



## Practicing Resilience During COVID-19

Resilience is the capacity to adapt or recover in the face of adversity. While we are all born with a certain amount of natural resilience, resilience can be further developed through practice. The suggestions below are adapted from [Developing Personal and Academic Resilience](#), a guide developed by professionals and students from several Canadian institutions including McMaster University and Queen’s University.

### Recognize your automatic, unconscious responses to stress

How do you respond to stress – physically, behaviourally, and emotionally?

- How does stress feel or manifest in your body? Do you get headaches? Stomach issues? Do you sweat? Become irritable or exhausted easily? Many other responses are possible.
- What behaviours do you automatically engage in when you are stressed? Do you shut down and become paralyzed? Push through, ignoring any impact on your well-being? Forget to eat, or over-indulge? Isolate yourself? Have difficulty with focus and concentration, or with processing information? Do you turn to substances (drugs, alcohol, sugar, caffeine)? There are many other possibilities.
- What emotions and emotional responses accompany stress for you? Do you find yourself overthinking everything? Becoming paranoid? Angry? Tearful? Unresponsive and withdrawn?

When you are aware of your automatic responses, you can identify at an early stage when stress might be building up, and act to minimize the negative impact. Awareness of how you respond to stress can also help build compassion and understanding for others when they are displaying similar reactions.

### Choose healthier strategies

Explore options for other, healthier ways to respond to stress. See BCIT’s guide [Managing Stress During COVID-19](#) for some recommendations. Commit to trying two or more strategies.

When experiencing a stressful situation, you have the option to choose a course of action that has the potential to significantly reduce your stress. Depending on the situation, any one of the 4 A’s below could be a good strategy.

<p><b>ACCEPT</b></p> <p>Recognize what you do and do not have control over, and practice accepting what you cannot control. For example, we cannot control the actions of others or the existence of the coronavirus. We can control the ways in which we take care of ourselves.</p>	<p><b>AVOID</b></p> <p>Not all stress can be avoided, but unnecessary stress can and should be avoided. You can avoid unnecessary stress by, for example, limiting your exposure to news and conversations about COVID-19.</p>
<p><b>ALTER</b></p> <p>Modify your environment or routines in a way that will help reduce or eliminate your stress. Complying with official recommendations such as physical distancing is one example.</p>	<p><b>ADAPT</b></p> <p>Change the way you think about the source of your stress. What benefits or opportunities are there to the current situation, or what lessons can you learn? Adjust your standards and set clear and reasonable expectations of yourself.</p>

## Identify your strengths

What do you feel are your top strengths? Perhaps you have natural self-confidence, a clear sense of purpose, or a love of learning? Are you daring, patient, tolerant, good at time management? Consider how you can tap into your strengths to face or overcome adversity. For example, if you are concerned about COVID-19 and optimism is not a strength for you, you can tap into a strength such as humour or creativity to help take your mind off negative thinking. You can complete a free personal strengths survey at [www.viame.org](http://www.viame.org).

## Identify and access your support network

Developing resilience involves acknowledging our need to connect with each other. Although there is some merit to trying to get through difficulties on our own, there are times when that is counter-productive or even harmful. Know who you can reach out to, and when and how to do so. Consider what people or resources you can connect with to ask for help. These might include:

- Family
- Friends
- Your set-mates
- Any [BCIT student service](#)
- BCIT Student Association services
- Faith community
- Professional websites, health agencies
- Medical professionals
- Counselors
- Phone apps
- Crisis lines

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. Information about after-hours community supports can be found at [www.bcit.ca/counselling/afterhours](http://www.bcit.ca/counselling/afterhours).

## Commit to thriving

Commit to one thing you are willing to do differently over the next three weeks to improve your resilience:

- ✓ Reframe challenges as an opportunity for growth
- ✓ Take action to complete tasks you know are good for you
- ✓ Brainstorm options to address stressors (think about the 4As)
- ✓ Express appreciation to those who help you
- ✓ Accept support when offered, and reach out when needed
- ✓ Improve your self-talk (things you say to yourself)

For more detailed information, see:

[From Surviving to Thriving: Developing Personal and Academic Resilience](#)