

Stressbusting During COVID-19

Simple Ways to Help you Cope

Do not forget your regular coping skills – they will work well now

There is no ‘right way’ to deal with stress and its symptoms – everyone is different. What is important is to work through your experience of the pandemic at your own pace. Some people might find it helpful to talk about it with friends and family. For others, keeping busy doing other activities may be more helpful than talking about it.

Here are a few ideas to try:

Sleep, Diet and Exercise

- Regular healthy habits, like good sleep, diet, and exercise are important during this time.
- Go to bed at your regular time each night and get up at the regular time each morning.
- You might find your appetite has changed. Try to eat regular meals and snacks. It is normal to crave more comfort foods. Try to include vegetables and fruit, whole grains, and protein.
- Do something active each day: go for a walk outside, do some simple stretches, try an exercise video. Exercise helps physical and mental symptoms of stress.
- Avoid using too much alcohol or cannabis (or any other drugs). These can make you feel more anxious and affect your sleep.

Create a regular routine

- While you might have a new “normal,” try to keep to your usual activities and routine as much as possible.
- Plan out your day! Plan time for doing housework and meal prep. Plan time to connect with others by phone or other technology. Plan time to do things you enjoy.
- If you are working from home, plan at least one task a day and make sure to include something for fun and social connections.

Keep your social network

- Make phone or virtual contact with friends and family daily. Reach out to people you haven’t talked to in a while. Remember this time is especially hard for seniors and people who have health issues.
- It’s important to keep a sense of connection when we cannot be physically close to others. Use technology to video chat if possible.

Limit how much time you spend talking about the virus

- Key updates may be important but talking about it for a long time will only add to your stress.

Accept the concern and care of others

- Reach out to the people who support you. It’s okay to ask for help. Let people know if you’re having a hard time.

Check your self-talk

- Remind yourself that the current situation is temporary. You have gotten through hard times before and you will get through this time.

- If you don't have any symptoms and have not been in a high-risk situation, contain the "what if" thoughts, like "what if I have the virus."
- If you may be at risk, seek appropriate medical care ASAP.

Try "unplugging"

- The internet is full of alarming and incorrect information. Avoid social media and other platforms as much as possible as sources of information about COVID and encourage others to do the same.
- If you want an update, use trusted sources like government websites and try to limit checking these sources to once per day or less.

Limit the amount of time you spend watching the news

- You should get all the news you need in 1-2 key broadcasts a day. Remember the press will always lead with tragedy. Listen to the experts, not the gossip.

Watch for the good news stories

- If you filter the news or social media, they are there. Young people helping seniors, people donating to food banks, people singing from their balconies and people buying groceries for each other. Hard times can bring out the best in people. Lead with the positive.
- Many organizations have made free content available to the public. Check out free concerts, online performances or museum virtual tours.
- Listen to inspirational talks from political, religious and cultural leaders including the Pope, the Prime Minister, and the Queen. Avoid listening to those who focus on the negative.

Show kindness to others

- Check in with a neighbour. If you have to go out, buy groceries for others and leave them on their front steps.
- If possible, donate to your favourite local charity.
- If you know someone who works in health care or an essential service (like a truck driver or a clerk in a grocery store or pharmacy), send them an email or mail them a card. Your support can brighten their day.

Look for the positives during your time of isolation

- Many of us often wish for down time. This isn't how we hoped to get it but try to find positives.
- Make time for relaxing and doing things that you enjoy – do something nice for yourself. Do what you love to do! What hobbies can you pick up? What projects can you get completed? Maybe you will want to do some spring cleaning or things that you have been putting off.
- It is OK just to get through the day, too.

And finally

- STAY home, STAY home, STAY home
- WASH your hands, WASH your hands, WASH your hands

Remember, we are all in this together and this too shall pass