

Coping in These Challenging Times

These are extraordinary times where we are all faced with changes coming at warp speed. I still feel like I'm living in a bit of a dream! Suddenly the university is closed, we are bombarded with media stories of a global virus that can trigger immense anxiety, fear and uncertainty, we are told to self-isolate as much as possible, and our routines are turned upside down as work and school life is mostly online now.

You are not alone. We are all faced with this pandemic challenge and are in it together. It is a time where we need to be gentle and patient with ourselves and others as so much can be affected, such as productivity, moods, eating and sleeping patterns. There is a plethora of articles on how to cope during this challenge that you can read (and I've included a couple of links below). Here I'll only post my top 3 suggestions that I hope helps:

1 – **Breathe**. Right now, relax your muscles so you can take a nice slow deep breath. Make the exhale even slower than the inhale. An effective breathwork technique is 4-7-8: breathe in through your nose for a count of 4, hold for a count of 7, exhale out of your mouth for a count of 8. Repeat at least 3 times.

2 – **Acknowledge your feelings**. Any feelings you have of fear, distress, or anxiety or normal and justified. Get them out through talking, journaling, moving your body, etc.

3 – **Focus on what you can control**. You can take care of yourself and protect your immune system by eating healthy, getting enough sleep, getting exercise (even if it's in your living room instead of a gym), and relaxing by practicing mindfulness, meditating or doing a guided visualization. You can minimize the time spent on the news. You can reach out to others to stay connected and avoid social isolation. You can help others, especially the elderly and those who are required to self-isolate by picking up groceries and dropping them outside their door, or even just reaching out with a phone call or text to see how they are doing. You can focus on all the good that is coming out of this situation.

Here are some links that might be helpful -

8-Minute Calming Meditation for anxiety, stress and worry related to coronavirus COVID-19:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZcUtlq6kPQ>

15-Minute Meditation to Deal With COVID-19 Anxiety:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BN3QEK5xAPQ>

Mental Health and Psychosocial Considerations During COVID-19 Outbreak – World Health Organization (WHO):

<https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf>

Mental Health and the COVID-19 Pandemic – Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH):

<https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-health-and-covid-19>

Help in Tough Times – Alberta Health Services (AHS) (this is a great resource list to other places for help):

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/amh/Page16759.aspx>

If anyone has other requests of what you would like me to write, or any other ways I can help, please let me know. Like most of you, I am working remotely now but continue to see people via video conferencing on Mondays and Thursdays, 9:30 am to 4 pm. A reminder I am here for EVERYONE in FRM: students, faculty, and staff.

It's easy to make an appointment. Simply email wellnessfrm@ualberta.ca and Katelyn Brown will reply with available dates/times to book you in. This is a confidential service and only Katelyn and I know who accesses me. If confidentiality is an issue for you and you only want me to know, you can email me directly for an appointment: merna@ualberta.ca.

Not only will we get through this, but we ARE getting through this. One day at a time.

Merna Schmidt
Wellness Coordinator