Last week was hard. I cried every day. I might even cry every day this week too. I’m not my usual self. Usually I’m pretty chill, able to maneuver the ups and downs of life. Resilient I like to think. But not last week. Last week I was anything but.

I’m a Registered Nurse of 34 years and I’ve seen lots. I pride myself on being a mental health advocate and I’m a facilitator for mental health in the workplace. I talk lots about, getting help, coping strategies and resilience. It’s my passion. But these times are unprecedented. I feel the stress of COVID 19. I work in the community with a mostly elderly population and they know the deal. Survival statistics aren’t on their side. If they get COVID they will likely die. I worry about previous clients that are now in nursing homes, they are extra high risk. We all patiently wait for the daily news briefings; how many new cases?, how many died?, how many in hospital?, How many recovered? There is the extra stress of social distancing and self isolation. People are missing their usual social supports. There is stress over finances with many people not working.

We have four grown children and three of them are essential workers in health care. One is an intensive care nurse carrying my first grandchild. One is a home care nurse. One works as a personal care assistant in a nursing home. They are all spending 12 or more hours a day in personal protective equipment. They miss a fresh air breath. Behind their ears are red from wearing a mask all day. They try to remember it’s protecting the frail like their grandmother. They are stressed. COVIDs occupying their thoughts and our conversations. We have daily phone calls and motherly conversations around resilience; Are you practicing your deep breathing?, Are you doing your meditation app?, Did you get some exercise today?, Did you get enough sleep?, Are you eating well?. There’s debriefing for most days. I really just want to hug them, but I can’t. Not now.

But last week was too much. Amidst all our stress in our COVID world, a gunman would go on a rampage and kill 22 innocent people over a 12 hour period. He would eventually be gunned down 30 minutes from our home. This is now known as Canadas deadliest mass shooting. This isn’t suppose to happen in our small province. Completely innocent people; a female police officer, a teacher, a home care nurse, a teenager, her parents and a pregnant home support worker to name a few. They were someone’s parents, sons, daughters, sisters and brothers. They will all be missed. A senseless act of violence to innocent people just going about their lives. Its incomprehensible. Families devastated. Communities hurting. Everyone is trying to do their best to support each other. Nova Scotia strong we say. I don’t feel strong. I’m hurting for those families. Their lives will never be the same. Emotions are raw. I keep reminding myself about making space and self compassion. This is hard. Sometimes resilience is just being human and knowing it’s OK to cry.