

## Strategies to manage self-isolation

Isolating yourself is hard! It is lonely and stressful, and it disrupts your habits, routines, and coping strategies. Anyone who has to had self-isolate must work hard to stay happy and healthy. However, the coping strategies are similar to what we teach in our groups and may sound familiar:

**Develop a daily routine.** My routine looks very different than before, but having a schedule helps me to feel like I have some control over a situation that feels very out of control. I make sure my day includes work / chores, self-care and leisure. I'm finding new activities to replace the things I can't do. In our house, we are using you tube videos to do yoga, karate and stretching exercises, and free apps to practice French and piano.

**Limit access to news.** It is important to be informed, but I limit myself to 15 minutes of news per day, so that I don't become too distressed and overwhelmed. If I want to sleep at night, I don't look at the news before bedtime.

**Focus on what you can control.** What can we control? We can save lives by doing our part to stop the spread of the coronavirus. We can protect our families, our friends and our communities. We can also work on all the coping strategies that help us to be healthier and to manage our pain (deep breathing, meditation, pacing, exercise, taking medications as prescribed, eating healthy, maintaining regular sleeping habits). Do you need a refresher on pain management strategies? Was your Pain 101 or Pain Management Group delayed by Covid-19? The Toronto Academic Pain Management Institute (TAPMI) offers web-based learning modules on pain management strategies. Take a look. It is an excellent resource.

**Look for joy every day. Work at it.** This is more important than ever. Do something fun every day. Play board games, watch funny movies, listen to music. I start and end my day by actively looking for something new that is pleasurable or joyful. What have I found this week? Mo Willems, our favourite children's book author, giving daily lunchtime drawing lessons. Musicians performing songs from their homes (Metallica, Neil Young, Michael Buble, Chris Martin, Sean Mendes, Phish and many others). Toronto Symphony musicians doing performances via videoconferencing. Free performances of Andrew Lloyd Webber musicals, the Bolshoi Ballet, London Royal Opera, the National Theatre, and Cirque de Soleil. And finally, Disney's "Imagineering in a Box" that teaches children and the young-at-heart how theme parks are designed and built. I hope you explore, and find something that gives you a few moments of joy.

**Find new ways to Connect with others.** Feeling connected is important for our mental health. Make connecting part of your daily routine. There are lots of ways to do this. Call, text or email family and friends. Chat with your neighbour over the fence. Send someone a note or a treat. Use videoconferencing for a playdate for the kids, coffee with a friend, a family gathering, or to read a bedtime story to your grandchild. Do you have a special hobby or skill? Do you know someone who is homeschooling their children? Offer to help by teaching a lesson by phone or videoconferencing.

**Monitor your mood.** This is a difficult time for everyone, and it is normal to experience some emotional distress (uncertainty, anxiety, fear, low mood). If your distress or anxiety starts to feel overwhelming, take advantage of available supports and resources. Our goal is to prevent a bout of depression and / or catch symptoms early on. Bounce Back provides phone and web-based counselling for anxiety and depression. Big White Wall is web-based resource that provides discussion groups, 24/7 support staff, and courses on managing depression, anxiety (health anxiety, OCD, PTSD, Panic, Social Anxiety), and emotional distress (Anger, Grief, Stress/Worry). We encourage you to check it out. For those of you who prefer books over websites, try *Mind Over Mood* or *The Reality Slap: Finding Peace & Fulfillment When Life Hurts*.

Take care of yourself. Marilyn

## Suggested Resources & Links:

### Pain & Mood Management Resources:

TAPMI Pain U Online: <http://tapmipain.ca/patient/managing-my-pain/pain-u-online>

Bounce Back: [www.bouncebackontario.ca](http://www.bouncebackontario.ca)

Big White Wall : [www.bigwhitewall.com](http://www.bigwhitewall.com)

### Information on Covid-19 & Self-isolation:

Middlesex-London Health Unit: [www.healthunit.com/](http://www.healthunit.com/) or COVID-19 Information Line: 1-833-784-4397

### Concerts:

Together at Home series: [www.globalcitizen.org](http://www.globalcitizen.org)

Budweiser Garden's: [www.budweisergardens.com/news/detail/live-streams-concerts-to-watch](http://www.budweisergardens.com/news/detail/live-streams-concerts-to-watch)

- Extensive list of live-stream concerts, updated regularly
- Current list includes Metallica, Phish, Coachella, Jason Mraz, Rob Thomas, Linkin Park, Ben Gibbard and more...

Michael Buble: daily concert at 5PM on his Facebook page

Neil Young's weekly Fireside Sessions <https://neilyoungarchives.com>

Arkells – daily livestream on Instagram

### Performances:

The Show Must Go On You Tube Channel

- Andrew Lloyd Webber musicals released Fridays at 8PM and available for 48 hours

National Theatre At Home You Tube Channel

- New performances released every Thursday (April 9: Jane Eyre, April 16: Treasure Island, April 23: Twelfth Night)

Bolshoi Ballet [www.youtube.com/user/bolshoi](http://www.youtube.com/user/bolshoi)

- Streaming full ballet and opera performances

Cirque Connect: [www.cirquedusoleil.com/cirqueconnect](http://www.cirquedusoleil.com/cirqueconnect)

- New material released every Friday (Performances, behind the scenes looks etc.)

### Books:

*Mind Over Mood* (Greenburger & Padesky; e-book available through LPL)

*The Reality Slap: Finding Peace & Fulfillment When Life Hurts* (Russ Harris).