

## 10 Tips for Managing Your Mental Health Gr. 7-12

Not only is it imperative during this time of COVID-19 to take care of our physical health, but also our mental health. The following tips will help you not only pay attention to your mental health during a stressful time, but also to help you feel like you can actively take care of yourself.

1. It is important to ease the effects of isolation by **staying connected** with friends and family through talking on the phone or using an online video platform. Your relationships can remain strong and healthy as long as this communication is kept up. If you find yourself gradually speaking less and less to others, try calling the one person you are most comfortable with: you will no doubt feel less alone.
2. **Take a self-mandated media break.** Instead, engage in relaxing activities that you enjoy, such as reading a book, baking, working on a project, or creating art. Constant exposure to the media in the time of COVID-19 can be very anxiety-provoking and taking this break will likely reduce feelings of concern and worry.
3. **You can stay active as well as eat in a healthy way.** You can choose to stay physically active by following YouTube for yoga, workouts, or by using exercise bands. Physical and mental health are closely linked. You'll be better equipped to deal with COVID-19 and its overall life impact if your body is in the best condition as it can be.
4. **Try to be aware of what triggers specific stressors.** You may be able to avoid some of the triggers and learn to prepare for or manage others. Stress is a part of life and affects people in different ways. Rather than react to stressors, figure out what it means to respond with forethought. Some examples of coping with stressors include:
  - Deep breathing exercises online can help.
  - Muscle relaxation is a way to be less tense by tensing and relaxing different muscle groups.
  - Guided imagery is a cool way to use your imagination to help you feel calm and mellow. You can find many videos on YouTube that can take



you through the process.

5. **Sleep is more important than ever right now.** Try to go to bed at a regular time each day and practice good habits to get better sleep. Sleep restores both your mind and body. In addition, a regular sleep schedule is a necessary part of keeping a stable and predictable routine during a time that does not always feel stable or predictable.
6. **Take a moment to notice each of your senses every day.** Try to 'be' in the moment – this is called mindfulness. Being conscious of your inner and outer world is important for your mental health. Practicing mindfulness meditation is a wonderful way to reduce anxiety and elevate one's mood.
7. In the face of our COVID-19 isolation, it is so important to **reach out** to a friend, family member, community resource, trusted colleague, counsellor, teacher and perhaps find an advocate. Reach out to a crisis line, online peer support groups, seek out reputable websites to gain knowledge, and participate in an online forum. Please remember that you are not alone!
8. If you're home with other people all the time, **it is ok and healthy to find some alone time.** You may need to take some time to simply decompress from the daily family activity inside. There is no reason to feel guilty about this, as we all need time to refresh and recharge. Take this time to close your eyes, read a book, meditate or exercise.
9. If you're isolating with someone who is extremely anxious, or depressed about the COVID-19 situation, it is important to **try to empathize** with the family member and allow them to fully express themselves. If they agree, provide the family member with reputable websites with reliable information. However, try not to overwhelm yourself with a family member's difficulties. Talk to your parent or get guidance on this matter.
10. **Remind yourself that COVID-19 will come to an end.** In fact, you may need to remind yourself often, especially these days when it's so easy to get caught up in the negative things. As the saying goes, this too shall pass, even though it may not always feel like it. Keep your head up, and know this is a temporary reality that we need to work through with our loved ones.

