

Doing Well During Stressful Times

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Challenging/Overwhelming Times



Cumulative Impact: We might be able to manage one or two of these without much impact or energy drain but not all at once!

Routines Help Us During Stressful Times but.....the current times have changed our routines too!

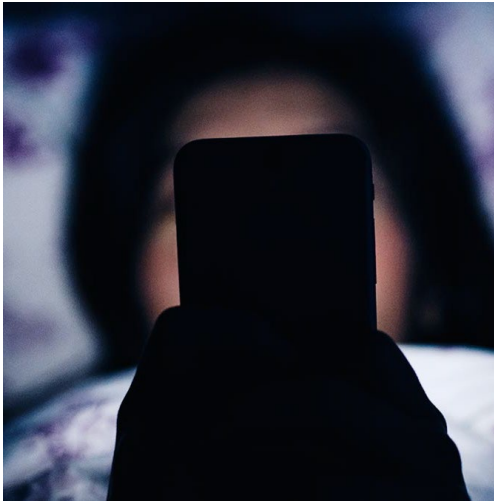
- Our ways of connecting with people have changed – less physical connection for many;
- Recreational pursuits may have been removed:
 - No movies to go to;
 - Can't eat out;
 - No sports team to play on;
 - Gyms are closed.
- Our space may have changed – more or less dense with people;
- Where you study, take exams – has changed!
- No work to go to for many – many people find work to be a stress reliever.



Normal Person, Normal Reactions, Abnormal Time

- Makes sense that many of us are feeling high stress or are feeling overwhelmed.
- Common Reactions:
 - Fear and anxiety:
 - Feeling anxious or worried about yourself or your family members contracting COVID-19 or spreading it to others;
 - Concerns about obtaining food and personal supplies;
 - Worry about money, studies, jobs, etc.
 - Depression and boredom:
 - Feelings of sadness or low mood;
 - Extended periods of time spent at home can also cause feelings of boredom and loneliness;
 - Anger, frustration, irritability:
 - Loss of agency and personal freedom associated with isolation;
 - Anger or resentment toward others if you feel others around you are negligent;
 - Uncertainty

Get Good Sleep!!



- Sleep is restorative and will help you perform better when studying and writing exams.
- Acceptable range is between 6 and 8 hours of quality sleep (defined as falling asleep within 10 to 20 minutes of going to bed and staying asleep for 85 to 90% of the time you're in bed).
 - Try to reduce the number of activities you do in bed so you don't accidentally train yourself to stay awake in bed.
 - If after 15 to 20 minutes you cannot sleep – stop trying to sleep and do something else that isn't stimulating until you're tired.
 - Create a “wind-down” or “buffer zone” for going to bed – this is a quiet time before trying to sleep that tells your body to get ready to sleep.
 - Don't use screens when you go to bed and, if you can, for 30 minutes to an hour before going to bed – screens activate your brain rather than helping you “wind-down” to get ready for sleep.

SOCIAL DISTAN~~S~~ING

SOCIAL DIS~~D~~ANCE~~E~~ING

Social Distance \neq Social Isolation

Human Beings Are Relational Creatures

- Most of us **CRAVE** social connection – and not just digital connection
- Be ***Social from a Distance***:
 - Set up regular days and times for online social “dates” with friends/family (including eating “together”);
 - Go out for a walk together but respect social distancing recommendations;
 - If you and a friend each have a vehicle, drive somewhere to meet, stay in your respective vehicles to connect;
 - Host a “Netflix Party”;
 - Play social games on your phone:
 - Look for games you can play with others using technology (e.g., “Jackbox T.V.”);
 - Join-host an online book or journal club;
 - Talk on the phone



Missing Physical Connection?

- Your physical body doesn't differentiate between you or someone else massaging or hugging you:
 - Hug yourself – close your eyes, hold the hug, and breathe;
 - Warm a blanket in a clothes dryer and wrap it around you;
 - Consider getting a weighted blanket and using;
 - Squeeze a stuffed animal or a pillow – kind of like hugging it (do while asleep too!);
 - Get a hot water bottle and use – or a heat pack you can warm in a microwave;
 - Massage yourself (with hands or an object like a tennis ball) – massage your feet, neck, jaw, any place you can reach;
 - Get your hands dirty (stimulate your skin!) – e.g., knead bread dough, bake, re-pot plants, etc.;
 - Practice yoga;
 - Get a long shower brush or a loofa and gently brush your back and other areas of your body;
 - Hug your pet if you have one.



Social Distancing Does Not Require You to Be a *SHUT-IN*

- Get outside and move your body – doesn't really matter what you do for your body to benefit (keep 6 feet from others when doing so);
- Consider taking a Pleasure Walk:
 - A Pleasure Walk is like walking while you're on vacation;
 - Go outside for 15 to 30 minutes and walk at a slow to no more than moderate pace (like you're strolling, enjoying the time and day);
 - Just like when you're on vacation, look around and try to find as many pleasurable things as possible, slowly, one after the other, using all of your senses (e.g., the smell of recently cut grass, a fresh breeze and the warmth of the sun on your skin, the sound of a bird, the flight of a bird soaring in the sky, the constellations, architecture around you, etc.
 - If you find yourself thinking about something worrisome or stressful, gently remind yourself this is a time for yourself and refocus on the world around you instead.
- Go for a run or a bicycle (again: keep 6 feet from others);
- Open a window and get some fresh air (try sitting in the sun too!);
- Take your dog for a walk

We've been on 20 walks today. Leave me alone.



Be Careful Of COVID-19 Overload and Misinformation



- For most people, constant monitoring of COVID-19 news feeds is not healthy nor helpful – it can feel overwhelming;
- Consider how you normally interact with news and try to keep with this routine....unless you're feeling overwhelmed.....then reduce how much you watch!
- Consider checking in once or twice a day and pick reliable sources of information (e.g., [Canada.ca/COVID-19](https://www.canada.ca/COVID-19));
- Rumours abound about COVID-19 – confirm the source before reacting;
- Remember that graphic images on the internet, social media, and other sources may exaggerate the actual threat:
 - e.g., images of empty shelves in grocery stores are compelling visuals but not necessarily common and may be confined to certain areas. People rarely post images of stocked shelves and calm shoppers because those images aren't newsworthy;
- Set boundaries with friends, family, and important others about the amount of time spent discussing the pandemic.

Develop and Revise Your Daily Routine

- There is an opportunity for you to experiment with how you live and create a new routine – establish a **NEW NORMAL**;
- Develop a routine that fits (with as little or as much detail as you like) and that includes meal times, study times, relaxation, social connecting, etc.;
- Try to do what you ordinarily would be doing as much as possible – keeping in mind safety recommendations (e.g., social distancing);
- Engage your brain in meaningful activity each day!!
 - Low mood and anxiety can increase if you do not engage in enriching activities;
 - Try activities that are consistent with your values and beliefs;
 - This is an opportunity to try new things (e.g., reading in a new area);
 - Pick a topic (not COVID-19) and research it on the internet.
 - After using technology (e.g., gaming, roaming the internet), check to see how you feel – if you're exhausted try something different next time; if you feel energized then you're good.

Expand Your Horizons

- Try a virtual museum tour:
 - <https://www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/museums-galleries/museums-with-virtual-tours>
- Search “Museum Collections Online”
- Look for live virtual concerts online
- Free classes online from Ivy League Schools:
 - <https://www.inc.com/jessica-stillman/500-free-online-courses-from-ivy-league-schools.html>
- Watch Broadway Shows online:
 - <https://broadwaydirect.com/where-to-watch-musicals-online-the-musical-lovers-guide-to-streaming/>
- Check out animals online:
 - Zoo Live Cams (San Diego Zoo) - <https://zoo.sandiegozoo.org/live-cams>
 - Search out “home safari”

Use Distraction Techniques

- Make a list of things that make you happy;
- Take a hot bath with bath oil or bubbles;
- Curl up under a blanket with a hot drink and a good book;
- Baby yourself somehow;
- Light sweet-smelling incense or a candle;
- Rub liniment or lotion under your nose;
- Listen to soothing music;
- Clean;
- Take a cold shower;
- Play a game or do a task that requires focus and concentration;
- Do something nice for someone;
- Play a game;
- Bake or cook –be mindful about your eating!!.

Be Mindful About Your Eating



Focus on What You Can Control Rather Than What You Can't

- When uncertainty exists, it is easy to focus on things you can't control – this will create additional stress.
- Put your energy into what you can control and try to accept that uncertainty has always been present and that isn't necessarily a bad thing.



Practice Mindfulness



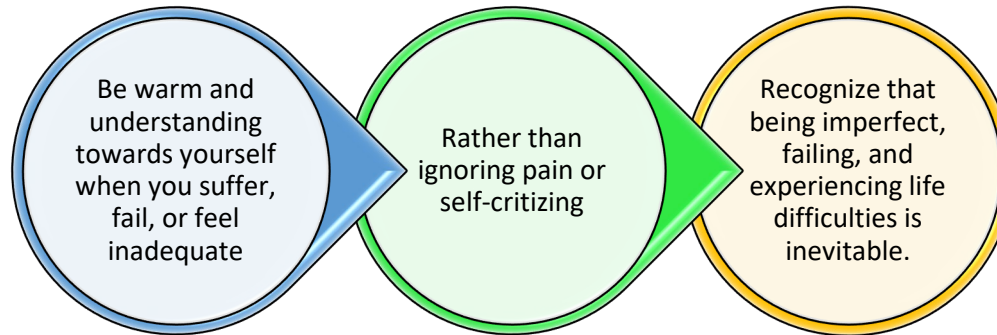
- Mindfulness practice can help you disengage from your busy world by focusing your attention inward and using your breath as a means to create more inner peace.
- Hurricane Meditation
- There are many apps that can guide you in meditation

Find Gratitude in Your Life

- Once a week, write down five things you're grateful for in your life and why you're grateful for them. Examples are:
 - "I'm grateful for being able to be a university student because in some other countries I might not be able to afford university studies or wouldn't be allowed to study."
 - "I'm grateful for my dog because she is very affectionate and always greets me when I come home."
 - "I'm grateful for my family because they always support me and they care about me."



Be Kind To Yourself: Practice Self-Compassion



- Self-Compassion: Transforming Negativity (K. Neff)
 1. It's hard to feel _____ right now.
(Emotion)
 2. Feeling _____ is part of the human experience.
(Emotion)
 3. May I be kind to myself.
 4. What can I do to make myself happier in this moment?

Challenge Negative Thinking



1. Get a set of index cards (or cut up paper in the size of index cards);
2. On each card, write one of your typical negative thoughts. Find those thoughts that are truly yours and capture your inner critic – that voice in your head that's critical, unforgiving, nasty, etc.
3. Next, shuffle the cards (shuffle the cards each time you do this activity) and pick one at random;
4. Read it out loud;
5. Then.....as fast and as thoroughly as you can....**dispute it!**
6. Do this out loud and with conviction (consider the facts and focus on **FACTS!**);
7. When you're satisfied you've shot down the negativity, move to the next card and repeat. If you can't think of a way to shoot down the negativity, put that card aside and pick another one. You can return to the card you've put aside at the end of the activity.
8. If you're struggling to challenge the negativity, think of what you would say to a close friend, loved one, or a child who is having the same negative thought;
9. Automatic thoughts roll out automatically and quickly. You have to respond just as quickly. This will take practice so do this every day for several weeks. Feel free to add to your stack of cards if new negative thoughts appear. Take out thoughts that no longer trouble you.

Struggling to challenge negative thinking?

Use the questions below to help:

- Am I confusing a thought with a fact? Believing something is true doesn't mean it is. Would your thought "stand up in court?" Is it really true?
- Am I jumping to conclusions? This is the result of basing what you think on poor evidence.
- Am I assuming my view of things is the only one possible? What alternatives are there? **Can you come up with two other interpretations?**
- Am I asking questions that have no answers? For example, "Why am I like this?"; Why does this always happen to me?" Don't waste time on questions you can't answer—try to turn them into answerable questions.
- Am I thinking in all-or-nothing terms? Nearly everything is relative. People, for instance, are not usually all good or all bad.
- Am I using words that exaggerate like always, never, everyone, etc. Use more specific language.
- Am I condemning my total person on the basis of a single event? No person is perfect. We all make mistakes. See if you can forgive your mistakes.
- Am I concentrating on my weakness and forgetting my strengths? Negative thinking often "shrinks" the positives and "inflates" the negatives. Is there anything positive about this? Are you discounting the positives?
- Am I taking something personally which has little or nothing to do with me?
- Am I using a double standard? We can often expect much more from self than from others and be forgiving of others but not self.
- Am I exaggerating the importance of events? What difference does a particular event really make to your life?
- What difference will this make next week, month, year?

Practice Forgiveness of Self and Others

- Forgiveness can release us from negative thoughts and feelings and reduce our stress.
- Forgiveness is first and foremost for the person doing the forgiving.
- Forgiveness is the “peace and understanding that comes from blaming that which has hurt you less, taking the life experience less personally, and changing your grievance story” (Learningtoforgive.com)
- There is nothing wrong with you if you are struggling to forgive someone else - this happens
- Forgiving someone doesn't mean that you're seeking reconciliation with that person or condoning what they did – you're seeking peace.
- Remember that a life well lived is your best revenge (if revenge is on your mind); instead of focusing on your wounded feelings and inadvertently giving the person who cause you pain more power, focus on the love, beauty and kindness around you.

Kristin Neff's steps to forgiveness (2011)

1. When thinking about what happened, see if you can identify any precipitating factors or events. For example, what was going on for the person or yourself at the time?
 2. Consider why the person (or yourself) didn't stop themselves from doing what they did. For example, is there anything in their learning history that suggests why they couldn't stop themselves.
 3. If you believe the other person (or yourself) is just "mean", think about what could have contributed to them (or you) being that way.
 4. Lastly, reflect on whether or not it is now a little easier to let go of some of your anger and/or resentment.
- You may not be able to completely forgive immediately – that is fine. Any positive change, no matter how small, is helpful.

What Can You Do About Stress?

- Walk stairs if you feeling a lot of stress and your body is really activated – but only if you don't have a heart condition. Walking stairs briskly to raise your heart rate and burn off the extra energy from stress can help your body relax. You can also try running in place, doing sit-ups or push-ups, or any physical activity that raises your heart rate.
- Identify a scent (e.g., lavender) that you associate with something really positive in your life and use this scent during times of high stress, for example, you can purchase an essential oil, dab this on your wrist and smell to calm your body
- Consider using one of the apps on the next slide to manage stress.

Wellness-Related Apps			
App Name	Description	Android Compatible	Apple Compatible
Music and Sounds			
Relaxing Music	Sleep sounds, built in timer	Yes	Yes
Relaxing Music for Stress – Anxiety Relief and Sleep	Simple melodies and sounds	Yes	Yes
Meditation, Breathing, and Yoga			
Calm: Meditate, Sleep, Relax	Includes meditation exercises, guided relaxation, calming music, stories	Yes	Yes
Stop, Breathe, Think	Meditation and mindfulness recommendations to you de-stress, sleep better, and build emotional strength and confidence.	Yes	Yes
Headspace	Includes meditation and sleep aids; mindfulness exercises; tracking your exercise, meditation, etc.	Yes	Yes
Serenity: Guided Meditation and Mindfulness	Takes you through mindfulness activities step-by-step (ex. breathing, learning the pull of the mind, etc.)	Yes	Yes
Breathe		Yes	Yes
Yoga for Beginners: Down Dog	Walks a beginner through the foundations of yoga, step-by-step instruction and video	Yes	Yes
Breathly	Another breathing app with preset functions (ex. four-square breathing)	Yes	Yes
Other Apps			
Simple Habit	Wellness and sleep app	Yes	Yes
Daylio	Mood tracker and journaling app	No	Yes
Calm in the Storm	An app for dealing with the stresses in life	Yes	Yes
Mindshift CBT	From Anxiety Canada, CBT skills	Yes	Yes

What Can You Do About Stress?

- When feeling stressed, talk to someone you trust. This could be a family member, friend or someone such as:
 - Student Counselling Centre – 474 University Centre
 - International Centre Advisor
 - Empower Me (1-844-741-6389) – available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
 - Spiritual Care Coordinator



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