

# COPING WITH COVID-19



8<sup>TH</sup> Edition, May 21, 2020

## *Support for Couples, Partners, and Dating*

As B.C. moves into its next phase of Coronavirus response, some are breathing a sigh of relief. British Columbians have been notified that many businesses are reopening, parks are again available for public day-use, and (small) outdoor hangouts that maintain appropriate physical distancing are encouraged. Others may be feeling apprehensive and anxious about how the re-opening will impact the spread of the virus. Regardless of which side of the fence you're on – we can likely all agree that our lives and our relationships continue to be impacted by the Coronavirus.

Stressors such as travel restrictions, financial losses, cancellation of daycare/school, homeschooling, and loss of social and recreation activities would be challenging on any given day. With the added complexity of anxiety and fear surrounding the current situation - it's no surprise that many couples are finding it difficult to navigate this time together.

Counsellors and therapists across the country are noting an increase in tensions within intimate relationships. Given that everyone has their own coping styles in times of uncertainty, it makes sense that couples may be having a difficult time communicating, understanding, and relating to each other.

While we don't have the space in this bulletin to discuss all of the varying challenges you and your partner may be experiencing, we do have some ideas that can help any relationship maneuver more successfully given the current circumstances.

**Engage in self-care.** Notice how you're feeling and respond in a way that's positive and self-soothing. Zoom with friends, read a good book, talk with your counsellor, spend time in nature – if you're not taking care of yourself, it's going to be difficult to interact positively with others.

*Love On Lockdown: Tips For Dating During The Coronavirus Crisis*  
<https://www.npr.org/2020/04/21/832961994/isolating-with-a-partner-relationship-therapists-share-stress-reduction-strategy> (Listen)

*How Coronavirus Is Changing the Dating Game for the Better.*  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/07/well/mind/dating-coronavirus-love-relationships.html> (Read)

*(cont'd)*

**Take and give space.** During isolation it's likely we will naturally lean more heavily on our partners for our emotional well-being. Recognize that your partner can't effectively be your **only** support (and you can't be theirs).

**Acknowledge** that these are trying times for both you and your partner. This isn't a normal time for most, so we can expect 'the unexpected' when it comes to the feelings, thoughts, and behaviours from both ourselves and our loved-ones.

**Communicate** your experience. Set aside time for each of you to talk about your worries and for the other to listen. This isn't about problem solving, it's about being empathetic and curious about our partner's experience.

**Press pause** before a disagreement escalates. When you find yourself bickering or getting negative with your partner, communicate that a time-out would help you reset. Move out of each other's physical space and engage in an activity that self-soothes - that gets you out of 'fight or flight' mode. Revisit each other at an agreed upon time to continue your discussion.

**Be intentional.** Set time aside to connect with your partner; engage in activities you both enjoy, do something special for your loved-one, or sit quietly without the distraction of technology – be active in being present.

**Get creative.** If you've been cooped-up together – set up a 'solo' date night for your partner to enjoy without the pressures of romance or parenting. Make a yummy snack and setup a cozy nook with their favourite movie, book or podcast. If you're apart – order take-away delivery to your partner's house and share a dinner-date over Zoom. Getting creative shows your partner that you value them, that you're grateful for them, and that you care about them – something that we all need during this experience.

These are just a few ideas that we hope will help foster kindness, empathy, and love in your relationships during these unprecedented times.

**Singles and those newly dating!** We see you too – and we know you're experiencing your own unique set of difficulties during Coronavirus. You might appreciate listening to the articles and podcasts below, which explore dating during a global pandemic.

Some main takeaways: acknowledge that dating is weird right now, foster confidence in your Coronavirus boundaries (i.e. it's ok to not feel comfortable meeting up with someone new right now), it's ok if you're not interested in dating right now (there's no shame in deleting any apps), and lean into being creative if you are continuing to date – many are finding they're skipping the 'small talk text' and having online video chats where they can have dinner dates, play online games together, etc. – and they're enjoying it.

**An important consideration.** As mental health providers we recognize that for many, this time has exacerbated already difficult living situations – and rates of domestic violence have increased during the isolation period. We care very much about your safety and wellbeing. Below are a few resources to access for safety and support:

**Campbell River: Ann Elmore Transition House**  
24-Hour Help Line: 250-286-3666  
TOLL FREE: 1-800-667-2188  
<https://www.annelmorehouse.ca/contact-us>

**Comox Valley: Lilli House**  
24-Hour Crisis Line: 250-338-1227  
24-Hour Text Line: 250-218-4034  
<https://cvts.ca/lilli-house/>

**Find Help Across Canada:** <https://endingviolencecanada.org/getting-help/>