



# Building resilient families

By Andrew Miki



In late 2015, CPCO and Starling Minds' founder and CEO Dr. Andrew Miki launched an online mental health initiative supporting our Practicing Associates. Starling is an online program available to all CPCO members. The program includes an example of an administrator named Virginia to help explain mental health concepts and how to increase resiliency to stress. To learn more about Starling Minds, please read our [earlier blog posts](#).

The Starling program was developed by Dr. Andrew Miki. Andrew is a registered psychologist with over 10 years of experience working with patients to treat depression, anxiety and other mental health issues using Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).

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***This is the fourth of several posts Andrew is contributing to our blog.***

Think back to the time in your life when you decided to become an administrator. Did it feel like a natural extension of your career?

The most frequent reasons that I hear are an intrinsic desire to serve, lead and increase one's scope of influence. These reasons likely outweighed the significant increase in responsibility, commitment and stress that are inherent to an administrator's position. Back then, how could you have known that you would need to manage so many "balls in the air", such as pressures from your board, unpredictable demands from so many parents, budget cutbacks, safety issues, staff politics, potential investigations and students' behaviours? It's only by working as an administrator that you learn the job can be so fulfilling yet, at the same time, be such an all-encompassing part of your life. You probably didn't realize that you were at risk of developing a co-dependent relationship with your smartphone!

**After working with CPCO for one year**, Starling learned that administrators are generally more resilient to stress than an average person. Like many conscientious professionals, their way of dealing with stress is to put their heads down and work through it. This works as long as the energy in their battery can outlast the stressors they face. However, CPCO Associates are still human. You are not invincible or immune to the toll that stress can take over time.

**We have had over 100 CPCO Associates join the Starling community in the past year and the results have been overwhelmingly positive. Over 70% of our members have found improvements in how they feel, their work/life balance, and their understanding of mental health.** Recently one of our users provided us with the following testimonial:

*"I do Toastmasters, which is great for someone with social anxiety. People there have said to me, 'You seem so comfortable up there.' And I laugh and say, 'Actually, I have anxiety disorder, panic disorder, social anxiety.' And they can't believe it. Because you're so careful about how you present to the world, and no one knows you're dying on the inside. I think people need to know. So I'm quite open with people about my mental health. My kids always say, 'Mom, why do you tell people that?' And it's because I want people to know there's no shame in it. If more*

*people would talk about it, there would be less shame, less stigma.*

*It's that stigma that's keeping people from speaking up, and seeking help when they're struggling. Whether that be seeing a counsellor or therapist, or logging onto to Starling Minds. We need to normalize these topics, so everyone knows there's no shame in accessing these supports...Because I think anyone could benefit from Starling, especially educators.*

*"Whether you have diagnosed mental health issues or not, just log in, do the assessment, and see where you land. You may not even know that what you're experiencing isn't normal, that you're struggling without even realizing it. That external perspective is really useful, as are the techniques to help you get back on track. They really work."*

*Jeanne, Principal*

This year, we are focused on improving our members' resilience to stress. That is why we will launch Starling 2.0 on September 15. It includes five new 10-minute modules that focus exclusively on mental health prevention. Our new program analyzes your assessment results and, following the prevention course, it will recommend additional courses (i.e. healthy maintenance, early intervention anxiety and early intervention sadness) to keep you as mentally fit as possible.

In addition, as arranged by CPCO, all Associates will be able to refer their family members at no cost to create their own Starling accounts. This initiative starts on October 3 during Mental Illness Awareness Week and coincides with the release of Starling 3.1. At least 20% of all Canadians will experience mental illness at some point in their lives. These issues do not happen in isolation. It also affects those who are close to the person experiencing them. It is our hope that providing this support can help keep your family unit mentally strong and improve your quality of life.

With Starling 3.1, our goal is to further reduce the stigma of mental health and help people become the best version of themselves.