



Coping With COVID-19

1st Edition, March 27th, 2020

At UIC we recognize that these are uncertain times and that many are likely experiencing an increase in symptoms related to stress, anxiety, and even depression. As mental health care professionals we aim to increase our level of engagement with member companies, clients, and the community at large during this time. We will be publishing a weekly bulletin to provide strategies for coping with Covid-19 and the ongoing changes in our communities.

We continue to offer confidential counselling services over the phone and online (Skype, FaceTime, and Zoom). We understand that personal mental health might be taking a 'back-seat' to other life disruptions – and we encourage you to continue to take care of yourself during these challenging times.

Managing stress and anxiety

The past few weeks have seen unprecedented global events take place in response to the novel coronavirus. Governments, businesses, organizations, and individuals are taking important and necessary measures to slow the spread and ease the burden on our healthcare system. We're seeing Canadians rise to the call to action with compassion and positive action. Businesses are offering free pickup and delivery of goods for vulnerable individuals, distilleries are producing hand sanitizer for front-line workers, and online groups are connecting those who can help with those who need it.

We're also seeing an increase in stress and anxiety. This is evident in public behavior such as panic buying and stockpiling. As well as shifts in internal feelings (anger, worry, apprehension) and/or private behavior (substance use, avoidance, conflict with loved ones).

First things first – we want you to know that it is completely normal to experience anxiety and stress

given that these are **normal reactions to abnormal events**. It's normal to worry about our own health and the health of those we love, our jobs and finances, and how long these measures and the health crisis might last. There is a lot we don't have answers to right now, and that's a difficult place to be in.

While normal, it's also important to recognize when anxiety and stress are negatively affecting your life, and to implement practices to support your health and wellbeing. Below are a few ideas:

- **Know the facts** – get your information from reliable sources (see sidebar for some fact-based sources).
- **Limit** - the time you spend looking at news and Covid-19 information. Consider assigning a set time and limit to your news intake (i.e. 15 min at 9 am and 4pm).
- **Reach out** - to friends, family, and neighbours. While practicing physical distancing, you can still connect with those you love over the phone or online – send a message, make a phone call, connect over FaceTime.
- **Practice self-care**. As activities and routines are disrupted, get creative about taking care of your well-being (cuddle your pet, cook healthy meals, join a free online exercise class, journal, meditate, do art, etc).
- **Seek help**. We are here to help! Reach out to your mental health provider for support, acknowledging current difficulties, mitigating negative coping strategies and implementing positive ones.

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We recommend these articles on the stress and anxiety associated with this situation:

<https://www.anxietycanada.com/articles/what-to-do-if-you-are-anxious-or-worried-about-coronavirus-covid-19/>

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

<https://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/infosheet/covid-19-and-anxiety>

10 TIPS TO REDUCE COVID-19 ANXIETY

-  Focus on things you can control, such as your thoughts and behaviors.
-  Keep the big picture in mind. Humankind will survive this.
-  Remember that the size of news coverage may not equal the size of a threat.
-  Let wisdom and logic guide you.
-  Turn to reputable sources for your news.
-  Control how often you check the latest news.
-  Model peaceful behavior for those around you.
-  Evaluate your own health behaviors and be a model for others, including children.
-  Feeling too isolated? Maintain digital connections with people.
-  Don't let fear influence your decisions, such as hoarding supplies.

THERE IS AN APP FOR THAT

B.C.'s Ministry of Health has released [a new app](#) for information and alerts on the coronavirus pandemic.

The free BC COVID-19 Support app includes:

- A self-check tool.
- Lists of recommendations from the B.C. Centre for Disease Control.
- Guides on handwashing and social, or physical, distancing.
- Basic information about COVID-19.

The app also includes information about COVID-19 in B.C. including confirmed cases, deaths and recoveries. The app is available in both ios and Android. For more information, go to <https://www.thrive.health/covid19-app>