The financial realities of the pandemic means that people are often well aware that their physical and mental health are suffering but feel a lack of control over their circumstances.

"I moved into a basement suite after we lost our house, right before COVID-19 hit, and it's extremely dark. My sleep habits are pretty bad ... and I'm having trouble focusing on work when I can't go to cafes," says Victoria Campbell, who is low-income and lives with a pre-existing disability.

"Housing is a struggle, and a major source of stress," she told the Star. She had to cancel a gym membership because the uncertainty of the pandemic makes it unreasonable to pay an upfront fee. Instead, she swims laps at a pool, but has still gained weight.

On the other hand, Campbell suddenly feels less alone with her challenges because issues she has struggled with for years are suddenly much more common.

"It's the first time in recent history that everyone has been part of the same anxiety cycle for such a protracted period of time," she said.

This is all very concerning for Steve Joordens, a professor of psychology at University of Toronto Scarborough.

"Our stress response evolved to help us deal with so-called acute threats, threats like the emergence of a predator from the bushes. When that happens our body enters 'fight or flee mode.' The hormone cortisol is secreted causing our heart and lungs to work faster."

"This reaction becomes a problem when a threat is chronic, when you can't fight it, can't flee it, and it just won't go away," Joordens told the Star.

When this happens, people get certain symptoms like fatigue, difficulty thinking through complex thoughts, greying hair and weight gain.

"Perhaps most concerning is a negative impact on our immune system. That is, we become *more* susceptible to the virus," he said.

Is there anything we can do to lessen the stress and give our immune systems a fighting chance?