



 **WYVERN** Wednesday Webinar

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ELEVATING SAFETY & SECURITY WORLDWIDE

*COVID-19
The Invisible Threat & Pilot's Mental Health*

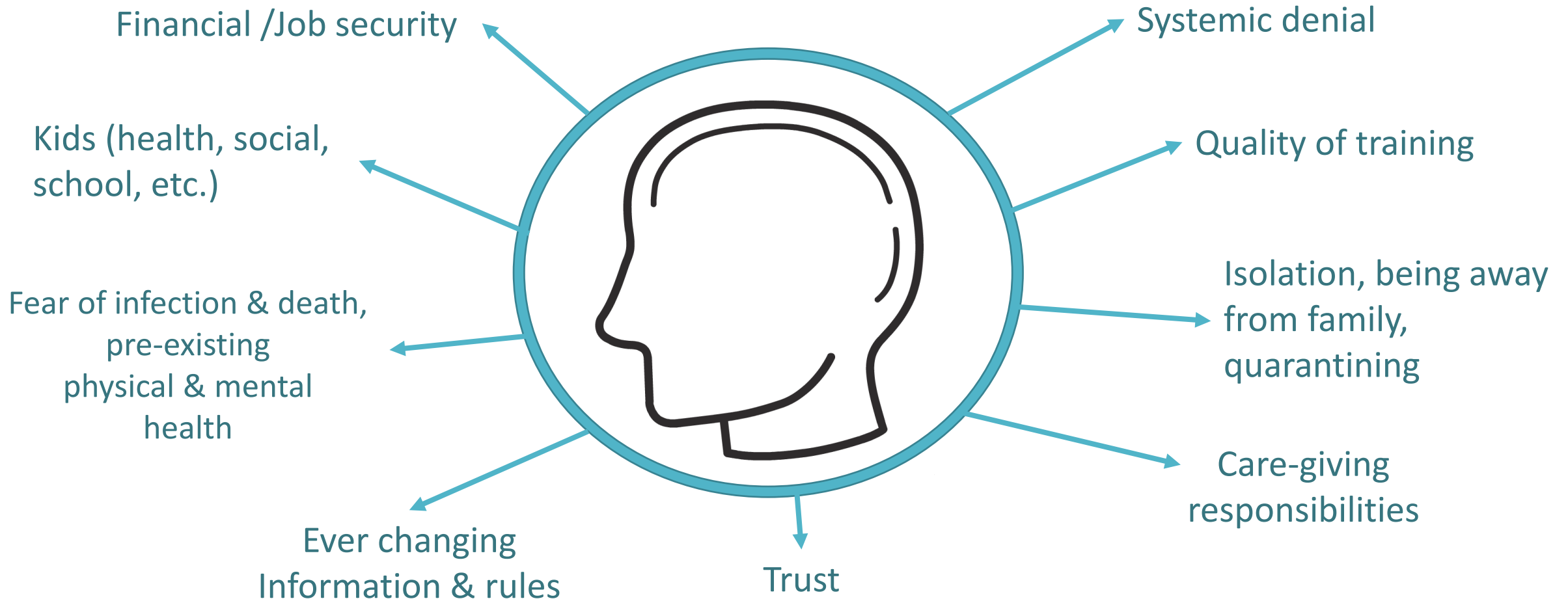
April 14, 2021

Agenda:

1. Pilot mental health and the Covid-19 effect
2. Brain chemistry & cognition 101
3. Covid-19 – Multiple “Perfect Storms”
4. Is this on your radar?
5. Management and Pilot Perspectives
6. Industry opportunities
7. Future risks

Covid-19 - Our World View

Psychological and Emotional Triggers (Minefield)



Brain Chemistry & Cognition

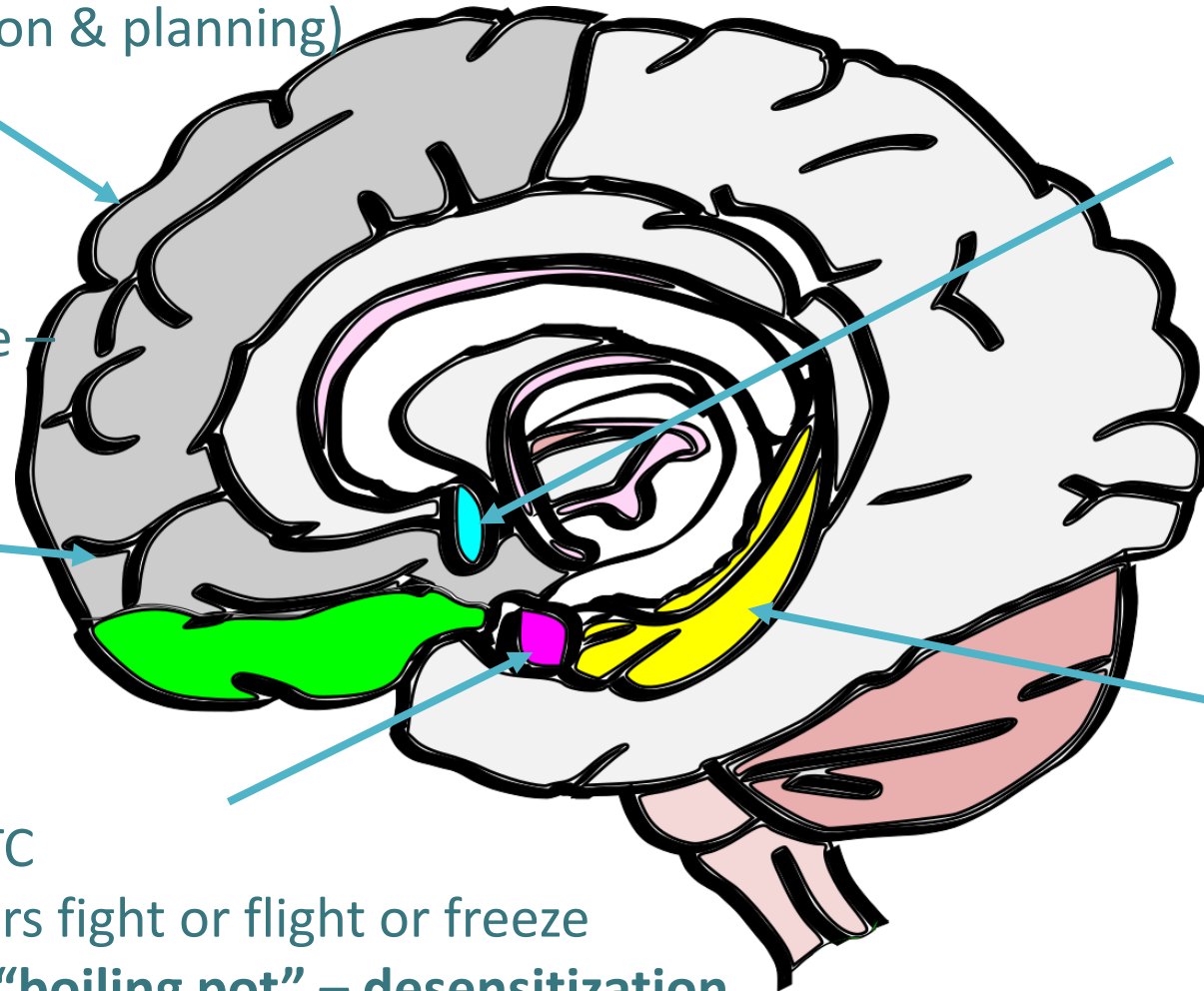
Frontal Lobe –
disruption (organization & planning)

Hypothalamus –
increase production of cortisol

Lateral Orbitofrontal Lobe –
disruption (social &
emotional responses)

Hippocampus –
disruption in memory
(learning, retention, recall &
execution)

Amygdala – Brain's ATC
Acute reaction: triggers fight or flight or freeze
Slow Burn reaction: "boiling pot" – desensitization



Effects of COVID-19: Multiple “Perfect Storms”

Immediate risk - Fitness to Fly:

I’m predisposed to deny any negative health issues

+

chronic stress associated with several existential triggers

+

which alters my mood and cognition (desensitization)

+

undermines my ability self-regulate and accurately self-assess the severity of the issue

Effects of COVID-19: Multiple “Perfect Storms”:

Long Term Risks:

1. Stress which is now “normalized” – the new normal
2. Morphs into something more clinical:
 - *Chronic exposure results in numbing*
 - *Increases anxiety, depression, in some cases PTSD and the need for an anesthetic*
 - *Increases in substance abuse, suicide, overdosing, and family violence*
 - *Keep an eye on the long-haulers*
3. Premature retirement demographic - escalates physical and mental risks



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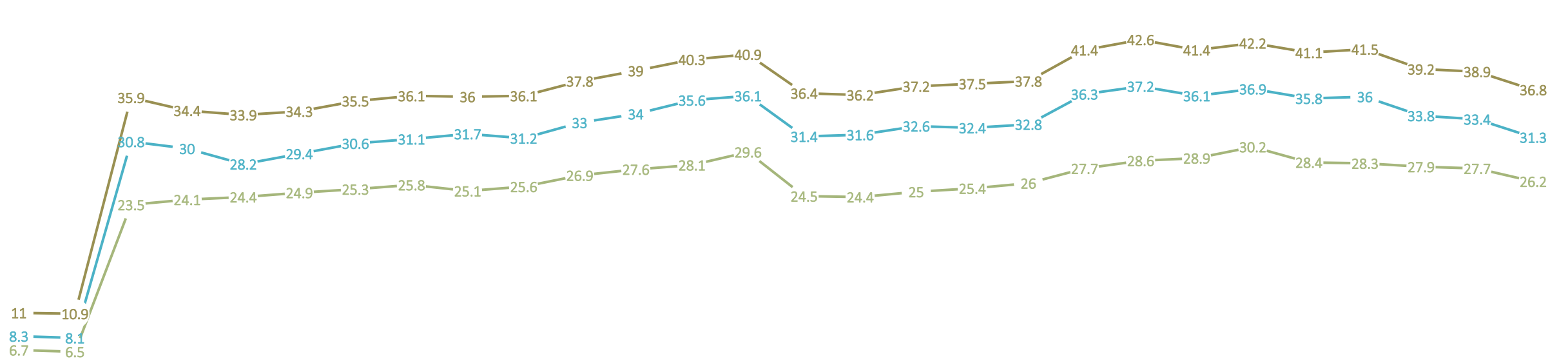


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Predictive Error Prevention

Effects of COVID-19 on Pilot's Mental

INDICATORS OF ANXIETY OR DEPRESSION BASED ON REPORTED FREQUENCY OF SYMPTOMS (%)



— Symptoms of anxiety disorder — Symptoms of depressive disorder — Symptoms of anxiety disorder or depressive disorder

Is this on your radar?



- Pilots are suffering at a higher rate than pre-pandemic
- Those on furlough sink deeper into the “if” they are going to fly again rather than “when”
- Possibility that one or both pilots are suffering in silence
- Reduction in cognitive function increases risk to safety

Management & Pilot Perspectives

Management culpability for chronic and systemic under reporting:

- *Collective / systemic denial, disavowing & minimization*
- *Industry stigma associated with mental health = weakness*
- *Belief that EAP or HR can handle this (“not my problem”)*
- *Reliance on pilots to self identify when we know that most won’t*

The pilot’s perceived cost of full-disclosure:

- *Fear of reprisal, reputation, career, livelihood, lifestyle*
- *Self identity – we often define who we are rather than what we do - “I am a pilot”*

Industry Opportunities

1. Look out for and support one another
2. Make mental health management, disclosure and treatment a “just culture” initiative
3. Remove the stigma of “weakness” by speaking about it openly and often
4. Treat pilot mental health the same as any other medical condition – with the same medical benefits, empathy, and support
5. Elevate pilot mental health to a safety risk worthy of SMS risk identification, quantification, severity, and mitigation
6. Avoid the “we’ve got this covered” tendency – this is a different time and standard EAP/HR support systems are not designed for this

Future Risks

- Is our existing mental health infrastructure designed to manage the psychological and affective (emotional) challenges, short and long term, sufficient?
- Continuing as is to avoid the uncomfortable conversations and challenges (including costs) of facing it
- Risks of self-assessment – we need to build a “village” of support around every pilot
- The vaccine doesn’t cure mental health issues

Let's talk about it...



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