



CULTIVATING RESILIENCE IN THE WAKE OF COVID-19

While there's much talk about a potential echo pandemic of mental illness following COVID-19, such a result is not inevitable. We can all cultivate resiliency by focusing on the actions and attitudes that strengthen our mental health.

By re-shaping today how we think about, talk about, and act on mental health, we can lay the groundwork for greater resilience in the future.

Resilience based on our ability to engage, adapt, and grow from periods of stress and adversity is a major predictor of how well we will emerge from this global challenge.

How to think...

About mental health

- Like physical health, mental health can ebb and flow depending on our circumstances. If you've noticed a decline in your mental health since the pandemic began, you're not alone. Some anxiety, agitation, and loss of focus is normal during such an abnormal situation. But that doesn't necessarily mean you're experiencing a mental health problem or illness. It can simply mean you need to give more attention to promoting your mental health.
- If distress is impeding your day-to-day functioning (for example, worry is inhibiting your ability to sleep, or anxiety is causing a prolonged loss of focus at work) consider reaching out to a friend, family member, peer counsellor, or a mental health website or professional for help. Lots of resources are available for you (see below).

About resilience

- Resilience is like a muscle that can be exercised, strengthened, and replenished by taking small actions every day. Going for a walk, talking with a friend on the phone, starting or building on a hobby, or reading a book are all simple ways to restore your sense of balance.
- Resilience should not be confused with perfect mental health. In fact, it's only after we're confronted with a challenge that we can show our resilience and bounce back. Sometimes, the people who face the greatest challenges can cultivate the most resilience.

How to talk...

About the pandemic

- Try not to talk about the pandemic as though things will only get worse. When the situation warrants it, consider balancing negative talk with reasons to be hopeful, such as the greater availability of virtual mental health services or the steps you're taking to build resilience.
- Avoid news sources that aggravate your concerns through one-sided or alarmist messaging. Our [media consumption tips](#) can help you set boundaries around your COVID-19 news intake.
- It can be hard to know what to say when someone you know is distressed or is showing difficulties with their mental health. Use our [tips on talking to someone in crisis](#) to help you learn how to deal with difficult conversations and be a more supportive listener.

About mental health

- Be mindful of the attitude you bring to mental health conversations. When you're talking about mental illness with the same compassion as physical illness, you're helping to reduce the stigma that keeps so many voices silent.
- Stories of lived experience and recovery can be powerful tools for promoting resilience. The more we can listen to and amplify the voices of people with experience of mental illness – while creating a stigma-free space for sharing stories of hope – the better equipped we'll be to face our own hardships. If you're thinking of sharing your lived experience, read our helpful tips in [how to share your story safely](#).

How to act...

As individuals

- Remember that you are not powerless. Think of a small action you can take each day to remind yourself of your control – even doing the dishes, going for a short walk, or taking a shower will help.
- Channel past resilience by reflecting on the times you overcame hardship, big or small. It's easy to forget these victories when the hard times have passed, but they're a valuable resource for fostering confidence and handling future adversity.
- Invest in building healthy relationships. Supportive connections are a key factor in promoting resilience. Make it a priority to maintain strong relationships with people you can count on, and offer them support in return.
- Stop comparing yourself to others. Each of us is running our own race and facing our own hurdles. Focus on what's under your control and don't be discouraged if it seems like someone else is coping more effectively.
- Ask yourself if your ways of coping are helpful or harmful. Think about whether these strategies are working or if you should replace them with more positive alternatives (e.g., substance use vs. exercise, media consumption vs. meditation).
- Consider taking on a new cause. Most of us feel better when we can support others or "give back" to society in a way that is personally meaningful. It doesn't have to be much. Lots of volunteer and community support activities are out there – maybe one is for you!
- Use this time for self-reflection. The current slowdown may be your chance to reflect on your life and where it's heading so that, over time, you'll be able to pursue new hopes and aspirations.

As a community

Community support is the backbone of individual resilience. These resources offer a range of supports:

- Financial assistance options: [Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan](#)
- Free mental health support: [Wellness Together Canada](#)
- Mental health programs in your area: [Find Your CMHA](#)
- Indigenous mental health support and crisis intervention: www.hopeforwellness.ca
- Mental health tips, training, and other resources: [Mental Health Commission of Canada COVID-19 Resource Hub](#)



For more information, visit www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/covid19



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