

Maintaining Your Mental Health During the COVID-19 Pandemic

With so much uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, it can take a toll on us not only physically but mentally. With the closure of services, schools and workplaces and the rising number of cases of the virus in our province, it can be hard to not become overwhelmed with anxiety and stress. The following strategies can help you take the necessary steps to maintain your mental health during this time.

Stay Focused on What you Can Control

While this situation may seem overwhelming there are things you can do to feel empowered. Frequently washing your hands, avoiding large gatherings, having an isolation plan and making sure you are following the guidelines recommended by Alberta Health Services are all ways you can feel in control during this difficult time.

Recognize that it is Normal to Feel Anxiety

During times of crisis it is normal to feel increased anxiety and it is important to acknowledge those feelings are valid. For those already prone to mental health issues, a stressful situation like a pandemic can increase anxiety, depression and hopelessness. Identify supportive people and mental health services in your community you can reach out to if these feelings begin to overcome your life.

Limit your Consumption of News and Social Media

Take time throughout the day to avoid checking your newsfeed, especially before bedtime. Allow yourself time to focus on activities you enjoy and bring positivity to your life. Reading, listening to music or doing some meditation are all great ways to destress when you are unable to attend regular activities in the community. This may even be a great opportunity to learn a new hobby!

Remain Connected and Listen to your Body

Exercise regularly, get outside, eat well, get enough rest and take care of your mental health by focusing on supportive relationships. Even if you can't go out and meet with friends and family in person, a quick phone call or video chat can help you feel less alone.

Have Open Conversations with Your Family

Have age-appropriate conversations with your children and answer any questions they may have in language they understand. Reassure them they are safe and that it is okay to feel anxious or scared. Keep the lines of communication open with loved ones and watch for signs of mental distress.

If you or a family member is feeling overwhelmed during this time, reach out for help from a mental health professional or call **Alberta's Mental Health Help Line (24 hours): 1-(877)-303-2642.**

For the latest information on the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the AHS self-assessment tool, please visit <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca>. If you have potential COVID-19 symptoms, please call 811 for further instructions.

Additional Mental Health Resources for Albertans

Distress Line (Edmonton):

780-482-HELP (4357)

1-800-232-7288 (outside Edmonton region)

Distress Centre (Calgary):

403-266-HELP (4357)

Distress Line (Southwestern Alberta):

403-327-7905 or toll free 1-888-787-2880