

# MANAGING COVID-19 RELATED STRESS

## TIPS FOR SOCIAL ISOLATION



- Practice habits that you enjoy and find relaxing, and make time for fun leisure activities (e.g., creative, physical, spiritual, cognitive, etc.).<sup>10</sup>
- Maintain familiar rituals such as eating breakfast and lunch, getting dressed (i.e., getting out of your pyjamas), and incorporating breaks throughout the day.<sup>4</sup>

## MAINTAINING AND BUILDING SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

- Experiencing a pandemic might affect the natural inclination for people to connect with and support each other; however, with social media and modern technology, we can maintain social connections while engaging in social distancing.<sup>3</sup>
- Connect with other new McGill students. To help ease you into the virtual transition to McGill, the university has created the [First Friend](#) program, which will connect you with another student based on your time zone, level, and faculty. All you need to do is sign up! You can learn more about program [here](#).



## WORKING FROM HOME



- If possible, have a designated area in your home that is exclusively reserved for working to maximize productivity and decrease distractions, rather than working in front of the TV or spreading work out on the kitchen table.<sup>6</sup>
- Set specific times to work and be realistic about what you can achieve. It can be easy to lose track of time when staying inside and not having to “clock in” or “clock out”. Working in short bursts (i.e., 45-60 mins at a time) interspersed with short periods of moving around can also maximize productivity.<sup>2</sup>

## DEALING WITH ALL THE NEWS

- Schedule specific times to read COVID-19 news and updates instead of scrolling through social media for hours at a time.<sup>9</sup>
- Get your information from reputable sources (e.g., World Health Organization, Government of Quebec, McGill website) – misinformation spreads fast!<sup>9</sup>



## REGULATING THE STRESS RESPONSE

- When we perceive we are under threat, our brain engages the fight-or-flight response. We can't avoid all sources of stress in our lives, nor do we want to, but we can develop healthier ways of responding to them.<sup>7</sup>
- Using different strategies can help us respond appropriately to stressors. With regular practice, we can create a sense of calm that we can come back to as the need arises. Try out [Calming Breath](#), [Progressive Muscle Relaxation](#), and [Thought Challenge](#).<sup>7</sup>



## PRACTICING HEALTHY COPING TECHNIQUES AND ENHANCING SELF-CARE

- Acknowledge and accept that feeling anxious, stressed or scared is understandable during times like these<sup>8</sup> and think about what you can and cannot control. Accept that certain current circumstances cannot be changed. Identify the things you CAN change (e.g., having good hygiene, doing things you enjoy, connecting with others).
- Try to get as much sunlight, fresh air, and nature as possible (e.g., spend time with your windows open to let in fresh air; take care of the potted plants in your home; look at photos of your favourite places in nature)<sup>5</sup> and cultivate ways to relax and be creative (e.g., using mindfulness, yoga, arts & crafts, music, and/or exercise). Some mindfulness strategies available in the PURE resource library include: [Mindfulness on the Go](#), [Body Scan](#), and [Sitting Meditation](#).



- Find creative ways to exercise like going for a walk, doing some indoor yoga or trying out an online workout.<sup>3</sup>
- Practice gratitude to help you keep a positive outlook. There are still small everyday things to be grateful for!

## BEING COMPASSIONATE

- Do what you can to stay safe and healthy, but accept that there are events that you can't change or control. Be compassionate towards yourself and accept that these events are entirely out of your hands!
- Although humour can be a good tool during times of crisis, ensure that you are being sensitive and compassionate to those around you. People cope with stressful situations in different ways!<sup>11</sup>



## COMMUNITY RESOURCES

### ONLINE PHYSICAL HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

- [Keep.meSAFE](#): 24/7/365 e-mental health service, available for free for all students at McGill. Step-by-step information on how to access it available [here](#).
- [Maple online](#): 24/7 online virtual health service connecting you to a Canadian doctor, accessible for International students with Blue Cross Insurance.
- [Dialogue](#): students who are covered by the SSMU Health Plan have access to this virtual health consultations and questions related to stress, anxiety and insomnia.



### COMMUNITY SOLIDARITY ACTIONS IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

- **Financial Solidarity** – If your income was affected as a result of COVID-19 related closures and restrictions.
- [MTL COVID-19 Mutual Aid Mobilisation d'entraide](#) – A Facebook group where you can request or offer assistance for others.



If you have any questions about your student rights at this time, SSMU VP University Affairs Madeline Wilson has put up a google form where you can submit any questions and concerns [here](#).

Check out Healthier McGill's [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) pages for more information about skills, strategies, and resources you can use to help navigate both everyday and COVID-19 related stress.