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10 Ways to Protect Your Mental Health During a Pandemic

Posted by **Medavie Blue Cross** on June 18, 2020

Does COVID-19 have you feeling low and struggling to cope? Are you going through a range of emotions – from wanting to hide under the blankets to wanting to scream into the pillows? You're not alone. **The struggle is real, very real, for a lot of Canadians.**

Stress, anxiety, fear and even anger are all normal reactions to the effects and unknowns of the current global health and economic crisis we now face. However, **left unmanaged, these issues can lead to other more serious emotional, psychological, and even physical problems,** including heart disease and high blood pressure.

Our Top 10 List

As part of our mission to improve the overall wellbeing of Canadians, we've compiled this Top 10 list, based on the expert advice of our trusted health care partners, to help you protect your mental health during this pandemic.

1. Maintain healthy habits

Eat well. Exercise regularly. Get enough sleep. All are smart health habits that can reduce stress and anxiety, and prevent small health issues from turning into big ones.

2. Keep in touch

When we're physically isolated we should stay socially connected – for our mental health and that of others. Reach out to friends, neighbours and family members for mental health check-ins on a regular basis. Now's the time to lean on each other. A simple phone call, FaceTime or text can go a long way in helping all of us get through this difficult time.

3. Find a balance

While it's important to be informed, constantly checking your screens for updates on COVID-19 can really take a toll on your mental health. Follow the news and social media in moderation and get your news from trusted, credible sources.

We've listed a few below that offer a wealth of information, tools and resources to help us stay strong and resilient.*

4. Do everything in moderation

Limit your screen time to lower your levels of stress and anxiety. Moderate caffeine intake; too much java, especially before bedtime, can make your heart race and interfere with your sleep. Don't give into the temptation to indulge in happy hours on week nights; overconsumption of alcohol can make us anything but happy. Set your "wine o'clock" to weekends only.

5. Practice self-care

If you're the primary caregiver in your household, your health and wellness should be a top priority. This includes getting a little "me time" to rest and recharge. Explore self-care strategies like mindfulness, yoga, meditation, art, or exercise to help manage low mood, stress and anxiety.

6. Be kind to yourself

Know that you're not alone in feeling like this – everyone is dealing with the same challenges. Talk to someone you trust. Sharing your feelings can help put things into perspective and help you feel more positive.

7. Stick to a routine

Keep to regular routines as much as possible, while ensuring a good balance of working, playing and relaxing with family. Having structure can keep your mind focused on daytoday activities and off COVID-19, while creating a sense of normalcy for you and your loved ones.

8. Focus on family

Children always need the love and attention of their parents, especially now. Give them extra time and attention. Listen to your children, and reassure them that their feelings are normal under these extraordinary circumstances.

9. Do what feels good

What gives you happiness? Is it reading, listening to music, chatting with a friend, playing an instrument? All the activities that “spark joy” in your life, as well as the coping skills that have helped you get through tough times before, can form your COVID-19 coping strategy.

10. Seek support

If your symptoms of anxiety are causing you significant distress or are interfering with your ability to function normally, it may be time to get expert help. **Here are some signs that you may benefit from professional advice and assistance:**

- You can't think about anything other COVID-19
- Your anxiety disrupts your daily activities
- You isolate yourself from others
- You feel hopeless or angry about the situation
- You have a hard time eating or sleeping well
- You experience physical symptoms such as frequent headaches or an upset stomach

Our mental health resources

As one of Canada's leading health solutions partners, **we offer a variety of online options to give you quick and easy access to expert care –without having to leave the house.** The services of our new digital care platform, [Connected Care](#), include Digital Therapy, which can connect you with a dedicated therapist for guidance and support.

You can also find a comprehensive list of mental health tools and resources on our website. These range from our Employee and Family Assistance Program, [inConfidence](#), to our wellness portal, [My Good Health](#).

Remember: Even if you don't have family or friends close by, **you are never alone.** Go online to check out the mental health offering that's available to you through your health insurance plan. **Help may be just a call or a few clicks away.**

Sources:

- [Canadian Mental Health Association \(CMHA\)](#)
- [The World Health Organization](#)
- [Health Canada](#)
- [Centre for Addiction and Mental Health \(CAMH\)](#)
- [Medavie Blue Cross](#)