



10 Ways to Cope Through Self-Isolation or Social Distancing

Pandemic 'changing our daily lives in ways we've never experienced,' writes Ontario's Big White Wall clinical director Dr. Tim Rogers

Are you looking for some practical ways to make living life under COVID-19 a bit more bearable? The pandemic is changing our daily lives in ways we've never experienced and impacting stress levels, fear, worry and anxiety.

It's normal to experience these symptoms when discussion of the virus is everywhere you turn, especially if you are supporting others around you who may also be struggling. The pointers below offer some simple — yet effective — ways to manage your emotional well-being if you feel affected by the novel coronavirus outbreak, are self-isolating or social distancing.

- 1. Do keep connected with others using technology:** Plan phone calls or Skype with friends and family and utilize social media to stay connected with people while you self-isolate;
- 2. Keep up with self-care:** Include things like long baths, showers or skin treatments within your daily routine;
- 3. Keep a schedule:** This should be full of routine, pleasurable and necessary activities that you can do within your home. This may include activities like cooking, exercise or getting around to doing tasks you may have been putting off previously. If you would like to learn more about keeping a schedule, you may benefit from self-help courses, such as [Big White Wall's](#) Managing Depression;
- 4. Add variety to your day:** Try to strike a balance between having a solid routine and a varied day so that every day doesn't feel the same. Adding variety boosts our mood and motivation levels;
- 5. If possible, get some fresh air:** Fresh air and natural light are both helpful for our well-being. Spend some time in your garden every day. Planting vegetables, setting bird feeders and potting plants are just some outdoor activities you can use to improve your well-being. If this is something that might be tricky, arrange some flowerpots on your balcony, windowsill or internal window ledge;
- 6. Try to remain active:** Remember that exercise is beneficial for your physical and mental health. You may need to think creatively about how you exercise if you are not used to exercising at home, for example: taking online classes or working out using exercise DVDs;



7. Download a relaxation app and practice relaxation: Think of this as taking your mind to the gym. Just 10 minutes of relaxation per day is proven to reduce stress and improve your well-being;

8. It's OK to feel some anxiety: Understand that it is perfectly normal to feel some stress and anxiety, and you are not the only one experiencing these emotions whilst self-isolating;

9. Set yourself small goals: Think of this as an unusual period to do something you wouldn't usually have the time to do. This could be learning a new skill, hobby or getting that job done that you have been putting off for a while;

10. Take breaks from things you find triggering: Set limits with how much you engage with anxiety-provoking WhatsApp groups and social media channels, if they are causing you distress. Try to stick to reliable news sources for your COVID-19 updates within your local area.

Using online support tools is also a great way to stay connected with a community of people who are going through a similar experience. Every resident in Ontario can access Big White Wall (bigwhitewall.com) for FREE — you'll have access to a 24/7, safe online community with clinicians on-hand for extra support. The service also provides self-guided courses, creative tools and resources. Register today using your Ontario postal code at www.bigwhitewall.com.

Dr. Tim Rogers is a psychiatrist and the clinical director of Big White Wall, a free online mental health support service available to Ontarians dealing with anxiety, depression and other common mental health issues. Funded by the Province of Ontario and the Ontario Telemedicine Network, it's an online community that offers anonymous, free, peer-to-peer support in a safe and welcoming environment while being moderated 24/7 by clinical professionals.