



Wellbeing Resources

for Coping During COVID-19



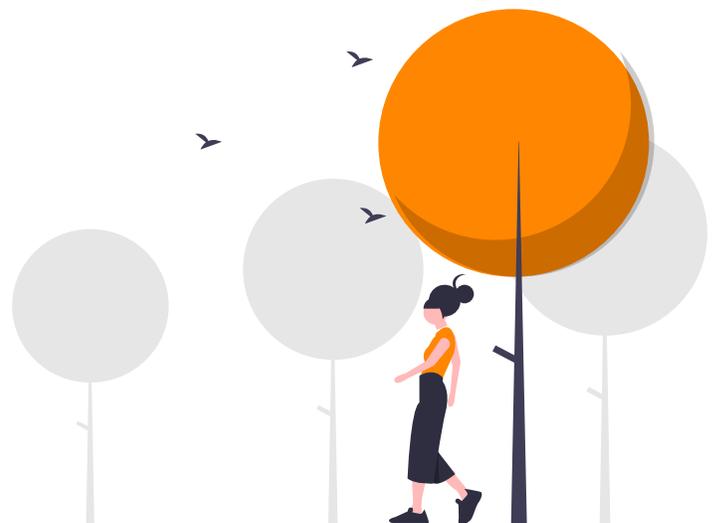
We are all feeling the impact of COVID-19 on our lives, in similar and different ways. It's all so new – it's not like any of us have had any practice in how to live through a pandemic. Our lives and our “normal” have changed dramatically and we are all struggling to find ways to get our heads and hearts around this. Just meeting basic needs can be a huge challenge for many. Finding our way is going to be messy and bumpy.

So this is a time for kindness, for compassion, and for patience, with ourselves, and with each other. We know that every person at Phoenix has their own particular story, their own unique life challenges, their own worries and vulnerabilities, as well as their own strengths and talents. This means that some may feel fearful, worried, or anxious. Some may feel sadness, grief, or loneliness. Some might feel angry, frustrated, or irritable. Some might feel tired and overwhelmed. Some might also feel some gratitude, appreciation, or a sense of connection. Many of these feelings will come and go. There are no “shoulds” when it comes to what we are feeling as we all do our best to cope with COVID-19. But we know sometimes it can all feel overwhelming.

The Phoenix Youth and Family Therapy team has put together a collection of ideas and resources that we hope will help you stay well in these uncertain and challenging times. We hope this resource can be helpful for everyone in our Phoenix family – youth, families, staff, volunteers, and others connected to Phoenix.

Special thanks to Adam Hartling for volunteering his time to design and layout this resource as a user-friendly manual. You can click on the purple headers and text to be linked directly to resources.

Warm regards,
Becka Hartling, Alison Little, Fiona McAdam



Tips for Maintaining Wellbeing

If possible, go to sleep and wake up at a reasonable time.

When stressed many of us have a tendency to over-sleep or under-sleep, and both can be detrimental to our mental and physical wellbeing.

If you find yourself struggling you might find one of these wellbeing resources helpful:

- A sleep story from the Calm app (the Matthew McConaughey sleep story is a favourite!)
- Guided progressive muscle relaxation from Anxiety Canada and the MindShift CBT app.
- Information on sleep hygiene from Anxiety Canada or the Centre for Clinical Interventions.

Take care of your body

When we are feeling low or depressed we might stop taking care of our personal hygiene, and conversely not taking care of our personal hygiene can lead to feelings of low mood and low self-worth.

Get showered and dressed in comfortable clothes, wash your face, brush your teeth. Take the time to have a bath, shave, do a DIY facial, trim or paint your nails.

When stressed we might also find ourselves over-indulging on junk food, forgetting to eat, or even avoiding food. It's important to keep our bodies healthy if eating healthy is something within your control.

Keep taking any prescribed medications.

Avoiding or limiting drugs and alcohol is another way we can keep ourselves healthy. Remember that the withdrawal effect of any drug is the opposite of the effect it has while using – so while you might find alcohol or cannabis help you feel relaxed in the short-term, you will likely experience more anxiety and low mood after using. If you are using – be safe. Naloxone kits are still available through our local pharmacies and anyone can pick one up.

Find some time to move your body.

Being active is so important for both our physical and mental wellbeing. Exercise can boost our mood and it's something we can still do to take care of ourselves during this challenging time. It also helps burn the extra stress hormones out of our systems.

Go for a walk, have a dance party, or check out some of these FREE online resources:

- [Yoga with Adriene](#)
- [Fitness Blender free workout videos](#)
- [Popsugar Fitness free workout videos](#)
- [YMCA360 free workout videos](#) (includes videos for children and older adults)
- [The YMCA of Greater Toronto live-streams classes and activities for the whole family](#)

Add structure to your day.

We are all struggling with disruption in our regular routines, but especially young people with no school, work, or regular social life at an age when these are so important. People who've experienced trauma may be even more impacted by this loss of routine and structure – things that contribute to a sense of safety. As such, folks may find it helpful to create a schedule of their day, with varied activities and times for school work, exercise, meals, and connection.

Find activities to focus on.

By now we've all heard about the benefits of mindfulness – it can help us stay in the present and thereby reduce anxiety and depression. Finding activities that keep us focused and engaged is an easy way to practice mindfulness. Coming up with a list of activities and making time to engage with them can also provide a good distraction, a sense of accomplishment, and relaxation. *Even if you're not feeling motivated, try challenging yourself to just 10 minutes of an activity.*

- In addition to the exercise options ideas listed above, here are a few more ideas:
- Work on a puzzle
- Read a book
- Colour/draw (there are lots of free colouring sheets online, or you can photocopy pages from an existing book)
- Listen to music or make your own

- Work on crafts – ([Ravelry](#) has lots of free knitting and crochet patterns available, and the IWK accepts donations of baby hats knit in this [pattern](#))
- Cook or bake something
- Play a game
- Do brain games like Sudoku and crossword puzzles
- Watch TV or movies
- Start a garden
- Draw chalk art on the sidewalk for others to see and enjoy
- Do laundry, organize a drawer, deep clean your bedroom, etc. – bringing order into our lives can be helpful when everything around us is so chaotic!

Limit social media and COVID-19 news and conversation.

Although we need to stay informed, limiting exposure to news and social media is often in our best interests. Find a few trusted sources that you can check in with, but limit it. If you already have heightened anxiety, you may start to find the need to check and read the latest updates can become compulsive, feeding the anxiety. You might find it helpful to give yourself a scheduled “worry period” when you allow yourself to worry, but set a time limit and then intentionally move on to something else.

No one knows yet how this current pandemic will resolve itself, and unfortunately you won't obtain greater certainty by scouring the internet for more information.

It's especially important to keep news and alarmist conversations out of earshot from children—they see and hear everything, and can become very frightened by what they hear. There are a few helpful links for how to talk to children about what's happening in our resource section.

Find ways to connect.

This can be with the people you live with – by cooking a meal together, watching a movie, playing a game or doing a puzzle. It can also be by reaching out to friends and family through video calls, by phone or text. We are all in this together, and this is an opportunity to support each other and build even deeper connections with the people in our lives.

This might be a time when it's important to keep interactions with people you find challenging to a minimum, and to increase time with those whom you feel most comforted by and connected to.

Develop a self-care toolkit.

This toolkit will look different for everyone, but a lot of successful self-care strategies involve tuning into our senses. We recommend coming up with some ideas ahead of time that you can turn to when you're feeling overwhelmed and need comforting.

There are lots of great resources on the Anxiety Canada website, including the 5-4-3-2-1 grounding strategy and list of self-soothing strategies (the link is in the attached resource list). The Calm website and Guided Mind app have a number of guided meditations. A few more ideas are taking a hot bath while listening to soothing music, sipping and smelling a cup of chamomile tea, or watching the live cams at the [Monterey Bay Aquarium](#).

Remind yourself daily that this is temporary.

It can seem in the midst of this pandemic that it will never end. It is terrifying to think of the road stretching ahead of us. Please take time to remind yourself that although this is very scary and difficult, and will go on for an undetermined amount of time, "This too shall pass."

When you are in it, anxiety also feels as though it will never end, but it will. The tendency to jump to the worst-case scenario is normal given the circumstances, but worst-case scenarios very rarely reflect reality. Remind yourself that *just because you think it, doesn't make it true*.

Find meaning.

This experience has been compared to one of collective grieving. Like with all forms of grief, we have to allow ourselves to feel the deep and difficult emotions that inevitably come up. When therapists and counsellors work with people who've experienced trauma and loss, a key feature of that work is to help them find meaning. It might be hard to find a lesson in something as big and awful as a global pandemic, and while we can't use meaning-making to bypass the pain, noticing and naming the meaningful moments, and being grateful for them, can help. For more on this, check out this [podcast](#) with Brené Brown and David Kessler talking about finding meaning as a key aspect of coping with grief.

Maybe there are things that you will learn about yourself during this time, such as your personal strength, something you enjoy doing, or what is most important to you. Maybe it's finding gratitude in the everyday: "The sky is blue today", "I have something I enjoy reading", "It was good to laugh today." Finding things to be grateful for has been shown to increase positive emotions.

Find lightness and humour in each day.

Right now there is a lot to be worried about, and with good reason. Is there a way you can counterbalance this heaviness with something light and funny each day: cat videos on YouTube, a funny movie, laughing with friends or family?

We might be inclined to listen to sad music or watch sad and scary movies, but if you find these adding to the heaviness of this experience you might want to set some limits for yourself. There's a strategy in Dialectical Behavioural Therapy called "opposite action" that involved acting opposite to your emotional urge when that emotion is doing more harm than good. Instead of withdrawing when feeling sad – seek connection, instead of laying around in bed when feeling low – do something active. This isn't about suppressing your feelings, but rather actively choosing a behaviour that's more helpful, effective, and in line with your values.

Give everyone the benefit of the doubt, and a wide berth.

We are all experiencing chronic stress, meaning many of us are experiencing a heightened fight or flight response. Add this to a lot of time cooped up in shared accommodations, and this can bring out the worst in everyone. It is important we try to move with grace through blow-ups, to not show up to every argument you are invited to, and to not hold grudges and continue disagreements. Everyone is doing the best they can to make it through this.

Reach out for help.

If you have a therapist or support person and they are available to you, even at a distance, connect with them. And if you're looking for some extra support, we've compiled the following list of self-help resources, direct service providers, and apps that you might find helpful. We've made sure they're all free of charge.



The above information was compiled by the Phoenix Youth and Family Therapy team. It was adapted from a list of Mental Health Wellness Tips for Quarantine created by Dr. Eileen Feliciano, Psychologist. The original list can be found [here](#)

Self-Help Resources

FACE COVID Coping Strategy by Dr. Russ Harris

'FACE COVID' is a set of practical steps for responding effectively to the Corona crisis, using the principles of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy.

Tolerance for Uncertainty: A COVID-19 Workbook

Created by Dr. Sachiko Nagasawa, Clinical Psychologist. This workbook will assist you with managing the strong emotions that will arise during this difficult time through a form of psychological treatment called Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT).

TAO (Therapy Assistance Online)

TAO is an online resource that has recently been made available for free to all adults (19+) in Nova Scotia. Once you have created an account, you can download the TAO Mobile app on your phone or tablet.

Using videos and engaging interactive activities, the modules cover a wide range of wellness topics: anxiety and stress, low mood/depression, relationships, substance use, and pain management. It also has a variety of mindfulness/meditation exercises - some specifically to help cope with COVID-19.

We suggest the "Let Go and Be Well" module starting with session 2 and the mindfulness exercises as a good place to start, as these fit well with coping with COVID-19.

Anxiety Canada

Anxiety Canada is one of our go-to resources in the PYFT program. This resource offers step-by-step instructions for a range of calming, mindful, soothing/distracting, self-reflecting, energy-boosting/stress-relieving, and self-soothing activities. The MindShift CBT app is a free app with audio for many of these activities.

Some other helpful links:

[Sleep Hygiene](#)

[Progressive Muscle Relaxation](#)

[COVID-19 specific resource for folks with excessive worries](#) (OCD and health anxiety)

[Talking to kids about COVID-19](#) (good for our clients who are parents)

MindWell-U

This 30 Day Mindfulness Challenge is an online, evidence-based curriculum shown by university researchers to lower stress, increase resilience and improve well-being, performance and optimism.

The self-guided program challenges you to take 5 minutes out of your day to learn the basics of mindfulness – the practice of paying attention to thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations in the present moment through a gentle and nurturing lens. Each day you will complete a “Take 5” session during which you learn new mindfulness skills to improve your mental health.

The Science of Wellbeing (Free University Course)

Offered for free by Yale University. In this course you will engage in a series of challenges designed to increase your own happiness and build more productive habits. As preparation for these tasks, Professor Laurie Santos reveals misconceptions about happiness, annoying features of the mind that lead us to think the way we do, and the research that can help us change. You will ultimately be prepared to successfully incorporate a specific wellness activity into your life.

Mind Control: Managing Your Mental Health During COVID-19 (Free University Course)

Offered for free by the University of Toronto. The intent of this course is to give you a deeper understanding of the anxiety reaction as it relates to various aspects of our current life, ranging from our consumption of news to the way we talk to our children about this. It will also give you clear strategies for managing and, in fact, turning off the anxiety response at least for short periods. The hope is that you will leave this course with a better understanding of how your brain reacts to crises, along with some powerful tools for managing it before it manages you.

Centre for Clinical Interventions

Self-help workbooks for a range of presenting concerns.

Self-Compassion

Sleep

Distress Tolerance

Problem-Solving

Mindfulness

Tips for Parenting During the COVID-19 Outbreak

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

Concise list of strategies to maintain your mental wellness during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Services Offering Direct Support

Community Mental Health and Addictions (NSHA) – Adult Services 19+

902.424.8866

Open Monday-Friday 8:30am-4:30pm

Continues to provide counselling services by phone or videoconference.

Community Mental Health and Addictions (IWK) – Up to age 19

902.464.4110 or toll free 1.855.922.1122

Open Monday-Friday 8:30am-4:30pm

Continues to provide counselling services by phone or videoconference.

Pause: Mental Health Walk-In Program

1.800.598.5270

Free single-session clinical therapy program for adults offered by the North End Community Health Centre. Call and leave your name and call back number and the coordinator will contact you with a phone-based appointment time on Tuesday or Thursday between 5pm and 9pm.

Kids Help Phone

1.800.668.6868

Text: 686868

Support is available 24/7. Youth up to age 20 can call to speak with professional counselors by phone. There are also trained volunteers available via text.

Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team

902.429.8167 or 1.888.429.8167

Available by phone 24/7, and mobile between 1pm and 1am daily.

For anyone experiencing a mental health or addictions crisis or someone concerned about them.

ICAN Conquer Anxiety and Nervousness

1.866.470.7111

This program will help adults (age 18+) learn life-skills to overcome anxiety and to cope with major life stressors.

A telephone coach will support you through the program that can take about 3-4 months with weekly telephone contact. They will provide you with written skill-based information as well as videos and audio that will help you find out what skills work best for you in specific situations. You will track your anxiety in an Anxiety Tracker, and use the skills to face goals and learn hope to control anxiety.

Your coach will help you match the skills to overcome your main anxieties. Some additional highlights of the program include tips on: the importance of self-care for your mental well-being, being your own advocate; balancing finances; effective problem-solving around major stressors using your skills to control anxiety and much more helpful information.

Alcoholics Anonymous - AA Meetings

Many meeting sites are offering meetings via Zoom or call-in.

Narcotics Anonymous - NA Meetings

Many meeting sites are offering meetings via Zoom or call-in.

Gambling support network

1.888.347.8888

Available 24/7, the clinical counsellors at the Gambling Support Network provide ongoing support for anyone affected by gambling. That means that they are there to help the person who is gambling and anyone affected by the gambling, including partners, family and friends.

Healthy Minds Cooperative

Peer-based wellness programming and navigation services offering weekly wellness programming online/by phone.

[April events calendar](#)

Mental Health Apps

Woebot

CBT based app that provides a check-in for those experiencing anxiety, depression, relationship problems, procrastination, loneliness, grief, addiction, pain management and more.

Woebot checks-in with you every day and guides you through practical techniques based on approaches such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Mindfulness, and Dialectical Behavior Therapy.

Woebot is your very own coach who chats with you and offers insights and skills to help you grow into your best self. You can chat with Woebot as much or as little as you like.

Calm

Normally this app needs to be purchase, but right now they are offering a selection of free meditations, sleep stories, music and other tools on this [webpage](#).

MindShift CBT

Tools to help with worry, panic, perfectionism, social anxiety and phobias.

The app uses Cognitive Behavioural Therapy strategies to help you learn to relax and be mindful, develop more effective ways of thinking, and use active steps to take charge of anxiety.

Guided Mind

Guided meditations on a range of themes, including COVID-19.

What's Up?

Uses Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy strategies to help cope with depression, anxiety, anger, stress and more.

LIVESTRONG MyQuit Coach

Personalized plan to help quit smoking (could be useful in conjunction with smoking cessation supports).