

Things to help take care of yourself in the wake of COVID-19

- 1. Set your own boundaries around access to news on covid-19 and social media.** This will look different for everyone. It may be scheduling “worry time” when you allow yourself a set amount of time to look at the news. It may be limiting it to before 8:00 pm. It may be reducing your phone use overall. Whatever feels comfortable for you. Also, be critical of your information sources. In the current climate, it can be easy to gain misinformation, which may cause you unnecessary stress and anxiety. Stick with reliable, reputable, evidence-based sources.
- 2. Engage in self-care activities – keep your mind and body active and remember your basic needs.** Self-care can be broken down into different domains such as emotional, physical, spiritual, social etc. Check in with yourself about what kind of self-care you need. It can look very different depending on what domain you may need a recharge in (ex. Having a hot bath, connecting with a spouse, exercising, completing mindfulness exercise, doing a puzzle). There is an attachment for different dimensions of self-care. Mindfulness can be a useful part of this. I have also provided some links below to different guided mindfulness meditations. Remember, during this time, it will be important to keep our minds and bodies engaged. This will take some adjustments based on your individual living situations. Continue to try eat healthy, drink lots of water, get rest, and keep your body moving.
- 3. Use Grounding skills to cope with anxiety.** First line of defense: diaphragmatic breathing. This means a breath that engages the diaphragm and fully fills the lungs. When you do this, concentrate on expanding your belly outward (it is a similar feeling as to if you were to do a abdominal crunch), keeping your chest flat and shoulders relaxed. Breathe in through your nose to get the most filtered air. Other relaxation exercises include progressive muscular relaxation, and imagery work. I have provided a handout that better explains these exercises. Grounding involves bringing ourselves back into the present moment and out of the future (anxious thoughts) or the past (recalling memories). There are a myriad of grounding techniques, and I find it helpful to think about what senses you connect most with or, what learning style you work best with, and use this as a jumping off point for establishing grounding skills that will be effective for you. Some examples:

Sight/Visual learners -> look at your environment and name 10 colours you see, or 10 objects. Pick one object and describe it to yourself in excruciating detail. Move on to another object. Engage in an imagery exercise.

Sound -> listen to a soothing song, turn on nature sounds.

Smell -> light a candle, have a soothing scent with you (lavender or eucalyptus are common, think of what would elicit good feelings)

Touch/Hands on learners -> hold an ice cube in your hand, have an object that is soothing to touch or rub (be careful with this one, ensure it is/can be cleaned), cuddle your pet

4. Maintain social connections. We are social creatures by nature, and isolation can be incredibly damaging. It is **important** for us to follow recommendations and engage in physical distancing, so we may need to engage in other creative ways of connecting through phone calls, video chats, or spending time with those who live with us at home. Talk to each other and keep lines of communication open. We are all in this together, it will be important to support each other.

5. Acknowledge how you are feeling. These are uncertain times and things are confusing. **It is normal to be worried and scared.** Be kind to yourself. When you're feeling off, take a breath, and say, "I am feeling overwhelmed/scared/unsure/anxious/etc right now. That makes sense, I'm not alone, and it's okay. What do I need to offer myself in this moment to help?" You can also challenge your thoughts and fears. Ask yourself if this is something you can change/fix right now. If not, ask yourself to put it away for now and shift your concentration to something that will help you feel better (all that self-care!).

If you need additional support, please don't hesitate to reach out.

For immediate crisis support in the Waterloo-Wellington Area: Here 24/7 – 1-844-437-3247 or 519-821-3582

Utilize your EAP programs, funding for private therapy, or talk to your Doctor about options within the Guelph Family Health team for short-term counseling.

Attachments:

- Self-care domains
- Deep breathing, imagery, and progressive muscular relaxation document

Mindfulness Meditation videos

Be the Mountain (good for dealing with uncertainty) (two different options with a little bit different approaches):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Kg-Z8RIiAI>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/my-brothers-keeper/201709/be-the-mountain-guided-meditation-video-script>

Root Grounding: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vApUMcbFSiE>

This webpage has a bunch of different mindfulness meditations you can pick from to find one that may work better for you:

<https://www.mindful.org/mindful-top-10-guided-meditations-of-2018/>

Additional Resources:

These websites offer further options for you in terms of education, connections, and information.

- Another option for mental health and COVID-19 (has info for parents):

<https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-health-and-covid-19>

- Great resource that has been set up geared toward current COVID-19 concerns and mental health. Take a look at the take a break tab, it has some pretty cool options to click on (has info for parents):

<https://www.virusanxiety.com/>

- Anxiety Canada has tons of resources for managing anxiety including: exercises, articles, podcasts, creating anxiety plans with learning modules –

<https://anxietycanada.com/>

- Big White Wall offers different learning modules, resources and connections with others in relation to mental health. You do have to create an account but it is free - <https://www.bigwhitewall.com/?lang=en-ca>

- Mindshift CBT App

Resources:

1. <https://www.mhe-sme.org/covid-19/>
2. <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/how-manage-and-reduce-stress>
3. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fabout%2Fcoping.html
4. <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/#collapse553f6>
5. <https://www.therapistaid.com/>
6. <https://www.verywellmind.com/grounding-techniques-for-ptsd-2797300>