

TIPS FOR MENTAL WELLNESS during the COVID-19 pandemic

During this time, it's important to maintain routine, as best as you can to keep yourself well. Your routine may not look the same, so it's important to create a new one, for our new "normal" during this time.

Some things to consider:

- Getting up/going to bed at the same time daily
- Showering/bathing/dressing and doing other personal care
- Eating 3 meals with snacks in between AND staying hydrated
- Make a plan each day – write it down

Here are some possibilities and ideas you might include in a daily routine:

1) *Move your body.* Put on your favourite song, make up a dance, do a video, do some stretches. Exercise helps us manage our stress levels and shake off some anxiety.

a) Make a list of your favourite songs and play them!

b) Grab some canned goods and do some strengthening with your arms **DO** this *especially* if you feel anxious or depressed and don't feel like doing it. Notice how you feel afterward.

2) *Go outside.* Breathe some fresh air. At least for now, being outside is NOT cancelled! Try to do this daily for at least 20 minutes.

Do this *especially* if you feel anxious/depressed and don't feel like doing it. Notice how you feel afterward.

a) If you're worried about safety, plan ahead. Choose times of the day that are quieter, and choose routes less traveled.

b) If you can't get outside, open all your windows for even a few minutes. Sit on your patio if you have one. Stand at an open window.

*Find signs of spring. Listen for bird sounds. Breathe some fresh air.

c) 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.

**Fresh air does amazing things for our spirits!*

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!

Ideas: wash the dishes, make a meal for yourself, go through your clothing, reorganize a drawer, call an old friend/family, complete an old project.

4) Help others. This might mean calling a friend in the building, or the community. Or texting a friend or a loved one who's socially isolated. Leave a note on your door for your neighbours to see, with words of encouragement.

5) Notice & accept. You're likely having a lot of thoughts and feelings right now. Do your best 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 – is it effective for this particular situation? Be curious about this. Maybe it is. And maybe it isn't.

a) Follow public health guidelines such as frequent hand washing, not touching your face, social distancing.

b) Isolating emotionally from those you care about and allowing yourself to become hopeless is not effective (and neither is repeatedly 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 things will reopen, and there is nothing you can do about that right now, what can you do? What do you know? If there is something within your control – focus on that for this moment.

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,
- Improve your sense of accomplishment by taking care of even small things: clean a room in your apartment, 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 and other needle work or crafts, playing an instrument, or colouring.

10) *Visit 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 “Virtual” way. Maybe on the phone, a video chat, like knitting, or watching a show together! 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). Ask your friends/family what they are doing, get some new ideas!

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 hearing about COVID19 related news, or 10 minutes max for worrying about the virus)

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

CBC news (radio, TV or online) Trudeau's daily address

- <https://www.virusfacts.ca/> From the Ontario Medical Association
- <https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus>

13) For now, not forever. You are not alone. 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/deliveries and not being able to go to your favourite community spots... it's all for now, not forever.