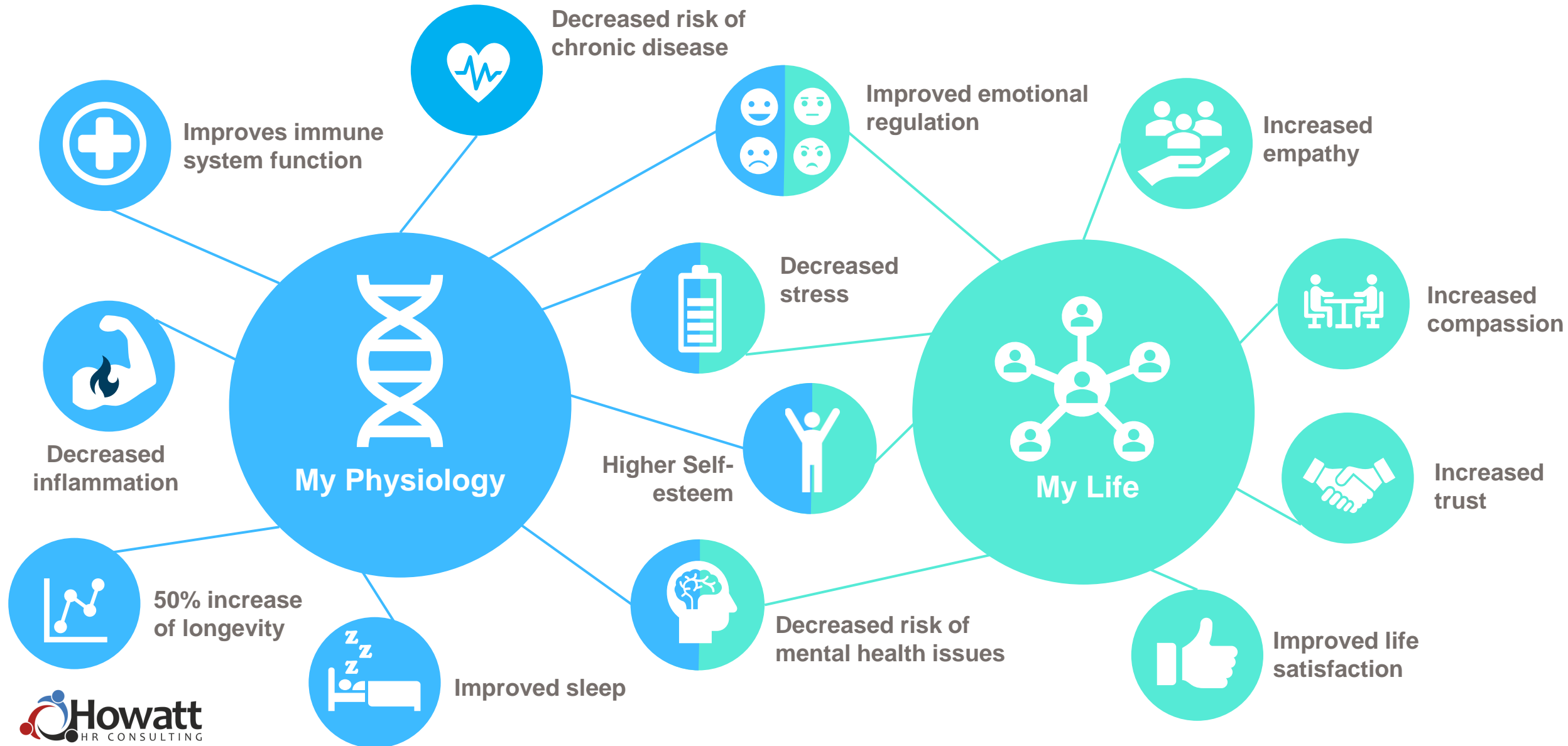


# What is social connection (*cont'd*) ?

- It is estimated that adding an authentic connection is worth about £15,500 (approximately \$22,000) for the average adult.\*
- Lack of connection can result in the same of physical pain sensation as a broken leg.
- Research has shown that lack of social connectedness predicts vulnerability to disease and death above and beyond traditional risk factors\*.



# How can social connection impact me?



**1**

**Refresher: Charging our Battery**

**2**

**Micro-skill of the Day: Connection**

**3**

**Actions for today**



# The challenge and opportunity of our current situation

25% of people have no one to confide in

Social accountability skills

Work Stress

No physical gatherings

% of loneliness?

In-home demands

Restricted to our homes

Fast paced life

Personal boundaries

Technology

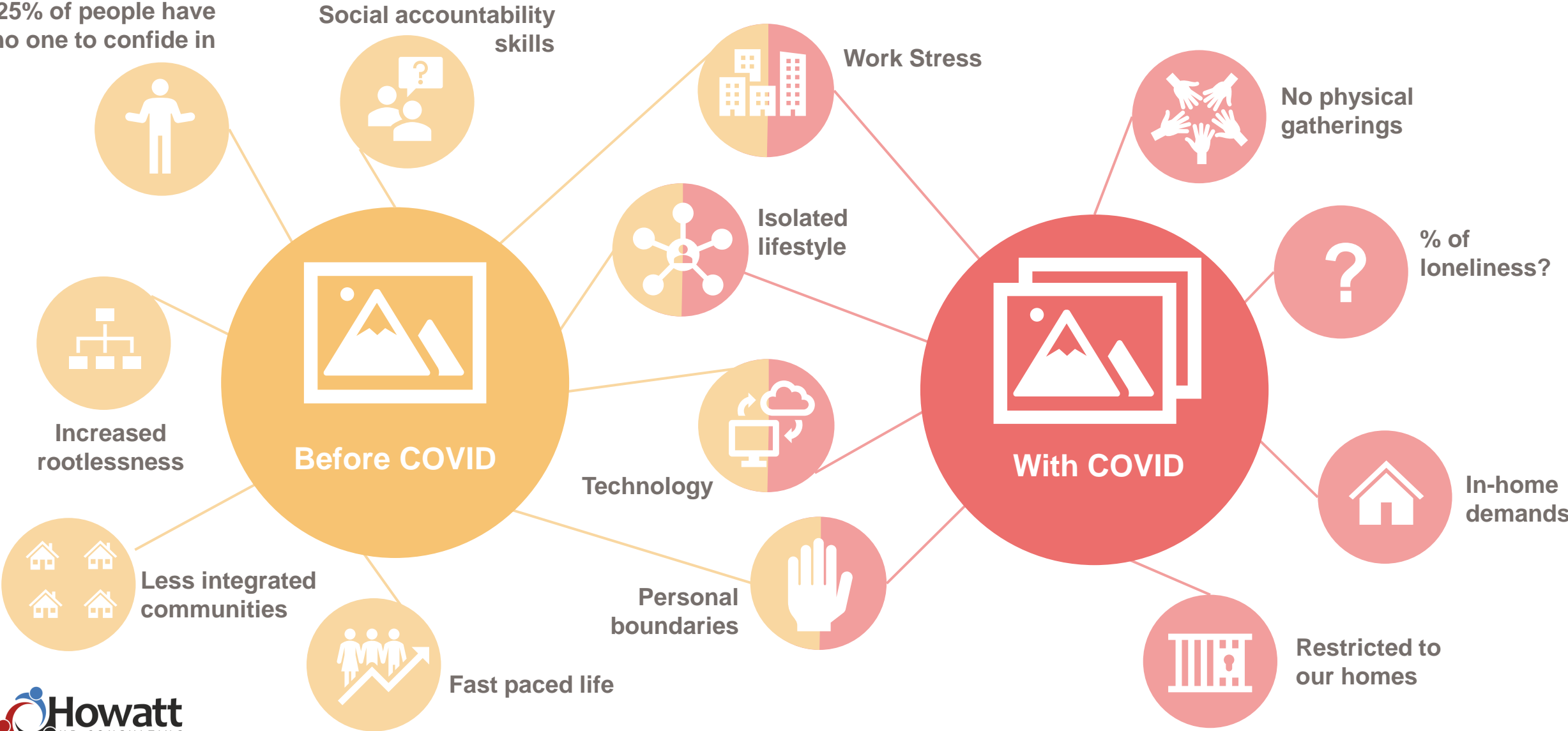
Isolated lifestyle

With COVID

Before COVID

Increased rootlessness

Less integrated communities



# Incorporating connection into your day...at home



**Take time to  
listen**



**Setup video  
time**



**Acknowledge  
others**



**Give to your  
community**



# Incorporating connection into your day...at work



**Use video  
work sessions**



**Setup regular  
check-ins**



**Ask about life  
outside of work**



**Acknowledge  
successes and  
challenges**

# Reflection for today

- What is the type of social connection you look for?
- How can you find opportunities within your current living situation?
- Share your reflection on social media using the hashtag:
  - #MYMF
  - #MYMFPLAN
  - #MFSTRONG

Complete an on-line screen:

## [Perceived Isolation-Loneliness Effect Survey](#)

Increase your awareness of the relationship between *isolation* and *loneliness* .



# Next Weeks Webinar

- When: Tuesday April 14, 2020
- What time: 12 pm est
- How to find it: [www.maintainingmentalfitness.com](http://www.maintainingmentalfitness.com)
- Micro-skill: Understanding Stress





# Question Period

[www.maintainingmentalfitness.com](http://www.maintainingmentalfitness.com)

Sponsored by



ALBERTA URBAN MUNICIPALITIES ASSOCIATION

