



THE IALH UPDATE

In this issue:

Dragons of Inaction

Impact of the Pandemic on Mental Health of CLSA Participants

Recap: National Health and Fitness Day 2021

Learning Opportunities

Dragons of Inaction



In 2011, IALH affiliate Robert Gifford (Psychology) observed that “Most people think climate change and sustainability are important problems....[but] if so many people are concerned about change, the environment, and sustainability, why are more of us not doing what is necessary to ameliorate the problems?” Dr. Gifford noted that while some of this discrepancy may be explained by structural barriers that are “beyond an individual’s reasonable control”, much of it is due to psychological barriers that limit behavioural choices and actions that would facilitate climate change mitigation and improve environmental sustainability.

A decade ago, Dr. Gifford categorized 29 psychological barriers - the “dragons of inaction” - into seven genera. In case you think these psychological barriers are no longer an issue, he has recently identified 36 “species of dragons” which are summarized below. In 2020, an eight-part podcast series *Scales of Change: A field guide to the dragons of climate inaction*, was produced with support from UVic. The series provided an in-depth look at the barriers to action as well as ways to overcome them.

Genera	Dragons of Inaction	Examples
Limited Cognition – people do not always behave rationally	ignorance; ancient brain; uncertainty; environmental numbness; spatial discounting; temporal discounting; optimism bias; lack of perceived behavioural control; lack of self-efficacy; confirmation bias; when time is	People believe that environmental problems will occur so far in the future that there is no need to take personal responsibility now.
Ideologies – beliefs that are inconsistent with climate change mitigation	worldviews; suprahuman powers; technosalvation; system justification	People believe that a religious deity or Mother Nature is in charge; they do not feel responsible either for the climate or the environment.
Social Comparisons – tendency to be influenced by others	social comparison; social norms and networks; perceived inequity; authority rules	People compare their own behaviour to others even when that behaviour may be harmful to the environment.
Sunk Costs – investments of money, time, and actions that limit climate friendly choices	financial investments; behavioural momentum; conflicting goals and aspirations; lack of place attachment	Some habits, such as eating and transportation choices, can have a negative impact on climate as well as the environment.

Discredence – disbelief about climate change and other environmental issues	mistrust; perceived program inadequacy; denial; reactance; contrarian personality	Some individuals distrust government officials or scientists from whom much of the information on climate change originates.
Perceived Risk – risks that hinder changing behaviour	functional risk; physical risk; financial risk; social risk; psychological risk; temporal risk	People are concerned that a change (for example, to an electric vehicle) will not be as good as their current choice.
Limited Behaviour – positive but insufficient behaviour change	tokenism; rebound effect	People choose actions that are easy to implement but may have minimal impact.

For more information on the Dragons of Inaction, see <https://tinyurl.com/DragonsOfInaction> and www.dragonsofinaction.com

To access the podcast series, go to <https://www.uvic.ca/news/topics/2020+future-ecologies-robertgifford+news>

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Mental Health of CLSA Participants

The Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA) is a large, national study that is following approximately 50,000 Canadians over a 20 year period. In 2020, the CLSA developed three sub-studies to explore the impacts of COVID-19. The first study, which was conducted between April 15, 2020 and December 31, 2020, explored how older adults were coping with the impact of the pandemic on their physical and mental health. More than 28,000 CLSA participants took part in this study, which involved completion of multiple interviews either by phone or online. Individuals who participated by phone completed a total of seven interviews – one baseline, two bi-weekly, three monthly and one exit. Those who participated online completed a total of nine interviews – one baseline, four weekly, three monthly and one exit.

A recent webinar which focused on the baseline and exit interviews examined a) the relationship between social determinants and changes in the prevalence of depression and b) how pandemic-related stressors are associated with the severity and trajectory of depression.

In brief, findings from the baseline and exit interviews for all participants indicated that:

- a) COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the mental health of older individuals, especially those 50 to 55 years of age.
- b) The prevalence of depression increased during the pandemic compared to the pre-pandemic period.
- c) The pandemic has had a larger negative impact on individuals who were already marginalized.
- d) Social determinants of health and pre-existing physical health conditions were significant predictors of the increase in depression during the pandemic.
- e) Individuals who experienced pandemic-related stressors such as “conflict” were more likely to be in a group that had the worst trajectory of depression.

For more information on these findings, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nN7_884eu0s. The study was funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada, McMaster University and the Province of Nova Scotia. UVic CLSA staff were actively involved in data collection for this COVID-19 sub-study.

For more information on other CLSA COVID-19 sub-studies, see <https://www.clsa-elcv.ca/covid-19-studies>



Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging
Étude longitudinale canadienne sur le vieillissement

Recap: National Health and Fitness Day



Thank you to everyone who participated in National Health and Fitness Day 2021 on June 5. Whether you linked into one of the events happening across Canada through the [ShowUsYourMoves website](#), or were active on your own – you contributed to the outstanding success of this year’s event.

If you haven’t already done so, check out the National Health and Fitness Day brochure at <https://www.uvic.ca/research/centres/aging/assets/docs/ialh-health--fitness-brochure---final.pdf> for a look at research related to staying active, suggested activities, local resources and inspirational people.

Learning Opportunities:

Frailty: Assessment, Mitigation and Prevention

The Canadian Frailty Network is offering a free training module entitled *Frailty: Assessment, Mitigation and Prevention*. The course provides an introduction to frailty and why it is important, information about tools that are used to assess frailty in different settings, and ways that frailty can be prevented. Access is open to anyone who is interested. For more information, see <https://www.cfn-nce.ca/training/frailty-module/>

Canadian Red Cross: Self-Care and Caring for Others

The Red Cross offers two online Psychological First Aid Courses: [Self-Care](#) and [Caring for Others](#). In both courses, participants learn the impact of stress, trauma, and grief while developing useful skills for handling difficult situations in daily life. At the end of each course, learners will be asked to complete a knowledge evaluation and will receive an electronic certificate of completion. Both courses are \$20 each.

The following poem was written by Louise Bernice Halfe – Sky Dancer, the Parliamentary Poet Laureate for 2021-2022, in recognition of National Health and Fitness Day 2021.

Over Sixty-Five

Sometimes the spirit of the body
has no inclination to move.
Yet,
the cool water on throbbing feet
after a half-hearted run
refreshes one’s resolve.
The heart-throb
and gasp for breath
drives
this reluctant exhilaration.

Sitting in a canoe
paddle dipping, gliding past
cliffs and forest,
hand cutting the water.
This gentle sweep
moves spirit and body.

Each morning my husband and I
lift weights.
Stretch above our heads,
bend at the waist,
arms flapping into a butterfly.
Leg press: kneeling has never been
so easy.
We work our
turkey waddle triceps,
do full length planks.

We are over sixty-five.

For three years
our feet covered
over two hundred miles
of the Saskatchewan prairie.
From the grasslands
to the rocky mounds of
the angels at the Mystery Rocks,
to the murdered sites
where we paid homage
to the original tribes.

We push beyond the limitations
of our reluctance.
Honor body, mind and spirit.
These gifts
of wind, sun, water and earth
course through our veins.