**Animal Programs Mental Health Understanding and Needs**

* **We deal with animal illness and death on a regular basis**
  + Multifactorial
    - *Grief*
      * Primary grief – they are our family
      * Secondary grief – feeling the loss for our brethren on our own or other teams
      * Compound grief – loss can occur frequently & unexpectedly
        + Multiple animals on one husbandry team
        + All animals for veterinary team
    - *Guilt*
      * Our animals rely upon us for everything
      * Died under our care / in our hands /could we have done more, or less?
    - *Trauma*
      * Traumatic deaths
      * May be unable to prevent – e.g. animal introductions
      * Necropsy attendance – seeing beloved animals in a thousand pieces
    - *Anxiety*
      * “Today, tomorrow, and in the future, I have to be able to function safely and effectively in similar circumstances”
        + Anesthesia
        + Surgery
        + Husbandry
      * Tomorrow will my animal be alive
        + Disease outbreak, e.g. EMCV
        + Individual disease, e.g. EEHV
    - *Having to relive experiences*
      * Working in the same areas where animal(s) lived and/or died
      * Guests / Volunteers ask what happened
      * Necropsy mementos
      * Debriefings
    - *Compassion fatigue, burnout*
* **Teams involved:**
  + Animal Husbandry – animal keepers/aquarists (care takers), managers
  + Animal Health - veterinarians, veterinary technicians (nurses), keepers, managers
  + Behavioral Husbandry/Science
  + Guest animal experience – interpretive guides
  + Animal Nutrition, Water Sciences, Dive Team, Conservation
  + Senior Leaders
* **Support needed:**
  + A well thought out strategy with input from our team and mental health professionals
  + Peer support – folks who understand our business, our emotions, our mental well-being
  + Mental health first aiders (Mental Health Advocates) – trained members of our teams who understand our business
  + Mental health professionals who understand our business
  + Education on brain health, resilience, stress, and anxiety