

Managing Stress and Psychosocial Wellbeing is as Important as Managing Your Physical Health

~ We are all in this together ~

As we adapt to our current circumstances – following new guidelines for social distancing while continuing to do our jobs, get groceries, care for children home from school and our elderly relatives and neighbours – it's normal to feel overwhelmed. It's important, however, to avoid feelings of isolation as we work to change our behaviours from wanting to connect and be physically close to one another as social beings to respecting social distancing.

Here are some tips for staying emotionally healthy and resilient during the COVID-19 pandemic

IT'S OKAY TO NOT BE OKAY

It's normal to experience stress and anxiety in the face of circumstances we cannot control. When uncomfortable feelings come up, pay attention to them and know what you are feeling in the moment is reasonable, given these unprecedented times. By acknowledging this, these feelings may lessen and become more manageable.

It may be helpful to notice what your emotions and body are telling you:

- Are you noticing any anxiety, sadness, anger or detachment?
- Are you noticing any change in your appetite or patterns of sleep?

When you notice troubling symptoms, it's important to consider how you might find ways to alleviate these symptoms through self-care activities. It can also be extremely helpful to share what you are going through with someone you trust who is supportive. You may find that once you share what you are experiencing with someone you feel close to, things become much more bearable.

STRIVE TO LET GO OF THINGS THAT ARE BEYOND YOUR CONTROL

Although this may be easier said than done, when we focus on things that are within our control, it can help us feel more positive and hopeful. Some things that you might consider doing to improve how you feel include:

- **Helping Others**
By assisting others (for example, offering to deliver groceries or provide social support to more isolated individuals such as seniors), you may also benefit from focusing on their needs. Through these acts of kindness, you can expect to experience a sense of purpose and satisfaction.

- **Self-Care**
Some ways to take care of yourself include eating healthy foods, getting enough sleep and exercising. Going outside and getting fresh air can improve your mental health – but remember to **keep a safe distance from others**.
- **Staying connected**
Finding ways to stay emotionally connected when we can't be physically close can reduce your sense of isolation. By regularly reaching out to close family members and friends through text, phone or video calls, you are showing them that you care about how they are managing. Likewise, share your own strategies for coping with them and ask for any help you may need. There are many online forums that you can also join to stay connected with others in your neighbourhood and communities.
- **Keeping a routine**
Setting a routine for yourself to provide some structure to your day can be helpful as it maintains positive habits.

If you are working at home, consider adopting some of the following habits:

- Keep the same routines as when you were going into work (for example, get dressed each morning)
- Take your lunch break, stepping away from your computer and other work tasks to improve your concentration and focus when you are working
- Try to take a walk outside during a lunch break and at the end of the work day to create a boundary between your work and home life
- Turn off your work phones and computers if you are not required to be on call once your workday is over.

Other good routines we can all benefit from include:

- Eating well and staying active
- Getting up at the same time each morning and going to bed at the same time each evening
- Regularly reaching out to friends and family
- Engaging in positive activities that feel nurturing, including relaxation exercises such as deep breathing and yoga, listening to uplifting music, reading, gardening, cooking, spending time in nature, playing board games and doing puzzles
- Limiting the amount of time you spend each day on social media and news related to the pandemic and only consuming information from reputable sources
- Structuring daily activities for your children
- Maintaining a sense of humour.

WHEN SHOULD I SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP FOR COVID-19-RELATED STRESS OR ANXIETY?

Some of the warning signs may include:

- Persistent anxiety, worry, insomnia or irritability
- Avoiding social contacts to the extent that you have become isolated in an unhealthy way
- Taking your temperature over and over when you are well or constantly seeking reassurance about your health from doctors, friends, family or the Internet
- Taking excessive or unnecessary hygiene precautions, such as wearing a facemask at home when you have no symptoms of the virus
- Overusing alcohol or drugs or overeating as a way of coping with stress
- Getting feedback from family and/or friends that they are concerned about you because you seem unusually worried or stressed out.

Are you or is someone you know in crisis or feeling suicidal?

If the risk is immediate, call 9-1-1

Or

**Please call 1-833-456-4566 toll free, text 45645 or visit
www.crisisservicescanada.ca 24/7**

WHERE TO FIND MENTAL HEALTH HELP:

City of Toronto Mental Health

http://insidetoronto.ca/mental_wellness/index.htm

World Health Organization: https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf?sfvrsn=6d3578af_2

The Psychological Foundation of Canada – Stress Strategies: <https://www.stressstrategies.ca/>

Canadian Mental Health Association <https://cmha.ca/news/covid-19-and-mental-health>

Let's Take a Breath Together:

https://www.calm.com/blog/take-a-deep-breath?utm_source=lifecycle&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=difficult_times_subs_031720

Canadian Red Cross

<https://www.redcross.ca/blog/2020/3/taking-care-of-mental-health-during-covid-19>

<https://www.redcross.ca/blog/2020/3/working-from-home-solutions-to-the-challenges-of-an-abrupt-workspace-change>

WHERE CAN I GET MORE TRUSTED INFORMATION ABOUT COVID-19?

World Health Organization: <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>

Public Health Agency of Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html>

Ontario Ministry of Health: https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus?_ga=2.8453937.545817279.1584977801-825715533.1555593618

Toronto Public Health: <https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/>