

## Managing Stress During COVID-19

Use the 8 Dimensions of Well-being model to consider how you can manage stress throughout COVID-19. Some suggestions are below.



### Stay connected (Social Well-being)

- Connect with those you trust, and talk to them about your stress and uncertainty. Telephone, social media, and video conferencing tools are good ways to stay connected. See BCIT's guide *Staying Connected During COVID-19* for suggestions.

### Maintain a balanced life style (Physical Well-being)

- Eating nutritious foods and staying hydrated will help keep your energy up and your immune system strong. This may seem obvious, but often when we are stressed we may find ourselves over-indulging, forgetting to eat, or avoiding food.
- Take time to move each day, for at least 30 minutes. Exercising inside or walking around your neighbourhood can boost your mood. If you are worried about contact with others, try going out earlier in the morning or later in the day.
- Pay attention to your sleep patterns. Sleeping well and keeping to a routine can help reduce the effects of physical distancing.
- Put limits on the amounts of time you spend studying and using electronic devices.
- Resist the temptation to over-indulge in recreational drugs and alcohol to escape your stress.

### Get the right information to ease stressful thinking (Psychological Well-being)

- Read facts about the coronavirus from reputable sources. For the latest medical updates, including case counts, prevention, risks and testing, visit: <http://www.bccdc.ca/> or follow @CDCofBC.
- Understand the recommendations coming from our top health leaders in our country and province and ensure you are practicing them.
- Have a plan in place for if you start to feel ill or believe you may be experiencing symptoms of COVID-19. Use the [COVID-19 Support App & Self-Assessment Tool](#) for guidance.

- Limit your exposure to news and information about the pandemic. Learn what you need to know to ensure you are following official recommendations. Avoid unnecessarily reading stories and articles on social media. A limit of 30 minutes per day should be sufficient.

### **Do what you can to stay on top of your studies, and ask for help if you need it (Intellectual Well-being)**

- You may need to lower your expectations of yourself. Invest more time in looking after your needs, and accept that you may not be performing at your best.
- BCIT prides itself on offering challenging, intensive programming. Studies can be stressful at the best of times; add in changes in response to COVID-19 and it might sometimes feel as though you cannot keep up. Know that you are not alone. BCIT recognizes how challenging the transition has been, and is committed to minimizing the impact on students' academic progress. If you are struggling, talk to your instructor, program head, or chief instructor.

### **Practice creativity (Intellectual Well-being)**

- Be creative by doing something you love that you might not have done in a while.
- Read a book, or keep a journal.
- Colour or do art. There are many sites online where adult colouring pages can be downloaded for free. Some sites allow you to colour online, with no printing required.
- Try a new recipe in the kitchen.

### **Give back (Spiritual Well-being)**

- Finding ways to support others is a powerful way to boost your mood and get out of negative thinking patterns. Reach out to others in your set and offer to organize a study group. Offer to go grocery shopping from someone who cannot leave their house. Check in with your neighbours (from a distance). Share wellness tips with your friends and set mates.

### **Make time and space for yourself (Psychological Well-being, Environmental Well-being)**

- Make a retreat space for yourself, and make it separate from your workspace. Even if it's only one corner of your room, dedicate that space to rest and rejuvenation. Fill the space with items that are comforting to you.
- Meditate or focus on your breath. Grounding yourself by focusing on your breathing has the effect of lowering your heart rate and decreasing stress. Phone apps such as Calm or Headspace include guided breathing exercises.
- Create a self-care toolkit that involves several of your senses: touch, taste, sight, hearing, smell, vestibular (movement) and proprioceptive (comforting pressure). Examples of each: a soft blanket, a hot chocolate, family photos, soothing music, essential oils, a small swing or rocking chair, a weighted blanket.
- Draw on your natural resilience. Reflect back to another time you may have been stressed and remember what you did that helped you face that adversity.

### **Reach out for assistance**

- [BCIT Student Services](#) are operational and available for support. You are not alone; recognize when you need support and take action.

- Don't hesitate to reach out to professionals and community leaders such as doctors, counselors, and faith leaders for support and guidance. Information about after-hours community supports can be found at [www.bcit.ca/counselling/afterhours](http://www.bcit.ca/counselling/afterhours).
- If you'd like help but are unsure where to start, you can always start by submitting an Early Assist referral request. [BCIT Early Assist](#) is an easy, confidential way to get in touch with relevant supports.

The information above is adapted from:

World Health Organization [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)

Vancouver Coastal Health Authority [www.vch.ca](http://www.vch.ca)