

Dealing with COVID-19 in the Winter

With the declining hours of sunlight and the reality of colder, snow-filled days ahead, it is imperative you monitor your mental health and practice appropriate mental health hygiene. With the added stress/anxiety that COVID-19 has on our daily lives, creating a mental health plan for the winter months is crucial for success and maintaining positive mental health.

LIGHTING

Try to ensure you get as much natural light as possible. Take advantage of any sunny days. On dark winter mornings, wake up by gradually increasing the light. Set your alarm a few minutes early and turn on a bedside lamp to allow your body to adjust. Newer alarm clocks and bedside lights have options to increase lighting options.

ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR FEELINGS

What can we do to manage the stress and anxiety that may occur during this time of uncertainty? Plenty, starting with recognizing that it makes sense to feel stress or anxiety in these circumstances. There's nothing weak or irrational about feeling stressed or anxious during this time of uncertainty. In fact, accepting this fact is the first step towards managing your emotions. Allow yourself time to notice and express what you're feeling...without judgment. You can do this by writing your feelings and thoughts down in a journal, talking to trusted others, and/or expressing them through a creative activity.

TAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF

Make sure to plan/schedule time into your daily schedule where you can engage in activities that are relaxing and enjoying. Take this time to engage in self-care where you become aware of your own mental health and plan accordingly. We often "fill our own bucket" last but be sure to adopt the air transport safety recommendation of donning your own mask before you help others.

STAY CONNECTED

Even though it may be difficult to see family/friends, it is important to connect with loved ones on a regular basis. Try new technology or themes to keep things fresh. Reach out to someone you have lost connection with or try to form a new connection if possible.

COPING STRATEGIES

Identify some positive strategies you can engage in that help you deal with stress, worry or anxiety. Write this plan down and post it in familiar locations. Share your plan with a friend/family member and ask them to hold you accountable to the plan.

SET LIMITS WITH SOCIAL MEDIA/NEWS

It is understandable to want to keep informed, but it is necessary to take breaks from it. Set up boundaries that work for you that keep you informed while not taking up most of your time and energy, such as checking in on social media for 10 minutes every few hours. Set an alarm on your cell to help keep the boundary

PLAN YOUR WEEK

Studies show that productive people often plan out their schedule well in advance. Organize your week and plan in activities that provide you with a sense of pleasure and achievement. Be sure to leave some flexibility and “white” space in your schedule for urgent matters.

POSITIVE HABITS

White down a list of 5-10 positive habits you can engage with on a regular basis to maintain your mental fitness. These could be meditation, yoga, breathing, positive affirmations, etc.

HELP OTHERS

Research shows that we feel accomplished when we help others achieve their goals. Try to help others with daily chores around the house or office. Reach out and ask how you can support your family member or colleague.

CONNECT WITH YOUR VALUES

Do an audit and write down your guiding principles/values. Reconnect with things that are important to you and try to engage with them on a regular basis.

MAINTAIN HEALTHY ACTIVITIES

Throughout the day, set aside a few minutes to be active. Take a break from your work and walk around or do a few sit-ups/push-ups. Regular exercise has been shown to be a great remedy for stress and has a positive impact on boosting mood. Be mindful of eating habits and sleep.

ASK FOR HELP

If you notice yourself struggling or having an off day, reach out to family, friends, or medical personal. It is easier to overcome a mole hill rather than climb a mountain. For employees/staff, your EFAP has great tools/advice and is a valued & trusted option.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- University of Regina Mental Wellness Hub: <https://www.uregina.ca/mental-wellness/>
- University of Regina COVID-19 coverage page: <https://www.uregina.ca/covid-19/>

- The Province of Saskatchewan COVID-19 information page: https://www.saskatchewan.ca/coronavirus#utm_campaign=q2_2015&utm_medium=short&utm_source=%2Fcoronavirus
- World Health Organization: <https://www.who.int/>
- The Government of Canada-Public Health page: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>
- Canadian Mental Health Association: www.cmha.ca
- Mental Health Commission of Canada: <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English>