

# Managing COVID-19 Anxiety – Resources

by the Canadian Psychological Association – Traumatic Stress Section Executive

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## Online Resources

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**Anxiety Canada** - <https://www.anxietycanada.com/> - a Canadian organization that offers free CBT-based online resources for learning about and managing anxiety.

- <https://www.anxietycanada.com/articles/what-to-do-if-you-are-anxious-or-worried-about-coronavirus-covid-19/>

**Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH):** <http://www.camh.ca/covid19>

**Daily Tips for parents:** <https://childmind.org/>

**Positive Psychology Kit:** <https://positivepsychology.com/the-crisis-kit/>

**310 COPE:** <https://www.yssn.ca/310-COPE>

**Mind your Mind Online Support:** <https://mindyourmind.ca/>

**Centre for Clinical Interventions** – <https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/> – an Australian organization that offers a number of free CBT-based online workbooks for a variety of mental health concerns. The workbooks can be found here: <https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/Resources/Looking-After-Yourself>

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** – Information on how to manage stress and anxiety during COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

**Anxiety and Depression Association of America** – a US association of clinicians and researchers who work in the areas of anxiety and depression: <https://adaa.org/learn-from-us/from-the-experts/blog-posts/consumer/covid-19-lockdown-guide-how-manage-anxiety-and>

**American Psychological Association** – Past research findings and tips to help reduce COVID-19 anxiety: <https://www.apa.org/news/apa/2020/03/covid-19-research-findings>

**Washington Post** - [https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/wellness/anxiety-coronavirus-mental-wellness-tips/2020/03/16/f187faf2-67b8-11ea-9923-57073adce27c\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/wellness/anxiety-coronavirus-mental-wellness-tips/2020/03/16/f187faf2-67b8-11ea-9923-57073adce27c_story.html)

**International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ISTSS)** - <https://istss.org/public-resources/covid-19-resources>

**Global Collaboration on Traumatic Stress** - <https://www.global-psychotrauma.net/>

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## **Apps**

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Headspace: Currently offering a free section called “weathering the storm”

MindShift: A free CBT app developed by Anxiety Canada

## **Media Interviews completed by our section member, Dr. Vivien Lee**

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General coping with COVID19 uncertainty, self-isolation, and how to talk to kids about it.

<https://www.iheartradio.ca/newstalk-1010/audio/podcasts/mar-14-ted-woloshyn-dr-vivien-lee-1.10758698>

Mental health issues and management during COVID19:

<https://www.iheartradio.ca/newstalk-1010/audio/podcasts/being-overwhelmed-with-covid-19-1.10793937>

How to stop touching our faces:

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/why-you-keep-touching-your-face-and-how-to-stop-doing-it-1.4857894>

## **Media Interviews completed by our section member, Dr. Katy Kamkar**

IciRadioCanada, L’Heure de Pointe, “La COVID-19, source d’anxiété au sein de la population”

March 17, 2020 <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/premiere/emissions/l-heure-de-pointe-toronto/segments/entrevue/159336/covid-19-anxiete-inquietude>

CHML @AM900CHML, Coping with anxiety Covid-19, March 17, 2020

Zoomer Magazine, “COVID-19 Sparks Ugly Social Media Backlash Against Older Generations”, March 17, 2020 <https://www.everythingzoomer.com/general/2020/03/17/covid19-backlash-older-generation/>

Zoomer Magazine “Inspiring Stories From the COVID-19 Front Lines to Fend Off Anxiety”, March 20, 2020 <https://www.everythingzoomer.com/health/2020/03/20/inspiring-stories-covid-19-anxiety/>

Facebook Live 7pm with Kevin Frankish on Social Distancing and Self Isolation and Mental Health and Coping with Covid 19, March 17, 2020

## **Strategies to Manage COVID-19 Cognitive Distortions**

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(source: “10 Simple Solutions to Worry” by Gyoerkoe and Wiegartz, 2006)

Even during times of relative calm, all humans can fall prey to “cognitive distortions” or thinking traps. These are ways that we think about a situation or process information that may not be entirely accurate

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and may lead to an increase in anxiety or other negative emotions. Below are some common cognitive distortions that anxiety may take hold of and some suggestions on how to challenge them:

Distortion	Example	Possible Challenging
<b>Overestimating the threat</b> - overestimating or exaggerating the likelihood of a negative outcome. A negative event that is improbable feels very likely. In this distortion, the possibility of a catastrophe is confused with its probability.	“If I get COVID-19, it will be fatal”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine the available evidence (using credible sources)</li> <li>• Health experts have estimated the mortality rate between 3-6%, meaning that for majority of people who have contracted COVID-19, it has not been fatal (although certain risk factors are present for specific populations (older adults, immunocompromised individuals))</li> <li>• Remind yourself of things you and your community are doing to decrease your risk (e.g., social distancing, self-isolation for unwell individuals)</li> </ul>
<b>Jumping to conclusions or predicting the future</b> – attempting to predict what will happen in the future	“Society will never recovery from COVID-19”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask yourself I you are really able to know what will happen in the future</li> <li>• Use past evidence to challenge predictions about the future (e.g., although it has been difficult, society has recovered from major illnesses in the past, such as the Spanish Flu)</li> </ul>
<b>All or nothing thinking</b> - You see things in extreme or black and white categories. Instead of a more balanced or reasoned view, you overlook shades of gray and force things into either-or categories.	“I have no control in this situation”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Validate what is difficult about the situation and also look for shades of grey</li> <li>• Validation: “There is a lot about this situation that is out of my control”</li> <li>• Look for shades of grey: What do you have control over? (e.g., how you spend your time at home, things you are doing to keep yourself safe) “I am doing the best I can to keep myself safe and I do have control over how I spend my time at home, I can connect with people virtually to seek support”</li> </ul>
<b>Discounting Coping Skills</b> - Overlooking your ability to cope with problems. You may exaggerate the threat in a situation and minimize or overlook your ability to cope with that threat.	“I won’t be able to stand being at home during social distancing or isolation”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Validate what is difficult about the situation and remind yourself of your abilities to cope with difficult things</li> <li>• Validate: “It will be hard to be at home for the time being”</li> <li>• Have you been through challenging situations in the past? How did you manage or cope with this? What strengths do you have?</li> </ul>

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## Other Tips for Managing Mental Wellness During COVID-19

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**Try to create new routines, new structure** and find new positivity to create comfort in your home. Engage in self compassion, self-kindness as well as kindness to others and being there for one another.

**Get outside and move around** – As long as you are not unwell, go outside and get some fresh air.

- Do this especially if you feel anxious/depressed and don't feel like doing it. Notice how you feel afterward.
  - Sit on your patio. Go for a walk. Find signs of spring. Listen for bird sounds. Breathe some fresh air.
- Try to keep about 6 feet of distance from other people you encounter - but smile and make eye contact with everyone you see.

**Move your body or exercise** – Do some yoga or a short workout routine in your living room! There are lots of free online resources for this:

- Yoga with Adriene: <https://www.youtube.com/user/yogawithadriene>
- Popsugar Fitness <https://www.youtube.com/user/popsugartvfit>

**Hang out with friends & family** – Social distancing is hard work, but it doesn't mean you have to be socially isolated, too! Find hobbies you can do with friends in a video chat, like knitting, or watching Netflix (see if you can sync up a movie!). Think of activities you can do while on the phone together that don't require a lot of talking (sometimes it's nice to have silent company).

**Limit your news consumption** – It's okay to not want to watch the news 24/7 and to take healthy breaks from the flood of new articles being posted about the virus every hour. Having information about the virus is important and necessary, AND knowing your limit is just as important, if not more. Try: Setting time limits (ie. 30 minutes a day of scrolling through COVID19 related news, or 10 minutes max for worrying about the virus)

**Find trusted sources** – If you are going to read about it, make sure that the information you are receiving is from a legitimate source, such as:

- Ontario Ministry of Health: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus>
- Centers for Disease Control (CDC) coronavirus page: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

**For now, not forever** – We know that no one can guarantee that things will be 100% okay, ever. But remind yourself as much as possible that all of this, the pandemic, the social distancing, the fear, the isolation, ordering groceries online and not being able to go to your favourite community spots... it's all just for now, not forever.