



Safe Environments

Healthy Workers

## COPING WITH UNCERTAINTY



The challenges we've been faced with as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic have been especially difficult given the novelty of the situation and the enormous impact it's had on all levels of society. The world as we know it has changed. As the situation is evolving, we are learning more every day, but there is still so much that is unknown. It's natural for us to feel anxious, fearful, stressed or overwhelmed when we are surrounded by uncertainty. We need to acknowledge that these kinds of feelings are valid but can take a toll on our mental health and wellbeing. That's why it's so important for us to find ways to cope with these emotions in order to get through these trying times as best we can.

Below are some tips and resources on how to manage our levels of stress and anxiety, and safeguard our mental health.

### FIGHT FEAR WITH FACTS

- **Pay attention and listen to the facts.** Misinformation can be damaging, especially at a time of crisis and can lead to chaos, panic and fear. Stay informed by trusted resources, including:
  - [Health Canada](#)
  - [Government of Ontario](#)
  - [Public Health Ontario](#)
  - Municipal Public Health Agencies
  - [World Health Organization](#)
  - [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
  
- **Know who to call and where to go for help.** If you are experiencing symptoms, use the [self-assessment tool](#), call [Telehealth Ontario](#), or your primary health professional (e.g. family physician) for virtual assessment and further guidance.

## HAVE A PLAN

- **Focus on what you can control.** There's a lot that can change day to day, but there's only so much that is in our direct control. If you find your mind spiraling through "what if's" and catastrophizing situations, it is helpful to take some time to acknowledge and answer some of these questions. Taking a step-by-step approach will help you figure out your options and problem solve. You will see that you can get through this. Somethings that you can control is how you choose to spend your time and what kind of coping strategies you use.
- **Be prepared.** Do an inventory of essential items that you may need (e.g. groceries, medications, etc.) and plan how you will obtain these items. Look into delivery options or if it is necessary to go out - think ahead and have a game plan. Being prepared will help ease feelings of stress and anxiety.



## SET BOUNDARIES

- **Limit your exposure to media.** While staying up-to-date is important, we don't need to spend all our time online to keep up. Too much information can be overwhelming. Try to limit your media consumption (e.g. television, online news, social media, etc.) to once or twice a day with a maximum of 20 minutes each time.
- **Keep a routine and structure.** Our everyday routines may very well be disrupted, including in our work, family and social lives. Keeping structure is helpful for managing responsibilities, duties and productivity. With so many of us working from home, the lines between work and family time can easily be blurred. Setting some boundaries and scheduling time can help us to achieve balance and keep up with increased demands. For example, starting and finishing work at the same time you normally do, and then unplugging from all work related devices for the rest of the day is one way to maintain routine.

## CONNECT AND COMMUNICATE

- **Connect with friends and family.** It is important to practice physical distancing and doing so can feel very isolating. Just because we can't physically see each other, doesn't mean that we can't reach out and keep in touch with friends and family by texting, calling, emailing or video conferencing. Support each other and connect emotionally. Share some laughs and smiles!



- **Take care of your mind and body.** Find healthy stress relievers and pay attention to unhealthy coping skills, like drinking too much. Doing physical activity or listening to your favorite music can give your mind and body the break it needs.
- **Communicate.** Talk out what you're feeling. Acknowledge it. You may be surprised that others are feeling the same as you. Sharing your thoughts can sometimes be helpful to know you're not alone. Talking to family members or [children](#) about the pandemic can be challenging but there are resources to help.

## FOLLOW GUIDANCE

- **Follow the rules set by public health authorities.** Your best form of protection will be from listening to and obeying the protocols set by public health authorities, including:
  - **Practice physical distancing.** If you are able to go out in public areas, always keep a distance of at least 2 metres or 6 feet from others.
  - **Wash your hands.** Practice stringent hand hygiene and wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, if not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol-based.
  - **Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.**
  - **Cover your cough or sneeze.**
  - **Disinfect high-touch surfaces at least once per day.**

## REFERENCES

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH): [Mental Health and the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): [Stress & Coping](#)

The Conference Board of Canada: [COVID-19 Implications for Canada and the Economic Impact](#)

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care: [Resources for Ontarians Experiencing Mental Health and Addictions Issues During the Pandemic](#)

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care: [Talking to Children About the Pandemic](#)

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