



Managing your **Mental Health** in Times of Uncertainty

The nature of the developing events related to COVID-19 can leave us all feeling anxious and uncertain.

When our daily lives undergo changes, it can impact our routines, thought patterns and therefore be unsettling. Looking after your emotional well-being is an important practice.

Caring for ourselves involves the attitudes, behaviours and actions that we take to maintain or improve our well-being. These may include an array of strategies aimed at nurturing the body, mind and spirit. When we are in balance, in all facets of our lives, our body, mind and spirit are in harmony. This implies a commitment and investment to know oneself, to responsibly and mindfully manage our personal resources, and to recognize our limits and choose healthy actions.

Below you will find some strategies for supporting both your mental and physical well-being in times of uncertainty:

- Meet your basic needs, ensuring you are eating healthy, drinking plenty of fluids and getting regular sleep. If you are biologically deprived, you may be at risk of endangering your mental health.
- Take frequent breaks. Go for a walk, listen to music, read a book and/or talk with a family member/friend.
- Be mindful of your alcohol, nicotine, caffeine, and sugar consumption.

- Limit or avoid looking at news and media related to the situation at hand.
- Connect with your supports. Talk to your colleagues; connect with family and friends to support each other. At times like these, we tend to isolate ourselves out of fear and anxiety. Tell your story and listen to others.
- Respect one's differences. Some people need to talk while others prefer to be alone. Recognize and respect these differences in yourself and in others.
- Practice a self-care check-in. Pay attention to depressive thoughts and/or signs of stress in yourself. If you experience prolonged sadness, difficulty sleeping, intrusive thoughts, feelings of hopelessness, it is important to seek support.
- Identify what is within your control. Worrying about things that are beyond our control is not useful.
- Be aware of your emotions such as fear, grief, guilt, frustration, exhaustion and so on. When you notice these emotions, work with a family member or colleague to develop a self-care plan. A plan will include activities you have used previously to overcome difficult situations such as regular exercise, meditation or journaling.
- Devote a moment of each day to reflect on the uniqueness of this time and to make decisions for tomorrow.

Resiliency promotes courage, empathy, compassion and humility. Building up your resiliency includes pausing, stepping back, taking a breath and taking time to recheck our thoughts, ideas and feelings. Being aligned in our values, intentions and current reality, are skills that we acquire. Self-awareness, including the ability of introspection, practice of listening and engaging in various reflective tools are key to maintaining optimal mental health.

Qualities that may emerge include:

- the attitude of not knowing all of the answers
- being open to discovering what will work best in the given situation
- accepting things as they are - without judgment
- having the willingness and courage to accept when a decision was, in hindsight, the wrong one

- willingness to adjust the course without a need to blame or self-criticize
- having realistic expectations of one's own performance, including the ability to take responsibility and take steps towards "starting over"

At times, we undergo stress that exceeds our ability to adapt and to remain in balance. Sometimes, this may bring anxiety born of feeling powerless in situations beyond our control. Real or perceived powerlessness, the inability to cause or prevent change, may contribute to our feelings of vulnerability.

Neglecting or ignoring our health and well-being will negatively impact our resilience. Sometimes, talking to a mental health professional can help you regain a healthy perspective on the current situation and its impact on you.

This is a message from your Employee Assistance Program. To access confidential psychological support services, contact the EAP at 1-800-268-7708 or, for the hard of hearing, at 1-800-567-5803.

www.healthcanada.gc.ca/eas

For more information on COVID-19:

1-833-784-4397 | canada.ca/coronavirus | phac.info.aspc@canada.ca