

Youth Wellness Centre

TIPS FOR MENTAL WELLNESS during the COVID-19 outbreak

Last updated March 19, 2020

- 1) **Go outside.** Breathe some fresh air. At least for now, being outside is NOT cancelled! Do this *especially* if you feel anxious/depressed and don't feel like doing it. Notice how you feel afterward.
 - a) Sit on your patio. Go for a walk. Find signs of spring. Listen for bird sounds. Breathe some fresh air.
 - b) Try to keep about 6 feet of distance from other people you encounter - but smile and make eye contact with everyone you see. Wave, say hi, compliment people on their dogs/babies/face mask fashion.

- 2) **Move your body.** Make up a dance, do a yoga video, do some stretches. Exercise helps us manage our stress levels and shake off some anxiety.
 - a) Make a list of your fave Youtube resources. Here are some of ours!
 - i) Yoga with Adriene: <https://www.youtube.com/user/yogawithadriene>
 - ii) Popsugar Fitness <https://www.youtube.com/user/popsugartvfit>
 - iii) Insert your favourite resources here
 - b) **DO** this *especially* if you feel anxious or depressed and don't feel like doing it. Notice how you feel afterward.

- 3) **Accomplish something.** Even accomplishing small things while we're practicing social distancing can be really helpful to keep our brain and bodies moving. Some of us like to feel accomplished and productive to be well, and that's okay!
 - a) Ideas: wash the dishes, make a meal for yourself, sign up for an e-learning course, give your dog a bath...

- 4) **Help others.** This might mean texting a friend or a loved one who's socially isolated, or getting connected with an online group that's trying to help people (like this Hamilton Caremongering group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Hamont.Response.COVID19/>), Leave a note for your neighbors to see if they need someone to drop off groceries. If you have a few extra dollars, give money to area food banks trying to help (like [Good Shepherd](#) or [Neighbour to Neighbour](#). [541 Cafe](#) is handing out sack lunches every day if you are in need of food.

- 5) **Notice & accept.** You're likely having a lot of thoughts and feelings right now. Try not to judge yourself for being worried, upset, anxious or depressed. It may be helpful to

label what you're experiencing "I'm noticing a lot of worried thoughts" or "I'm noticing my heart is beating faster than usual." **AND....**

- 6) *Practice healthy behaviours.* What we DO in response to our thoughts and feelings should be considered relative to what's effective for this particular situation.
 - a) Follow public health guidelines such as frequent hand washing, not touching your face, social distancing are effective...
 - b) Isolating emotionally from those you care about and allowing yourself to become hopeless is not effective (and neither is obsessively scrolling through news articles about Coronavirus)

- 7) *Practice mindfulness.* We all need a break from worrying and planning constantly. Sometimes our minds tell us "to do something," but some things are out of our control. When a particular worry pops up, ask yourself: "Is this under my control right now?" and if the answer is no, try to do something to help you take a break from worrying. For example, if you are worried about when school will reopen, but there is nothing you can do about that right now, check out some of the mindfulness resources at <https://www.virusanxiety.com/>, or your own favorite mindfulness app or podcast instead.

- 8) *Engage in healthy coping.* Share your concerns and how you are feeling with a friend or family member in a healthy manner. Surround yourself with individuals who bring you some comfort. Avoid panic, it can be contagious.
 - Take care of your body: exercise, dance, eat something healthy, sleep, avoid ingesting substances, [progressive muscle relaxation](#)
 - Improve your sense of mastery by taking care of even small things: clean your room, send an email to a friend/family member, etc.

- 9) *Hang out with yourself.* Find hobbies you can do on your own: reading a book you have had on the shelf for a while, journaling, knitting, playing an instrument, or coloring.

- 10) *Hang out with friends & family.* Social distancing is hard work, but it doesn't mean you have to be socially isolated, too! Find hobbies you can do with friends in a video chat, like knitting, or watching Netflix (see if you can sync up a movie!). Think of activities you can do while on the phone together that don't require a lot of talking (sometimes it's nice to have silent company).

- 11) *Limit your news consumption.* It's okay to not want to watch the news 24/7 and to take healthy breaks from the flood of new articles being posted about the virus every hour. Having information about the virus is important and necessary, AND knowing your

limit is just as important, if not more. Try: Setting time limits (ie. 30 minutes a day of scrolling through COVID19 related news, or 10 minutes max for worrying about the virus)

12) *Find trusted sources* If you *are* going to read about it, make sure that the information you are receiving is from a legitimate source, such as:

- <https://www.virusfacts.ca/> From the Ontario Medical Association
- <https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus>
- <https://www.cbc.ca/>
- Here is a great explanation from the Washington Post of how social distancing will help reduce transmission of COVID-19:
<https://apple.news/AWTPfZ4rMQwmOos2PRsrVRw>

13) *For now, not forever.* We know that no one can guarantee that things will be 100% okay, ever. But remind yourself as much as possible that all of this, the pandemic, the social distancing, the fear, the isolation, ordering groceries online and not being able to go to your fave community spots... it's all just for now, not forever.

Some great online mental health supports

www.virusanxiety.com Specific tips for coping with anxiety and depression related to COVID-19

www.bigwhitewall.com Peer support for mental health concerns online, supported by the Ontario government

And specifically for help if you're struggling with substance use:

<https://www.intherooms.com> Virtual groups for addiction recovery

Smartrecovery.org SMART recovery (peer-led addiction support groups) online

<http://aa-intergroup.org/directory.php> Online AA (12 step addiction recovery) meetings

Tips adapted with thanks from:

<https://www.unr.edu/nevada-today/blogs/2020/mental-health-and-coping-associated-with-covid-19> by Jacqueline Pistorello, Ph.D. Director, Counseling Services