The outbreak of COVID-19 will be stressful for many individuals. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions. People are worried about their own health and the health and well-being of those they serve. They are also worried about their long-term stability in relation to job security or the stamina of their organization. All these elements and more can at times be overwhelming or potentially even traumatic. This means that we must learn to take care of ourselves. But this is not merely a physical endeavor. It is important to understand and have strategies to address physical, mental, and emotional wellness.

**Everyone Reacts Differently**

How you respond to the outbreak can depend on your background, the things that make you different from other people, and the community you live in.

**People who may respond more strongly to the stress of a crisis**

- Older people and people with chronic deceases who are at higher risk of COVID-19
- Children and teens
- People who are helping with the response to COVID-19, like doctors and other health care providers, or first responders.
- People who have existing mental health conditions including problems with substance use.

**Signs of stress or distress in yourself or others could include**

- Increasing or heightened levels of fear and worry
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns, energy and activity levels
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating, nightmares or upsetting thoughts and images
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs
- Feelings of numbness, disbelief
- Headaches, body pains, stomach problems, and skin rashes
- Anger or short temper
- Guilt about not being able to work or protect/support clients
  - If released from quarantine possibly guilt about not being able to perform normally as a parent or on the job during quarantine.
Things you can do to support yourself

- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media.
- Take care of your body. (additional ideas further below)
  - Take deep breaths, stretch often, or meditate or use grounding techniques. Additional: [see link](#)
  - Progressive muscle relaxation
  - Eat Healthy, be purposeful about improving sleep, exercise regularly
  - Avoid alcohol and drugs
  - Ensure you have time in your day to unwind. Try to do activities you enjoy.
  - Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about concerns or feelings. Practice physical distancing not social distancing.
  - Share and pay attention to the FACTS about COVID-19 to understand the actual risk to yourself, your community, and the people you care about.
  - Seek help when needed. If you find that the distress is negatively impacting your daily life emotionally for several days or weeks, talk to a clergy member, counsellor, or doctor.

If you are a parent

Not all children or teens respond to stress in the same way either. Things to watch for include:

- Excessive crying or irritation in younger children
- Reverting to behaviours they have outgrown (toileting accidents, bedwetting)
- Excessive worry or sadness
- Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits
- Irritability or “acting out” in teens
- Poor school performance or avoiding school
- Difficulty with attention or concentration
- Avoiding activities they normally enjoy
- Unexplained headaches or body pain
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

To support your child

- Take time to talk with your child or teen about the COVID-19 outbreak. Answer questions and share facts about COVID-19 in a way that your child or teen can understand.
- Reassure your child or teen that they are safe. Let them know it is ok if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.
- Limit your family’s exposure to news coverage of the event, including social media. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.
- Try to keep up with regular routines. If schools are closed, create a schedule for learning activities and relaxing or fun activities.
- Be a role model. Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members.
- Learn more about [helping children cope](#).
Help them to keep active. Minimum 30 minutes of physical exercise a day.
- Walk, stretching/yoga, active video games, set physical goals.

Exercise the brain.
- Continue with schoolwork or consider [www.khanacademy.org](http://www.khanacademy.org).

Stay calm by talking to parents or other adults or even contact Kids Help Phone.
- [www.kidshelpphone.ca](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca), text TALK to 686868, call 800-668-6868.

Connect with friends through chats or text messaging or phone.

Help the family with ideas to keep safe and to support each other at home.

**Other helpful ideas for practitioners or anyone needing them.**

- St. Mungo’s in Westminster, Self-Care for Front Line Workers toolkit: [file:///C:/Users/Wally's%20Laptop/Canadian%20Alliance%20to%20End%20Homelessness/Canadian%20Alliance%20to%20End%20Homelessness%20Team%20Site%20-%20%20CAEH%20Shared/TTA/Resources/Self-Care/Front%20Line/Self%20Care%20for%20Workers%20Toolkit.pdf](file:///C:/Users/Wally's%20Laptop/Canadian%20Alliance%20to%20End%20Homelessness/Canadian%20Alliance%20to%20End%20Homelessness%20Team%20Site%20-%20%20CAEH%20Shared/TTA/Resources/Self-Care/Front%20Line/Self%20Care%20for%20Workers%20Toolkit.pdf)

- Feeling effective and purposeful is a sustaining factor. “Our sustainability is connected to knowing and believing that our work matters.” ([Reynolds, 2010](#)

- It is important to solicit clear feedback and to know if what we’re offering is or isn’t working. If it isn’t, having the professional humility to either change approaches or offer another helper or service that might be more effective.

- Find ways to increase connection to yourself, others, and something greater.

- Practice [mindful self-awareness](#), optimism, countering isolation, holistic self-care.
  - [Guided meditation exercise](#) video (9 minutes)
  - [Reflective Inventory for Individual Processes of Self-Healing](#)
  - [15 Fun Self-Care Ideas for Daily Living](#)
  - [Stress and Resiliency: Challenges of 21st Century Living](#)
  - [Holistic Nourishment for Healing and Resilience: What feeds us is not always on our plate!](#)
  - [Meditation for Emotional Wellbeing: A Self-Care Strategy](#)

- “We-Care” vs “Self-Care”: “We are sustained in the work when we are able to be fully and relationally engaged, stay connected with hope, and be of use to clients across time.” ([Reynolds, 2011](#)
  - Exchanges and variety in workday and worklife
  - Everyday acts of solidarity and mutuality
  - Organizing around mutual ethics
  - Compassionate critiques of oppressive practices or systems
  - Celebrating and centering success/victories
  - Taking scheduled breaks and respecting boundaries
  - Co-visioning plan with peers or supervisor
  - Exploring spiritual beliefs/connections
  - Taking care of our bodies
- Go for a (mindful) walk (5 min guided mindful walk)
- Use Noble Speech: T.H.I.N.K.
  - True
  - Helpful
  - Intentional
  - Necessary
  - Kind

Disclaimer: This document is a collection of resources and/or ideas compiled by the team at CAEH. Please follow Public Health Agency of Canada guidelines on COVID-19 as the primary resource for all health-related concerns.

CAEH will continue to update this resource as new information or ideas become available. Please refer to the CNH3 website Resources page at cnh3.ca/resources for additional information. If you have an idea or resource to share or are seeking further support, please contact us at info@caeh.ca.