

# Prescribing Happiness: A Community Health Care Initiative

## Focused on Wellness for the Health Care Team

Nikola Grujich<sup>1,2</sup>, Liv Grujich<sup>2</sup>, Mary Walling-Field<sup>3</sup>, Melinda Gilmour<sup>3</sup>, Kathy Bresett<sup>4</sup>



### The Challenge

The prevalence of compromised mental health skyrocketed during and post COVID in the population as a whole, and specifically, in over-worked health care workers (HCW).

Common themes that come up in our discussions with HCW workers include: high rates of burnout, reported lower job satisfaction, moral injury, unpredictability, sense of hopelessness, long term fatigue, and lower retention rates for workers.

Statistics Canada survey of 18,000 health-care workers across Canada revealed 7 in 10 health care workers reported worsening mental health as a result of working through the pandemic. Nurses, in particular reported declining mental health, with 37% saying they have poor mental health, compared to a fifth of the general population.<sup>1</sup>

*"We need to schedule time for our own wellness, and that of our teams, or we will be forced to spend time on our illness."*

-Liv Grujich, Prescribing Happiness

### The Importance of Putting On Our Own Oxygen Mask FIRST



Health care workers have the great responsibility and privilege of taking care of others. To be able to do this, effectively and ongoing, one must first take care of themselves.

Due to lack of time and resources, the self-care practices that we all know to be effective are forgotten or ignored.

The positive effects on the brain and body that result from the ongoing pursuit of self-care and wellness practices allow us to enjoy a healthier, happier life.

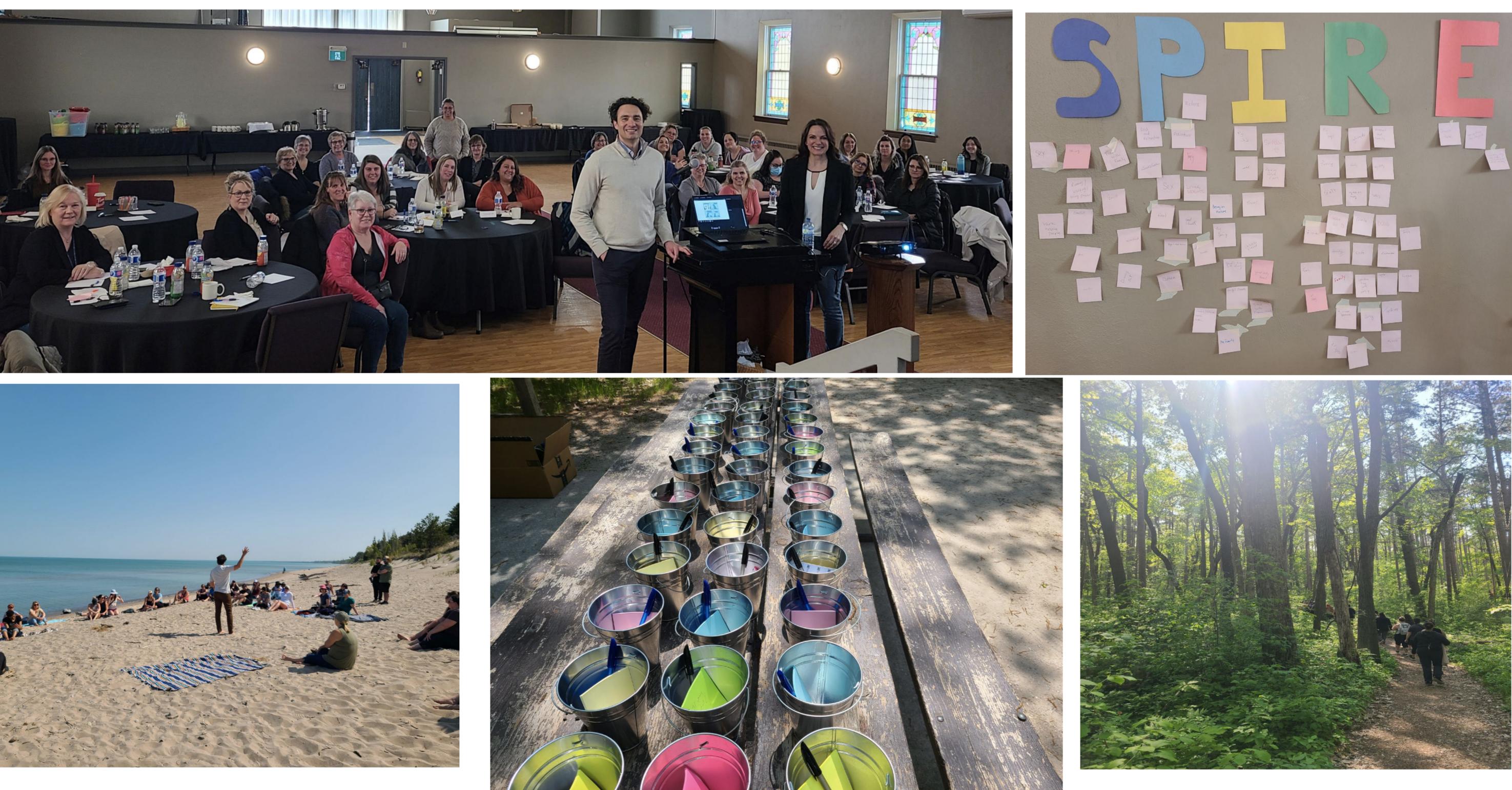
Engaged employees are 87% less likely to leave their organization<sup>2</sup>, experience more job satisfaction and are better able to cope with stress and take on average 15 fewer sick days every year<sup>3</sup>. Happy employees are 12% more productive.<sup>4</sup>

### The Solution

Goal: To support rural CHC staff, build stronger mental health resilience and to promote physical/psychological health through education and team building.

Intervention: Launching with a one day in person wellness retreat for staff (clinical and administration) allowed the teams to take a break from their day to day and indulge in wellness themed activities. Participation was voluntary.

Subsequently, a 12-session curriculum was developed and delivered virtually on a monthly basis. Topics were curated and customized for the needs of the CHCs and centered around the SPIRE model of happiness<sup>5</sup>.

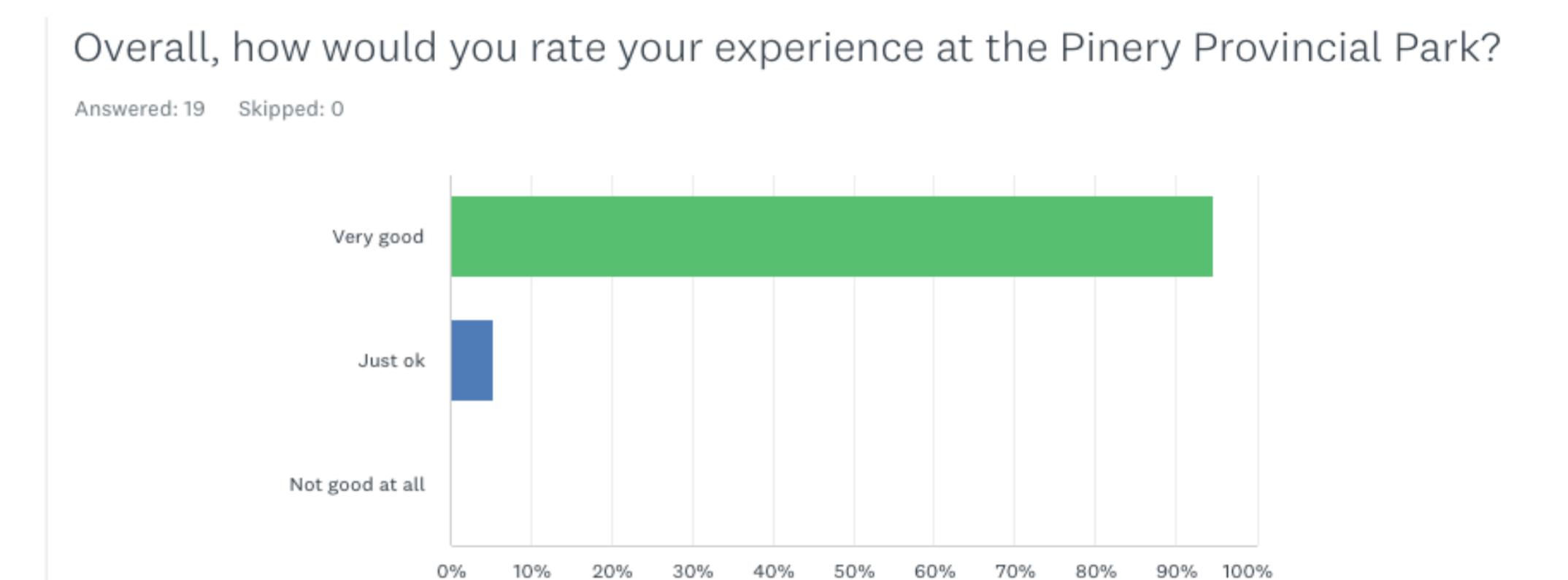


*"These sessions inspired me to prioritize mindfulness & self-care with practical tips that were easy to apply in the workplace."*

-Sarah, Medical Administration

### The Outcome

Based on our literature review, this is the first wellness program piloted to rural CHCs. The one-day, off-site wellness retreat received positive reviews. In addition, the 12-session online curriculum was appreciated specifically for the self-care strategies that were practiced each session.



*"It was really beneficial to bring the teams together to get to know one another, to digest where we all were individually and then as teams."*

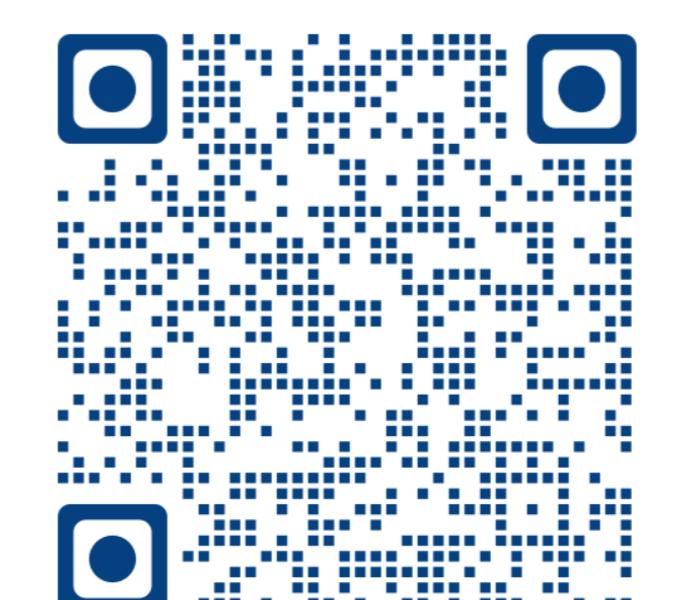
-Retreat attendee survey respondent

*"Our team retreat was held in an outdoor provincial park and this created the perfect setting for holistic reflection on understanding ourselves and our work."*

Kathy Bresett, Executive Director

*"The relevant content and context in which you developed our program provides opportunities for engagement, self-reflection and meaningful discussion. Your easy manner of facilitating this to support healthier self-care strategies, and provide tools to use for overall happiness has had tremendous positive feedback."*

-Melinda Jayne Gilmour, Director of Clinical Services



### References

1. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210202/dq210202a-eng.htm> Accessed on May 1, 2024.
2. Corporate Executive Board, Driving Performance and Engagement through Employee Retention, St. Cloud State University, 2004
3. Ziggi Ivan Santini et al, Mental Health and Prevention, Elsevier, 2022 Warwick University Study on Employee Well-being
4. Clement Bellet et al, Does Employee Happiness Have an Impact on Productivity?, University of Oxford, 2023.
5. Tal Ben-Shahar, Happiness Studies: An Introduction, Palgrave MacMillan Publishing, 2021.