

Managing fears and anxiety around COVID-19.

RESOURCE GUIDE

As information about COVID-19 unfolds and the Vancouver Health Authority and Langara College response plans are implemented, there can be a wide range of thoughts, feelings, and reactions.

Mental health is just as important as physical health when it comes to responding to COVID-19. Caring for our mental health as individuals and as a community translates into a more effective pandemic response and fewer costs to humans and society as a whole.

Humans generally love certainty, routine, and a sense of control. When our routines are disrupted and things feel out of our control, it can increase our anxiety and feelings of fear. This is normal and potentially helpful because it can help us respond. What matters is how we respond to our reactions.

We have started compiling this rough draft of a resource guide to support your mental health during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

SOME COMMON REACTIONS YOU OR OTHERS MAY BE EXPERIENCING:

- Increased anxiety and worry
- Fear of falling ill and dying
- Avoiding approaching health facilities due to fear of becoming infected while in care
- Uncertainty around engaging in online learning, accessing resources, communicating with instructors and academic supports, as well as financial and student visa implications
- Fear of losing employment
- Feeling stressed due to disruption in social connection and routines, meaningful activities
- Awareness of increased frequency of checking news and social media leading to feelings of overwhelm
- Fear of being socially excluded/placed in quarantine because of being associated with the disease (e.g. racism against persons who are from, or perceived to be from, affected areas)
- Feeling powerless in protecting loved ones near and far, and fear of losing loved ones because of the virus
- Fear of being separated from loved ones and caregivers due to quarantine regime, including family and friends overseas
- Feelings of helplessness, boredom, loneliness and depression due to being isolated
- Fear of reliving the experience of a previous epidemic or other natural disaster

MANAGING AND COPING

Get the facts. Stay informed with the latest health and campus information. Some useful sites are:

- **Langara COVID FAQ's**
- **CDC BC**
- **Vancouver coastal health**
- **WHO**

- **Keep things in perspective.** Try to limit worry and agitation by limiting or reducing the time you spend watching or listening to upsetting media coverage. Take a break from watching the news and focus on the things that are positive in your life and things you have control over.

- **It is normal to feel some anxiety and fear.** Acknowledge your experience of anxiety and feeling afraid and then turn your mind to other things. We know that naming and acknowledging our feelings can often help them to dissipate. "It is understandable that I am concerned about the current situation, AND I understand that worry is not an effective or productive way to respond"

- **Practice mindfulness and acceptance.** Focus on asking "what now" rather than "why." Practice patience, kindness and care with yourself and others. Consider this as being your self-at-best. Try to let things unfold and assume that others are trying to do the right thing and also navigating concerns about COVID-19.

- **Focus** on trying to be rational and active problem solving vs. emotional overreacting. Find out who is available to answer questions, provide accurate information and guide you if you need help.

- **Find activities that give you a sense of mastery**, even simple tasks such as making your bed, doing your laundry, completing your schoolwork, going for a walk, checking in on a friend or family member, or practicing a new skill. Purposefully, engage in activities that are the opposite of focusing on worry. Listen to upbeat music, watch a comedy, read a book, make an effort to help someone in need every day in some small way, etc.

- **Rather than dwelling on thoughts** and images of hopelessness, imagine yourself coping effectively or completing tasks that you have to do. Notice how you would act, what you would do or say. See yourself being effective or calm and grounded.

- **Think about what you might say to a friend** about the current situation that would help to support, encourage or reassure them. Now say the same things to yourself.

- **Practice a mindset of gratitude.** Spend time each day thinking about three things you are grateful for. Picture holding these things in your open hands.