TAKING CHARGE OF WHAT YOU CAN: A COVID-19 TOOLKIT

COMMUNITY ADDICTION AND MENTAL HEALTH - SUNRIDGE

Date Issued:
04/01/2020
Prepared by
Vanessa Chong, Ph.D., R, Psych.

Contributors
Karen Lane, RN
Erin Moss, Ph.D., R. Psych.

Artwork
Marla Wirasinghe

(cover page, pgs. 1-2)
A World in Crisis

The Covid-19 epidemic has drastically changed the way we live, work, and connect each other in a very short period of time. As a world, we are experiencing a collective crisis, the likes of which most of us have never encountered. Right now it is NORMAL to be experiencing a whole host of emotions, including anxiety, anger, sadness, and uncertainty. Our minds and our bodies are closely connected, so it is also likely that you are losing sleep and experiencing other physical symptoms, such as muscle tension, aches and pains, headaches, and low energy.

WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER!

On one hand, this means that everyone in the world is going through a really awful time. That sucks! But this also means that we will get through this together, by collaborating, connecting, and supporting one another. As a species, humans are really good at overcoming adversity.

How Will This Toolkit Help?

We all need to find a sense of control right now. This toolkit is designed to help you focus on the parts of your life that you can take charge of and stop spending energy on the things you cannot control.

The Anxiety Onion

You can think of anxiety as an onion. The Covid-19 crisis is anxiety provoking in itself. It’s normal to feel anxious and you should be feeling anxious because this is our body’s way of signaling to you that there is danger and that you need to keep yourself (and others) safe. This core “nugget” of the onion represents this anxiety.
Extra layers of anxiety get added to the onion when you are thinking and behaving in unhelpful ways. Lack of routine, isolation, checking behaviours, over-exposure to the media, and unhelpful worry or rumination add extra layers to your anxiety onion.

Instead of this anxious

You feel THIS anxious.
Using this toolkit, you will learn how to “peel away the layers” of your anxiety onion by using the following strategies:

- **Building a healthy routine** (page 4)
- **Limiting checking/reassurance seeking and media use** (page 9)
- **Learning to manage your worries** (page 14)

You will also learn some additional skills for managing your anxiety:

- **Mindfulness** (page 17)
- **Relaxation skills** (page 23)

At the end of the toolkit, you will find some additional resources, including:

- Information about **crisis mental health resources** (page 25)
- **Other tips for coping** (pages 26, 27, 34)
- **Financial resources** (pages 28-33)
BUILDING A HEALTHY ROUTINE

For most of us, our routines have changed drastically. You may not be working right now or working from home, you may be tackling keeping your children occupied, or you may be adjusting to being around your partner for the majority of the day.

Work is an important source of structure, accomplishment, purpose, and social contact. For those who have experienced a job loss or change, you have also experienced a loss in all of the above areas.

Because of mental health struggles, others may have been social distancing before social distancing became a thing! You may be thinking to yourself, “I’ve got this! I’m an expert at self-isolating!” While this may be true, we would encourage you to take this crisis as an opportunity to develop a new healthy routine and to find creative ways to connect with others. This will set you up well for the next steps in your wellness journey, once we are able to more freely leave our homes.

What are the components of a healthy routine?

Try to aim to complete each of these activities every day. Be gentle with yourself and realistic!

- A regular sleep schedule
- A social activity
- A physical activity
- A self-care activity
- A productive activity
- A pleasurable activity

These activities don’t necessarily need to be really involved or time consuming. Try to strike a balance between pushing yourself and not being too easy on yourself.
1. Print out a copy of the blank *Routine Builder* and the *Routine Checklist*.
2. Using the blank *Routine Builder* sheet, brainstorm ideas for activities that could be part of your routine. We have provided you with some ideas to get you started.
3. Use the Routine Checklist to track your daily progress. Choose a wake-up and bed time that you will try to stick to. When you complete an activity, write it in the appropriate box. Aim to do at least one activity in each area per day.
4. At the bottom of the *Routine Checklist*, there is some space to set some “mini-goals” for yourself for the week. For example, you may set the goal to make your bed, get dressed, and eat breakfast every morning. Or you may set the goal of going for a 15 minute walk each day.
5. Start a new *Routine Checklist* for the next week on Sunday night by filling out your planned wake-up and bed times for the upcoming week and setting some new mini-goals for yourself.
ROUTINE BUILDER

Brainstorm ideas for activities that will be part of your new daily routine.

You might need to think outside the box.
Use your creativity!

Social

Physical

Self-Care

Productive

Pleasurable
Social
Spend time with friends/family using a video chat program (e.g. Zoom, Skype). Try:
• A wine night
• Eating a meal together
• Board games or video games
• Cook together (share a recipe)
• A book club
Call or text a friend or family member
Virtually watch TV or a movie with someone (e.g., using Netflix Party extension)
Help someone in need
Hang an inspirational banner or sign outside your house for your neighbours to see

Productive
Pick a project (e.g., re-arranging your furniture, fixing something, home improvement)
Organize a closet, your clothing, a bookshelf
Daily household chores
Cook a meal, bake something, canning
Sign up for an online class
Grocery shopping
Shoveling
Getting your balcony/yard ready for spring
Clean out your car
Spring cleaning
Clean out your fridge
Pay bills, do paperwork

Physical
Go for a walk
Try an online yoga, tai chi, or fitness video
Physical video games (e.g., Wii Fit, Just Dance)
Lift weights
Stretch or roll out your muscles
Doing a household chore that is physical (e.g., vacuuming)
Snowshoeing, cross country skiing, tobogganing
Sit-ups or push-ups
Walking/running up indoor or outdoor stairs
Online dance classes or a dance party
Ride your bike
Use home exercise equipment
Play with your kids

Self-Care
Sit outside in a nature
Journal
Meditation or mindfulness
Do your nails or put on a face mask
Have a bubble bath
Eat a healthy meal
Focus on hygiene (e.g., regular showers, brushing your teeth, flossing, doing your hair, moisturizing your skin)
Practice a coping or relaxation skill
Write a list of things you like about yourself
Post inspirational quotes or affirmations around your house

Pleasurable
Board games or puzzles
Video games
Play an instrument or learn how to play one online
Art or craft projects (e.g., painting, drawing, make gifts, jewelry making, model painting, origami)
Colouring
Listen to music or make a playlist
Watch a TV show or movie
Online virtual tours of museums
Make a photobook
Read a book or look through magazines
Build something
Explore the online resources through the Calgary Public Library

Here are some ideas to get you started.

TIPS:
- You can also brainstorm ideas with people in your life or with your therapist
- Please maintain a 2 m distance from others while doing activities outside the home!
**YOUR ROUTINE** for the week of:____________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Tues</th>
<th>Wed</th>
<th>Thurs</th>
<th>Fri</th>
<th>Sat</th>
<th>Sun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stuck to planned wake up time of</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>________________ am</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Productive Activities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pleasurable Activities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Care Activities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Activities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Activities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stuck to planned bed time of</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>________________ pm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MINI GOALS** for the week:
BEHAVIOURS THAT FEED ANXIETY

When we start to experience a lot of worry and feel anxious, we can sometimes fall into some problematic behaviours. These behaviors can give us a sense of control and relief in the short-term; however, over the long run, they feed our anxiety.

Checking and Reassurance Seeking

Unhelpful behaviours often take the form of either checking behaviours or reassurance-seeking behaviours. Look through the following list and check off any behaviours you are currently engaging in excessively and repetitively:

- Monitoring health symptoms multiple times a day (e.g., taking temperature; scanning body for unusual symptoms)
- Repetitively asking friends, family, healthcare providers about your health symptoms (asking for the same information from a number of people)
- Calling family and/or friends multiple times a day to check about their health and well-being
- Checking banking/finances/pension funds multiple times a day
- Excessively researching health symptoms/covid-19 symptoms online
- Excessively engaging in online forums discussing health symptoms or financial concerns
- Reading as many covid-19 articles as possible throughout the day
- Excessively analyzing of covid-19 data and numbers and trying to predict trends
- Other checking or reassurance-seeking behaviors:

  __________________________________________________________________________
  __________________________________________________________________________
  __________________________________________________________________________
  __________________________________________________________________________
  __________________________________________________________________________
TAKE CHARGE: Review the boxes you checked above. In the space below, reflect on any negative effects or consequences of your excessive checking and/or reassurance-seeking.

Questions to consider: Is the anxiety relief short-lived? Does it lead to new worries or concerns? Does it negatively impact relationships?
Checking and reassurance-seeking behaviors aren’t entirely bad – we don’t want to be ostriches with our heads in the sand! We want to be aware of what is happening with our health, with our finances, and with the world around us. Ideally, we want to aim for a happy middle-ground between complete avoidance and excessive and time-consuming checking and reassurance-seeking.

In order to achieve this middle-ground, the goal is usually to decrease the behaviour (although sometimes completely eliminating the behaviour is necessary).

**TAKE CHARGE: Reducing Checking and Reassurance Seeking**

Choose one of checking or reassurance-seeking behaviors you checked above and consider how you might be able to decrease this behavior over the next week. What would be a reasonable target for you in terms of time allotted to this activity?

*Behaviour:*

*Current time spent on behavior (or amount of times per day):*

*New goal for behavior (time spent and/or amount of times per day):*
Media Use

The world we live in is interconnected. Technology provides us with unprecedented ways for connecting with one another, keeping up-to-date on the latest news stories, and keeping ourselves informed about the spread of Covid-19. On a positive note, having quick, easy access to each other and to the information we need has the potential to help us through this pandemic. However, it looking up the news can be a form of checking and reassurance seeking. While this gives you temporary relief, in the long term it can feed stress and anxiety.

BALANCE IS KEY!

It is important that you find a balance between getting the information you need and not freaking yourself out! Information should be useful and empowering. Below are some tips that will help you make decisions about your media use.

Tips for Healthy Media Use

- **Consider your sources!** Think critically about the things you read and hear. Only use trusted, reputable sources. If watching the news has been too stressful for you, try sticking to website updates from sources like the World Health Organization, Health Canada, and Alberta Health Services.

- **Set limits with yourself** about your media use.
  - You may set a time limit for yourself (e.g., I will only watch a maximum of 1 hour per day) or stick to just checking the news once or twice. It’s a good idea to avoid keeping the news on in the background all day.
  - You could also limit which news sources you will use (e.g., I will watch Dr. Hinshaw’s daily updates but I will not read any articles that people post on Facebook).
  - You could limit when you watch or read the news (e.g., I will avoid watching the news before bed because this will disrupt my sleep).
➢ **Take a break from social media.** If a certain form of social media (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, Instagram) has been unhelpful, consider taking a break from this platform. Likewise, if certain social media friends have had a negative impact on your, consider blocking them or muting their feeds for a while.

➢ **Consider whether certain social media could have a positive impact on you.** Certain forms of social media have been focused on positivity (e.g., goodnews_movement on Instagram). Other media use that is unrelated to Covid-19 could be a helpful distraction (e.g., cooking/recipe accounts, art accounts).

➢ **Consider what you share on social media.** Are you sharing something that is coming from a reputable source? Could you balance sharing negative news with sharing positive news? Could you post something that’s not related to Covid-19 at all?

➢ **Consider whether social media is adding unnecessary drama to your life.** If you are already experiencing anxiety, getting into debates and arguments may be a waste of your emotional energy. Watch out for trolls who are looking to start a fight.

---

**TAKE CHARGE: Media Use Plan**

Based on the tips suggested above, what changes will you make to your media use right now?
MANAGING YOUR WORRIES

It is normal to worry about a global pandemic. In fact, it would be kind of weird if you weren’t worrying! However, worries can also become a “runaway train,” contributing to more anxiety and stress than is necessary. Excessive rumination (meaning reviewing the same worries over and over again, like on a “hamster wheel”) is going to make your anxiety much worse. An important first step is learning the difference between helpful and unhelpful worry.

**Helpful vs. Unhelpful Worry**

Worries are **HELPFUL** when:

- You are worried about something that is a real problem
- You have control over the thing you’re worrying about
- It motivates you to do something to solve a problem
- You CAN do something about it, and you can do it NOW

**EXAMPLES:** worrying about being around big crowds of people when the government has recommended social distancing; worrying about your teenager not respecting social distancing guidelines

Worries are **UNHELPFUL** when:

- You are worried about something that is not totally based on facts
- You have no control or responsibility about the thing you’re worrying about
- You can do something about it, but NOT NOW

**EXAMPLES:** worrying about what will happen if you lose your job when there is no indication that you will lose your job; worrying about strangers not respecting social distancing guidelines
TAKE CHARGE: Dealing with worries

When you notice yourself worrying, work through the following steps. We recommend that you write down your answers to the following questions:

1. What are you worries? (write down specific things you are saying to yourself)

2. Pick one worry that you wrote down. Is this worry helpful or unhelpful?

3. For helpful worries: DO SOMETHING! Come up with a step-by-step plan of how you will solve the problem. What is your plan?

   For unhelpful worries: USE A SKILL to manage your anxiety, including distraction (see Build a Routine chapter), mindfulness (see Mindfulness chapter), or relaxation (see Relaxation chapter). What skill could you use right now instead of focusing on your worry?

Write down COPING STATEMENTS, such as:

   It will be okay
   You are strong
   You’ve got this!
   Together we can do this
   Take things one day at a time
   Focus on what you can control
   Just focus on what you need to do today
   This is an adjustment period- you’ll get used to it over time
   You’ve coped with tough things before, you can do it again
This is just the first step with working on your worries. If you would like to learn some more in-depth strategies for working on your worries related to the pandemic, you can try using the resource below.

TAKE CHARGE: Download the “Living with Worry and Anxiety Amidst Global Uncertainty” guide on the Psychology Tools website

1. Find the guide HERE (alternatively, you can Google the above title and “Psychology Tools”).
2. Read the guide. Consider printing it out and highlighting sections that you can relate to.
3. As suggested in the guide, try the following strategies: worry postponement, worry time, and thought records.
MINDFULNESS

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is another approach for managing your worries. Mindfulness is about being in the present moment, with acceptance and without judgment. We are often distracted by regrets of the past or future worries and it can be hard to spend time in the here and now. Mindfulness is a form self-awareness training that helps us approach our thoughts, feelings, sensations and environment with an attitude of curiosity and an understanding that they are temporary. This helps us to become an observer of ourselves and respond with compassion and kindness while we let thoughts and feelings come and go.

How can it help?

Mindfulness has benefits for many people which include reduction of stress and anxiety, decreased ruminations (going over and over something in your head), less emotional reactivity, improved focus, more flexibility in our thinking and greater satisfaction in relationships (apa.org). In the current time of crisis, high stress and uncertainty, mindfulness will not change events around us but can help with our perception of stress. It can be a useful tool to manage fearful and uncertain thoughts and feelings, as well as recognize that we are all in this together. Daily practice can help make the positive outcomes of mindfulness long lasting through actual changes in the brain.
TAKE CHARGE: Download the *Mindfulness Exercises* worksheet from the Therapist Aid website  
(from www.TherapistAid.com)

1. Find the guide [HERE](#) (alternatively, you can Google “Mindfulness Exercises” and “Therapist Aid”).
2. Try at least one exercise each day. Make sure you try each exercise at least twice so you can see which one(s) you like best.
3. In the space below, track which mindfulness exercises you have tried so far and when it might be helpful to use them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Which exercise did you try?</th>
<th>When could you use this exercise in the future?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Examples: when I first wake up, to help me fall asleep, when I’m annoyed with my kids/partner, when I hear a triggering story on the news</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Loving Kindness Meditation

There are many forms of meditation - a gentle one to start with is one that evokes a very natural state in us: gentle kindness for the self and others.

Loving-kindness meditation focuses on developing feelings of goodwill, kindness and warmth towards ourselves and others, which could be particularly helpful during our challenging times.

TAKE CHARGE: try using this Loving Kindness script

Although we often use words when we are learning loving-kindness meditation, the words are only secondary props. The focus of the meditation is on a feeling, a feeling of loving-kindness. Over time the words can fade and you simply are left with the feeling. That is the aim.

You may consider recording this script for yourself onto your phone. Then you can practice Loving Kindness by listening to the script whenever you think it might be helpful.

1. SIT QUIETLY AND COMFORTABLY.
Sit in a comfortable way but without being in a sleepy position. For example, sit with your back straight, head up, feet on the floor and your arms gently in your lap.
Simply sit and notice yourself sitting.
Breathe naturally.
Watch your breath going in and your breath going out. Keep focusing on your breathing for a while.
(continued on next page)
2. PLACE YOUR ATTENTION ON THE AREA AROUND YOUR HEART.
Place your attention on the area in the middle of your chest, around your heart.
Repeat to yourself gently and softly, feeling the resonance of the words: "Love, love, love, may my heart be filled with love..."
As you say this, if you like, bring to mind something that you feel caring and loving towards.
It may be an image of a soft, lovable dog, or the serene look on someone's face, or a baby, or the feeling of the soft fur as you stroke a kitten ...
This image is simply to help you kick-start the feelings.
If a feeling of loving-kindness arises without the need of these images there is no need for the images.

3. EXPERIENCE FEELING LOVE THROUGH YOUR WHOLE BODY.
Experience this feeling of warmth and love through your whole body. Feel the sense of caring, healing and soothing. Let it wash over you and through you while you gently repeat silently to yourself:
- May I be well, healthy and strong.
- May I be happy.
- May I abide in peace.
- May I feel safe and secure.
- May I feel loved and cared for.
Sometimes people find this stage difficult to do. It may be helpful to spend some days or weeks simply cultivating loving-kindness for yourself. There is no need to rush on. The number of people you send the feeling of loving-kindness to is not what is important, it is developing the quality of the feeling that matters.
(continued on next page)
4. BRING INTO YOUR MIND SOMEONE YOU LIKE A LOT AND RESPECT.
Bring into your mind someone you like a lot and respect.
Send them these feelings of warmth and caring, as you wish them well:
  ▪ May you be well.
  ▪ May you be happy.
  ▪ May you abide in peace.
  ▪ May you feel safe and secure.
  ▪ May you feel loved and cared for.
If you have a feeling of loving-kindness you may not need the words.
If the words are too many for you, simply say, "May you be happy" is also fine.

5. BRING TO MIND SOMEONE ELSE YOU LIKE AND RESPECT.
Do this with someone else who is equally important, that you like and respect. Choose someone that you find it very easy to spread loving-kindness to.
Send them these feelings of warmth and caring, as you wish them well:

  May you be well.
  May you be happy.
  May you abide in peace.
  May you feel safe and secure.
  May you feel loved and cared for.

**Mindfulness Book Recommendations:**

*Calming Your Anxious Mind* by Jeffrey Brantley

*Wherever You Go There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life* by John Kabat-Zinn

*Loving-Kindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness* by Sharon Salzberg

*Spontaneous Happiness* by Dr. Andrew Weil

*Mindfulness: An Eight-Week Plan for Finding Peace in a Frantic World* by Dr. Danny Penman and Mark Williams.

Additionally, a list of ‘The Top Mindfulness Books of 2019 ‘ is found at Mindful.org

**Mindfulness Websites:**

[www.mindful.org](http://www.mindful.org) – Excellent resource with articles, guided meditations and practices

[https://blog.calm.com/mindfulness-resources](https://blog.calm.com/mindfulness-resources) - Monthly mindful calendars with daily tips and exercises

[www.headspace.com](http://www.headspace.com) – Offering free meditations during the current crisis

**Free Mindfulness Phone/Tablet Apps to try:**

*(may require you to sign up, but should offer some free content)*

The Mindfulness App
Calm – currently offering more free content during the crisis
Stop, Breathe & Think
Smiling Mind
Headspace
Insight Timer
10% Happier
Buddhify
RELAXATION SKILLS

In addition to mindfulness skills, there are a wide range of other coping skills that you might find useful for bringing your stress and anxiety levels down. Give some of these a try!

TAKE CHARGE: Try these relaxation skills!

Belly Breathing
Put your hand on your belly and imagine it is a balloon. When you breathe in, the balloon should inflate (pushes your hand out). When you breathe out, the balloon deflates (your hand goes in). Try slowing down your breathing. Whenever you feel anxious, do a few rounds of belly breathing.

Square Breathing
Take belly breathing one step further by pausing in between the in-breath and the out-breath. This will help you slow down your breathing even more. Try breathing in for 4 counts, hold for 4 counts, out for 4 counts, and hold for four counts. Repeat as many times as you like. You can imagine this like a square:
Grounding

Grounding is a strategy for bringing your attention to the outside world, away from your inner world of negative feelings and thoughts. When grounding, try saying these things out loud to yourself:

- List many things as you can see in the room
- List many colours as you can see in the room
- 54321
  5 things you can SEE
  4 things you can TOUCH
  3 things you can HEAR
  2 things you can SMELL
  1 thing you can TASTE

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)
We hold stress in our bodies in the form of muscle tension. PMR involves systematically tensing and releasing different muscle groups in your body. Written and audio scripts can be found online with a Google search. You can listen to many PMR scripts on YouTube.

Relaxation Apps to try:
Breathe2Relax
Thrive: Mental Wellbeing
Calm – currently offering more free content during the crisis
Stop, Breathe & Think
Buddhify
MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Calgary Distress Centre
24 hour crisis line: 403-266-4357 (HELP). Also offers online chat. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

Alberta Mental Health Helpline
24 hour provincial helpline for any mental health concerns: 1-877-303-2642

Alberta Addiction Helpline
24 hour provincial helpline for any addiction concerns: 1-866-332-2322

Eastside Family Centre (Wood’s Homes)
Currently offering e-therapy and phone therapy. Click [HERE](#) for information.

Crisis Response Team (Wood’s Homes)
Offering children and families crisis support. Call 403-299-9699 (24 hour) or text 587-315-5000 (9 am to 10 pm). Click [HERE](#) for more information.

Text4Hope
A new, free AHS program. After signing up, you will receive daily text messages written by mental health therapists with ideas for coping with Covid-19. For more information click [HERE](#), or text COVID19HOPE to 393939 to subscribe.

Mind Control: Managing Your Mental Health During Covid-19
A free online course offered by the University of Toronto that covers how to manage anxiety during the pandemic. Click [HERE](#) for information.
APPENDIX: Other Resources

- **Practical and Emotional Preparedness for a Pandemic** (Click [HERE](#). Mental Health Promotion and Illness Prevention, AHS)

- **Covid-19 and Your Mental Health** (Click [HERE](#). Mental Health Promotion and Illness Prevention, AHS)

- **Mental Health: Coping and Connection for Children and Families During Covid-19** (Click [HERE](#). Mental Health Promotion and Illness Prevention, AHS)

- **Managing Stress and Anxiety from Covid-19.** Click [HERE](#) for free online course.

- **Mental Health Resources: During Covid-19** (Attached- Addiction and Mental Health, AHS)

- **Financial Assistance during Covid-19** (Attached- Alberta Health Services, information updated on March 25, 2020)

- **What to Do Within the Limits of Your Home** (Attached- from the Independent Living Supports program)
Mental Health Resources: During COVID-19

Mental health information during crisis is important. Alberta Health Services has information and a number of resources available for Albertans and our staff to help.

Mental health resources are posted here, www.ahs.ca/helpintoughtimes.

COVID-19 Online Resources

For helpful advice on handling stressful situations and ways to talk to children.

- Coping and Connection for Children & Families During COVID-19 (AHS)
- COVID-19 and Your Mental Health (AHS)
- Practical and Emotional Preparedness for a Pandemic (AHS)
- Mental health and coping with COVID-19 (CDC)
- Talking with children about COVID-19 (CDC)
- Talking with children during infectious disease outbreaks (SAMHSA)

Podcast


Need more?

Be sure to check regularly to the online information as resources will be updated and added as developed. Future podcasts and videos will also be shared in the coming days.
Support for Individuals and Families

Provincial Emergency Isolation Support:
Alberta residents can receive a one-time payment from the Alberta government of $1,146.

Eligibility:
You have no other source of compensation, such as workplace sick leave benefits or federal employment insurance benefits.

You have experienced total or significant loss of income and are not receiving compensation from any other source because you:
- have been diagnosed with COVID-19
- have been directed by health authorities to self-isolate
- are the sole caregiver of a dependent who is in self-isolation

How to apply:
Apply online at: https://emergencyisolationsupport.alberta.ca/

You will need a MyAlberta Digital ID (MADI) to complete the application. You can use a driver’s license or an ID car number to verify your identity when creating an account.

If you need help with the application, you can call (403) 310-4455 for assistance.

Federal GST Credit:
The Government of Canada is proposing to provide a one-time special payment by May 2020 through the Goods and Services Tax credit (GSTC). The average boost will be $400 for single individuals and $600 for couples.

How to apply:
If you file your taxes for the 2019 tax year, you are automatically eligible to receive GST credits.

*Note: Canada Revenue Agency has deferred the filing due date for 2019 tax returns until June 1, 2020. However, it is recommended that you do not delay filing your return to ensure that your GST credit payments and Canada Child Benefit are properly determined.
Federal Special Child Tax Benefit:
The Government of Canada is proposing to increase the maximum annual Canada Child Benefit (CCB) payment amounts, only for the 2019-20 benefit year, by $300 per child.

How to apply:
If you have not applied to receive CCB payments, you can apply online through My Account (your personal CRA account): https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/e-services/e-services-individuals/account-individuals.html

If you have any questions or need help with your application, you can call 1-800-387-1193.

Support for People Facing Unemployment/Unable to Work:
Federal Emergency Response Benefit:
We will provide a taxable benefit of $2,000 a month for up to 4 months to:

- Workers who must stop working due to COVID19 and do not have access to paid leave or other income support.
- Workers who are sick, quarantined, or taking care of someone who is sick with COVID-19.
- Working parents who must stay home without pay to care for children that are sick or need additional care because of school and daycare closures.
- Workers who still have their employment but are not being paid because there is currently not sufficient work and their employer has asked them not to come to work.
- Wage earners and self-employed individuals, including contract workers, who would not otherwise be eligible for Employment Insurance.

The Canada Emergency Response Benefit will be accessible through a secure web portal starting in early April. Applicants will also be able to apply via an automated telephone line or via a toll-free number.

** This benefit replaces the previously announced Emergency Care Benefit and the Emergency Support Benefit**
Federal Employment Insurance (EI) Regular Benefits:
If you were laid off or have reduced hours of work due to COVID-19, you can apply for EI regular benefits.

Eligibility:
- you were employed in insurable employment
- have been without work and without pay for at least seven consecutive days in the last 52 weeks
- have worked for the required number of insurable employment hours in the last 52 weeks or since the start of your last EI claim, whichever is shorter

How to apply:
You can apply online at: https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/ei-regular-benefit/apply.html. If you need assistance with your application or have any questions, you can call 1-800-206-7218.

Improved Access to Employment Insurance (EI) Sickness Benefits:
If you are sick, quarantined or have been directed to self-isolate, the requirement to provide a medical certificate to access EI sickness benefits will be waived.

Eligibility:
- you’re unable to work because you are sick, quarantined or have been directed to self-isolate
- your regular weekly earnings from work have decreased by more than 40% for at least one week
- you accumulated 600 insured hours of work in the 52 weeks before the start of your claim or since the start of your last claim, whichever is shorter

How to apply:
You can apply online at: https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/ei-sickness/apply.html. If you need assistance with your application and have questions, you can call 1-833-381-2725 (dedicated EI phone number for COVID-19).
Support for Seniors:
Reduced Registered Retirement Income Funds Withdrawals:
Reducing the required minimum withdrawals from Registered Retirement Income Funds (RRIFs) by 25% for 2020. Old Age Security (OAS) and Canada Pension Plan (CPP) benefits will come as usual.

More information about RRIF can be found at: https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/tax/individuals/topics/registered-retirement-income-fund-rrif.html

Support to Businesses:
Temporary Wage Subsidy for Employer:
Providing eligible small employers with a temporary wage subsidy for a period of three months. The subsidy will be equal to 10% of remuneration paid during that period, up to a maximum subsidy of $1,375 per employee and $25,000 per employer.

Eligibility:
- are a non-profit organization, registered charity, or a Canadian-controlled private corporation (CCPC);
- have an existing business number and payroll program account with the CRA on March 18, 2020
- pay salary, wages, bonuses, or other remuneration to an employee

How to apply:
You must calculate your subsidy manually. Once you have calculated your subsidy, you can reduce your current remittance of federal, provincial, or territorial income tax that you send to the CRA by the amount of the subsidy.

Business Credit Availability Program (BCAP):
The Government of Canada is providing $10 billion credit to help Canadian businesses obtain financing. Financial institutions will work with the Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) and Export Development Canada (EDC) to find solutions for business.

Eligibility:
Largely targeted for small to medium-sized businesses.

How to apply:
Businesses seeking support through BCAP should contact the financial institutions with whom they have a pre-existing relationship, so that the financial institutions may assess the client’s financial request.

The financial institution will contact the BDC and EDC directly where appropriate. If you need to contact them, they can be reached at: 1-877-232-2269 (BDC) or 1-800-229-0575 (EDC).

Support for Students:
Deferring the Repayment of Student Loans:
Repayment of Canada and Alberta Student Loans has been temporarily paused from March 30, 2020 until September 30, 2020. Students will not need to apply for the repayment pause and interest will not accrue interest during this time. Students who are currently studying can continue to apply for Canada and Alberta Student Loans.

Other Supports for Albertans:
90-day Utility Deferral:
Albertans who are experiencing financial hardships can defer their electricity and natural gas bill payments from any service provider for the next 90 days and are ensured that no services will be cut off.

How to apply:
You must call your electricity or natural gas service provider directly.

- Atco: (403) 292-7500
- Direct Energy: 1-855-461-1926
COVID - 19 Financial Assistance Resources

- **Enmax**: (403) 310-2010 or 1-877-571-7111
- **Just Energy**: 1-866-283-3108
- **Spot Power**: (403) 450-3458

**Mortgage Deferral:**
You can receive up to 6 months of deferral on mortgage payments, skip a payment, automobile loans, and credit cards. Terms and conditions vary for each bank.

**How to apply:**
You must call your bank directly to apply. General information can be found below:

- **National Bank**: [https://www.nbc.ca/personal/notice.html](https://www.nbc.ca/personal/notice.html)
- **RBC**: [https://www.rbc.com/covid-19/](https://www.rbc.com/covid-19/)
What to do within the limits of your home

Use this page to choose an activity each day. If you are unsure where to start, try putting the list of activities into a jar and pick one at a time.

Cognitive

- Brain Teasers: [https://sharpbrains.com/brainteasers/](https://sharpbrains.com/brainteasers/)
- Board games
- Card games
- Puzzles
- Needle work - sewing, cross stitch
- Learn a new skill - Take an online course
- Reading – Book, audio book, magazine, comics
  - Calgary Public library app - ebooks and audiobooks available with library card

Creative:

- Color a picture
- Coloring apps
- Paint a picture
- Sketch
- Writing, poetry
  - [https://lifemadesweeter.com/flourless-3-ingredient-peanut-butter-cookes/](https://lifemadesweeter.com/flourless-3-ingredient-peanut-butter-cookes/)
- Paint your nails
- Style your hair
- Origami
  - Butterfly - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZdO2e8K29o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZdO2e8K29o)
  - Turtle - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JJJsU8spfc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JJJsU8spfc)
  - Dinos - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYovYw9R7oI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYovYw9R7oI)
- Call a friend
- Write a letter
- Facetime, skype
- Text, what app, social media messaging
- Watch a T.V. show or movie virtually with a friend. Download the Google Chrome Netflix Party extension here: https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/netflix-party/oocalimimngaihdbihfgmpkcnmlaoa?hl=en

**Exercise:**

- Outdoor exercise parks in Calgary
  https://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/Parks/Pages/Locations/Parks-with-fitness-equipment.aspx
- 10 minute living room workout
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O5YX5xg8Seg
- High Intensity Exercise Routines with modifications
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CBWQGb4LyAM
- 30 minute Yoga
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QvgnE5aGGJ4
- Gentle Chair Yoga Routine
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KEjiXtb2hRg
- Stretching Guide
  file:///R:/OUTPATIENT_PROGRAM/Recreation%20Therapy/Handouts%20&%20Education/PA/wellness-mindfulstretchingguide.pdf

**Organize:**

- Organize or clean a space in your home (closet, drawer, cabinet, etc.)
- Sort through household items to donate (clothing, jewelry, electronics, seasonal décor, etc.)
- Organize documents, files and photos on electronics
- Clean out your vehicle

**Self-Care:**

- Have a bath
- Use a face mask
- Listen to music- make a playlist
• Watch a movie, clip or T.V. series (try to limit time spent on current events)
  o Netflix
  o CRAVE
  o Youtube
  o CTV website
  o Chrome- Netflix party (watch your favorite movies together by syncing with friends))
  o Amazon Prime
  o Disney Plus
  o Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra Live
  o Virtual Tour of museums across the world
  o Watch musicals for free
    www.dailymotion.com

• Dress in cozy clothing
• Progressive Muscle relaxation
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihO02wUzgkc
• Deep breathing
  o Breathe app
  o Calm app- free resources
  o Headspace app
• Try taking a break- see “50 ways to take a break”

**Children:**

• ways to engage children
  https://www.thebestideasforkids.com/indoor-activities-for-kids/
  https://www.kqed.org/education/athomelearning
50 Ways to Take a Break