

# The York University Staff Association Health & Wellness News & Views

Uncertainty is all around us, never more so than today. And as we enter phase 3 the current COVID-19 pandemic has heightened anxiety over the economy, employment, finances, relationships, and of course physical and mental health. This uncertainty can leave you feeling stressed, anxious, and powerless over the direction of your life as well as your loved ones. While anxiety is a normal and expected reaction to the pandemic, too much anxiety can start to cause harm. Experiencing anxiety everyday takes its toll on health and well-being very quickly. When this anxiety becomes overwhelming it can ultimately cause serious disruption in our lives. For many people, the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 is the hardest thing to handle. We still don't know exactly how we'll be impacted, how long this will last, or how bad things still might get. And that makes it all too easy to catastrophize and spiral into overwhelming anxiety. But there are many things you can do even in the face of this unique crisis to manage your anxiety and fears. Hopefully, these tips can help get you through this ongoing difficult time.

It is imperative to be kind to yourself. Again, this is an anxiety provoking time for everyone, and it is okay to feel more anxious than usual. Build self-care into your day, even (and especially) as activities change rapidly and routines change daily. All the things you do to take care of yourself will help manage your stress. And by taking good care of yourself, you'll be better prepared to take care of others. With this newfound time, why not do something special for yourself? Start a daily journal to jot down thoughts and feelings to reflect on later. Connect with a friend over FaceTime every morning. Allow yourself life's little pleasures such as listening to music, just cause, and dance like nobody's watching, enjoy the sun set each evening or take a warm bath. Having something special during this time will help you look forward to each new day.

**Give yourself a break.**  
**Give yourself credit.**  
**Give yourself time.**  
**Give yourself attention.**  
**Give yourself love.**  
**Give yourself power.**  
**Give yourself to you.**

With social distancing limiting our ability to connect and physically interact, daily screen time has seen a jump. For many of us, it is our window into the world, friends, family, fitness, and even foodspiration. Well before the COVID-19 outbreak, social media came with its pros and cons. Excessive use of social media can fuel feelings of anxiety, depression, isolation, and FOMO. It's all about how you expose yourself to it. Don't allow social media to take over your free time. Set limits to social media apps to restrict how much time can be spent on them. It doesn't take long to refresh. Even letting go of your phone for an hour or two can help.

Take action over things you can control. Much about life is uncertain at the moment and many things remain outside of your control. You can't control the spread of the virus, whether you can take a vacation, whether other people are following social distancing guidelines, how quickly the economy will recover, or whether there is toilet paper at the store. However, it may be hard to imagine, you are not totally powerless in these unforeseen times. Whatever your personal circumstance, instead of worrying about the uncontrollable, try to refocus your mind on taking action over the aspects that are in the realm of your control. Try letting go of illusions of control and find peace in the fact that you are doing your part. Take pride in and focus on your nutrition, sleep, exercise, your grace, and kindness and how much time and energy you spend thinking about COVID-19. Remember to challenge your irrational thoughts by asking yourself if the worry is realistic or if you may have exaggerated it. Write out your worries, reactions, and feelings, and remind yourself that they are normal and fair. Focus on calm. Bring your attention to your breath and your body. Focus your attention on the sights, sounds, and smells around you and what you're feeling in your body. Breath in and out slowly, gently. Take control by bringing your mind back to your body and breath when it drifts, until you feel more calm. This breathing technique works well for children and adults and can be done as we move or as a part of a mindful exercise. Keep calm & carry on.

Ask for help if you need it. If you are struggling with pre-existing mental health issues, or if you're struggling with these issues more now, these times may be increasingly more difficult, and you may find problems may peak at this time. Seek out support from family, friends, and any mental health care providers. Even with limited physical access many care providers may provide access through phone service.

Finally, remind yourself that this situation is temporary. The timeframe may be unclear, but this situation eventually will resolve. Humans are often more resilient than we give ourselves credit for.

As always, I hope some of these tips are helpful, and that you're all hanging in there while we go through this together!

Stay well.

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