

CAMHELPS

CamHelps provides you with tips and resources to support your mental well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic



TOPIC: Manage Information Overload

Throughout each stage of the COVID-19 outbreak, it could be argued that the physical spread of the virus has been outpaced by a demand for information about the virus. From East Asia to Europe and the Americas to the Indian sub-continent, countless articles, reports, and blog posts have been written and videos produced in order to chronicle, analyse, predict, lament, inspire and encourage global and local audiences.

In most instances, the abundance of information available about COVID-19 keeps us safe, healthy, and connected to stories of how this pandemic is playing out beyond our own backyards, cities, and country. Unfortunately, information that is evidence-based and helpful is also in direct competition for our attention with information about the coronavirus that is inaccurate, speculative, and potentially even harmful.

Sorting through information and doing our best to pay attention to only trusted and reputable sources place a demand on our time and emotional bandwidth. In some instances, the discomfort of not feeling in control of events around us can perpetuate a relentless search for that one article, interview, or report we hope will help ease our anxious feelings. In other instances where there is a real or perceived absence of information, our minds can try to 'fill in the blanks' by making up 'worst-case scenario' stories about what could happen.

Given the complex, unpredictable, and unprecedented nature of these times, these responses are normal and should ease once things begin to stabilize again. In the meantime, this issue of CamHelps provides some suggestions about what you can do to help yourself and others stay positive and in control while standing in the middle of the whirlwind of information that swirls around us.

WHAT YOU CAN

WHAT YOU CAN DO

IDENTIFY your needs

With all the COVID-19 content available, it can be helpful to do some personal reflection even before turning on the television or browsing the web:

- What are my information needs and priorities? What is most useful vs. what is merely interesting?
- What information do I need in order to make a specific decision?
- What information sources are available?
- How reliable is this information source?
- How will I know when I've found the information I'm looking for?
- What will I do if I discover information that challenges or contradicts what I currently believe?

SET your limits

Put some structure around your access and exposure to COVID-19 related information before you begin to feel overwhelmed or overloaded. Some ways to do this are:

- Create a schedule of when you will check out news sites, news programs, or other favorite media sources. Try starting with once in the morning and once in the evening;
- Be clear with others at the beginning of a conversation that you want to take a break from talking about COVID-19;
- Give yourself permission to step out of conversations that dwell on speculation, rumour, or things that are out of your control;
- Create dedicated COVID-19-free times such as mealtimes. Use this time to engage each other in positive talk about the day's successes and accomplishments, an uplifting conversation you had, read each other stories, or maybe even sing together;
- Remember that social media (like Facebook and Twitter) can sometimes be platforms for information that is more rumor and opinion than fact. Consider your sources carefully;
- Create a gratitude journal where you can spend time each day recording things that you are thankful for. Try writing in your journal just before falling asleep – it will help calm your body and brain before drifting off.....

CHALLENGE negative thoughts

In the current climate of COVID-related information overload, it can be hard to maintain perspective or challenge negative thought patterns. The endless stream of disturbing or frightening news can act like filters that trick our minds into falsely believing that we are completely powerless, alone, and vulnerable. It takes some effort to challenge negative thoughts, assumptions, or conclusions about our circumstances, but it's worthwhile in order to help reduce anxiety and think more clearly. Here are some suggestions that might help:

- Tell yourself a more positive version of the negative thought(s) you are having. Unless you can predict the future, you don't know how things are going to work out;
- Put your thoughts and feelings into a journal. Writing about your experiences causes your thoughts to slow down which can help you gain a new perspective or insight;
- Exercise. It's a great distraction;
- Nurture your inner life. Spiritual readings, liturgies, ceremonies, or meditations can bring about a deep sense of peace and purpose, especially during very challenging times;
- If negative thoughts start to cause increasing levels of distress or seem out of control, reach out to Homewood Health's EAP services or other mental health professionals for support and care.

HONOUR your role as an information source

Each person is uniquely processing their COVID-19 experience. Some may be more open to talking about it than others; some people may find certain aspects of current circumstances more troubling than others; and some may be too young to understand what's occurring in the world but still pick up on heightened levels of stress and anxiety in their caregivers:

- Be patient with others and listen for clues they give about their willingness or capacity to talk about COVID-19;
- Respect boundaries and be prepared to adjust the direction of a conversation if others show signs of distress, discomfort, or distraction. Remember that it can be more important to be kind than to be right.
- Use language that's appropriate for your audience. Pay particular attention when talking with children about COVID-19;
- Consider the source of information that you are sharing:
 - Where did it come from?
 - Who was the original source?
 - Are you passing along reliable information or sharing your opinion? Which of the two is needed at this moment?

RESOURCES

COVID-19 Resources @ Camosun College

- [COVID-19 main information site](#)
- [COVID-19 FAQs](#)
- [Employee Resources](#)
- [Student Services](#)

Information Sources

- [BC Centre for Disease Control](#)
- [BC Government COVID-19 website](#)
- [Government of Canada COVID-19 website](#)
- [World Health Organization COVID-19 website](#)

Managing Information

- Article: [Impact of Social Media on Mental Health](#) (Homewood Health)
- Article: [How Much Information is Too Much?](#) (Homewood Health)

Talking to others about COVID-19

- Video: [Talking to your Family about COVID-19 Misinformation](#) (cbc.ca)
- Website: [Talking to Kids about the Coronavirus](#) (childmind.org)
- Website: [How to Talk to Young Children about Coronavirus](#) (parents.britannica.com)
- Article: [How to Talk to Children about COVID-19](#) (Homewood Health)

Stress Management Resources

- [i-Volve](#) – Homewood Health's bilingual web-based program to help identify, challenge and overcome anxious thoughts, behaviors, and emotions;
- [Bounceback](#) – a free skill-building program offered by the Government of British Columbia to help adults and youth 15+ manage low mood, mild to moderate depression, anxiety, stress or worry. This program is delivered online or over the phone with a coach.

If you are experiencing a mental well-being related emergency or need urgent support, please contact:
the Vancouver Island Crisis Line at 1-888-494-3888 - OR

the Vancouver Island Crisis Line provides 24/7 support, crisis intervention, information, and resources to Island residents

the KUU-US Crisis Response Service at 1-800-588-8717 - OR

the KUU-US Crisis Response Service provides 24/7 culturally-aware crisis support to Indigenous people in B.C.

in the event of an emergency call 911.

WORKING REMOTELY RESOURCES

[10 General Tips for Working Remotely](#)

[Remote Work Guidelines](#)

[Tips For Workplace Leaders in Supervising Remote Workers](#)

MORE INFORMATION

Questions about Camosun's Employee Wellness resources – including suggestions for future CamHelps – can be sent to healthytogether@camosun.bc.ca.

Frequently check Camosun's [COVID -19 information page](#) and [FAQs](#).

Workplace Leaders looking for support with managing remote workgroups can contact Nancy Ali, Organization and People Development Specialist (AliN@camosun.bc.ca)