



Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority Inc.



April 8, 2020

TO: NITHA Partner Community Mental Health & Addiction Departments

Re: COVID-19 and your Holistic Health - Mental Health Tips

Here are some helpful tips for those, who may be feeling a sense of loss and/or a feeling like you don't have control, here are a few helpful tips to assist you during this time:

- Find comfort in your spiritual/personal beliefs and practices.
- Maintain your regular routines as much as possible. Focus on what needs to happen today, and make a list of what you need to do in the next day or week to keep yourself safe and comfortable.
- Be mindful. Pay attention to your thoughts, feelings and body sensations. This can help you understand why you're feeling anxious or stressed. If you're having trouble managing your stress or anxiety talk to someone you trust, contact your healthcare providers, or call the Hope for Wellness Helpline at **1-855-242-3310**
- Practicing breathing techniques is one way to help you manage stress and anxiety. It can calm your nervous system and help you think more clearly. Take a slow deep breath in as you count to 5 and then exhale, also counting to 5 (repeat 10 times). Practice doing this throughout the day.
- Be sure to rest and try get enough sleep. Lack of sleep can make you feel overwhelmed, which will make it harder to cope during stressful times.
- Avoid or limit drinks with caffeine (i.e., pop, coffee, tea, energy drinks), they can make you feel anxious or restless and affect your sleep.
- Avoid or limit drinks with alcohol. It can disrupt normal sleep patterns, cause changes in your mood, and make feeling of stress and anxiety worse.

For those with existing mental illness, (i.e., anxiety disorder like post-traumatic stress disorder, mood disorders like major depressive disorder and/or psychotic disorders like schizophrenia) no alcohol use is the safest choice. Alcohol use can make symptoms of the mental illness worse.

For parents and caregivers, try model health and positive coping skills. Your child sees your emotions through your words, facial expressions, and actions. How you respond to the stress of a pandemic can affect how your child reacts. Modeling calm and constructive reactions to the event will help your child feel calmer and cope better. It's okay to have strong emotions. Name them (i.e., "I feel frustrated." Or "I feel sad.") Talk about how you feel and how you're going to cope (i.e., deep breathing, positive thinking) so your child learns how to do the same.

For Healthcare Workers and First Responders, if you find yourself making the decision to physically isolate yourself to lower the risk to family and/or friends, it is important to remind yourself that you are valuable, and this includes your mental health. The effects of COVID-19 can cause a stir of emotions along with conflicting thoughts and beliefs as you are on the frontlines, know that you are not alone, and that you can reach out. You can contact the OCISM line, Hope for Wellness, and/or your local mental health office for support during this time.

If you are in self-isolation or you have been advised by health authorities to limit contact with others it's important to still keep your personal care routines (e.g., bathing), engage in healthy activities (e.g., stretching, meditation, listening to music), and connecting with friends and family through phone calls, text messaging, email, Skype, and face-time.

Helpful Resources

- Health line: **811**
- Hope for Wellness: **1-855-242-3310**
- Kids Help Phone: **1-800-668-6868**
- Occupational & Critical Incident Stress Management – For Healthcare Staff
 - Phone: **1-800-268-7708**
 - Email: hc.ocism-gspic.sc@canada.ca