

Online Mental Health Resources for Community Members During the COVID-19 Crisis

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In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the Clinical Psychology program at York University has compiled a list of evidence-based and user-friendly online mental health resources for members of the community. They are listed in this document under specific categories.



MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

The World Health Organization has published useful messages about mental health considerations for individuals in the general population, healthcare workers, managers in healthcare settings, carers of children, older adults, people with underlying health conditions and their careers, and people in isolation:

https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf?sfvrsn=6d3578af_2

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health has posted online resources around speaking with loved ones who are anxious about COVID-19, coping with loneliness in isolation, building a wellness plan, and dealing with stigma for those who have tested positive for the virus:

<https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-health-and-covid-19>

The American Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has written about stress and ways you can take care of yourself and your community during the crisis, taking into consideration that people react differently to stressful situations:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>



MANAGING STRESS, ANXIETY, & WORRY

Having a routine is one of the best ways to manage stress and anxiety that can emerge due to COVID-19. Schedule things every day that you can do safely to create structure in your day, making sure to do something pleasant or enjoyable every single day. It is also recommended to limit your exposure to the news to once or twice per day and for the most important updates. Here are some other links to ways to cope:

<http://waterloocbt.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Tips-for-Coping-During-COVID-19.pdf>

<https://www.ptsd.va.gov/covid/COVID19ManagingStress032020.pdf>

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/anxiety/coronavirus-anxiety.htm>

The following downloadable *Free Guide to Living with Worry and Anxiety Amidst Global Uncertainty* provides education about what is “normal” and “excessive” worry and specific, effective suggestions for how to cope with each. It is also available in several languages:

<https://www.psychologytools.com/articles/free-guide-to-living-with-worry-and-anxiety-amidst-global-uncertainty/>



SELF-HELP ACTIVITIES

If you feel like you are struggling with “excessive” anxiety and worry related to COVID-19, the following is a structured self-help online course:

<http://valleycentreforcounselling.com/onanxiety>

For individuals who feel like they are struggling with low mood, this free worksheet on managing your mood while observing social distancing can be downloaded and printed so you can track the kinds of coping activities you find helpful:

https://www.betweenessionsresources.com/uploads/4/4/6/6/44661643/managing_your_mood_while_observing_social_distancing_Is_final_032020.pdf



PARENTING

Providing children with an interesting, well-defined daily schedule encourages engagement and controls anxiety. Activities can be kept short for youngsters who have shorter attention spans. For example, preschoolers and children with ADHD should have challenging activities last no longer than 10-15 minutes. Break down large tasks into smaller steps (consider creating checklists of individual components for multi-step activities). Use effective limit-setting strategies to manage challenging behaviour and set your child up for success by being clear, specific, and consistent about expectations and rules.

Manage children’s behavior in a positive fashion when they are bored, tense, or anxious. For example, have your child help you with household tasks and frequently reinforce positive behaviour. Together with your child, brainstorm and plan activities to combat boredom. Help your child identify when they are anxious, check in with how they feel and validate

that it is natural to be anxious sometimes, be honest and accurate about why physical distancing is necessary in this time, share with them ways you manage anxiety, introduce relaxation strategies, and empathize with their fears but don't reinforce them. Provide a model of what they can control, such as practicing current guidelines (e.g., handwashing, physical distancing, etc.). <https://childmind.org/article/what-to-do-and-not-do-when-children-are-anxious/>

Practice thinking optimistically about your parenting. Journal your thoughts (positive and negative) about your parenting, and work to reframe pessimistic thoughts into more realistic or self-compassionate thoughts about your parenting (e.g., "I'm a terrible parent" → "I'm doing the best I can" or "I was able to sit and cuddle with my child for a few minutes today")

Talking to Children About COVID-19:

- 1) <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/talking-with-children.html>
- 2) https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/helping-children-cope-with-changes-resulting-from-covid-19?ck_subscriber_id=342989428%c2%a0

Although put out by Children and Adults with ADHD, the following two links to resources can be useful for parents of all children: Guidance for Uncertain Times: Creating Structure and Routines for Children with ADHD <https://youtu.be/hOGG42njdrU> & Managing Screen Time: <https://chadd.org/adhd-weekly/too-much-time-online-suggestions-for-limiting-media-use/>

Parenting teenagers in the time of COVID-19:

https://cpa.ca/docs/File/Publications/FactSheets/PW_HelpingTeensCopeWithImpacts_COVID-19.pdf

COPING WITH OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER

The actions that public health experts are asking everyone to engage in to prevent and limit the spread of COVID-19 (such as frequent hand-washing or wearing protective equipment) can create unique challenges for people living with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and related disorders. Setting a basic safety plan based on the recommendations of trusted health organizations (e.g., limiting hand-washing to 20-seconds) for people with OCD is recommended. The International OCD Foundation provides detailed guidance on how individuals living with these challenges can cope: <https://iocdf.org/covid19/>



WORKING / STUDYING FROM HOME

The Canadian Psychological Association has provided tips for working from home and maintaining a sense of well-being, with or without children in the home: https://cpa.ca/docs/File/Publications/FactSheets/PW_COVID-19_Working%20from%20Home.pdf

Students of all ages have made the switch from in-class to online learning. Here are some wellness tips for students during COVID-19: https://cpa.ca/docs/File/Publications/FactSheets/PW_StudentWellness_COVID-19.pdf

This list of resources was targeted to university students, but may also be useful to members of the general public who are spending so much time at home (e.g., relaxation and mindfulness promotion, increasing wellness, reducing loneliness): https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/aphd/Home/COVID-19_Coping_Resources/index.html



FOR FRONTLINE WORKERS

Frontline health care providers are facing unique emotional and psychological challenges. The Canadian Psychological Association has published guidelines on how these essential workers can face these challenges effectively. These may be useful to anyone working face-to-face with people in an essential service capacity: https://cpa.ca/docs/File/Publications/FactSheets/PW_COVID-19_FrontLineHealthCareProviders.pdf

The following link is to both general and COVID-specific online therapeutic resources and materials, including research on mental health among healthcare workers during the current crisis: <https://www.psychologytools.com/psychological-resources-for-coronavirus-covid-19/>

Guilford Press, a leading publisher of psychology titles, has posted free resources for self-help, parenting, clinical practice, and teaching in response to COVID-19, available here: https://www.guilford.com/covid-resources?utm_source=bm23&utm_medium=email&utm_term=free+resources&utm_content=dlawless@yorku.ca&utm_campaign=Coronavirus+Resources



TO CONNECT WITH SOMEONE

If you feel like you are struggling with mental health right now, it is important to reach out and talk to someone. The following are ways that you can connect to someone who will listen:

Toronto Distress Centre: 416-408-4357

Mental Health Helpline: 1-866-531-2600

Drug and Alcohol Helpline: 1-800-565-8603

Psychotherapy and supportive counselling delivered through online sessions are available at the York University Psychology Clinic:
yupc@yorku.ca (416-650-8488)

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