

Stress, Interpersonal Violence and COVID-19

COVID-19 has changed many aspects of our lives, including our mental health.

1 in 4 Canadians report improved mental health but:

- 4 out of 10 Canadians say they regularly feel stress since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic¹
- 3 out of 4 Canadians are experiencing financial stress due to COVID –19 ²
- 1 out of 3 Canadians are concerned about family stress from confinement³
- 1 in 10 women are concerned about violence in their homes COVID19, Mental Health and Gender-based Violence ⁴

Pandemic-related stress may have an even greater impact on people who are already coping with trauma such as intimate partner violence, sexual violence or child maltreatment. Even without a pandemic:

- Women who experience intimate partner violence are twice as likely to experience depression⁵
- 1 in 6 sexual assault victims experience symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder⁶
- 1 in 6 children who experience maltreatment cope with depression/anxiety/withdrawal.⁷

We invite you to consider these strategies if you are experiencing the impacts of violence and pandemic related stress:

1. **Try to maintain a daily routine:** Do tasks that have a clearly defined beginning, middle, and end.
2. **Recognize where and when you have the power to choose:** Consider choices you can make in your daily routines, self-care activities (bath, shower), and the media coverage you expose yourself to.
3. **Build-in activities to help you stay in the present:** Stay grounded with mindfulness exercises such as [yoga](#).
4. **Stay active to help reduce stress:** Move often, stretch, dance, go for walks or jog.
5. **Connect with others for a sense of community:** Find ways to connect regularly and from a physical distance with those who are important to you through texting, emails, phone calls or video chat.
6. **Try to maintain a healthy diet and get enough sleep:** Eat balanced meals regularly. Herbal teas can help promote feelings of warmth and calmness.
7. **Do something you enjoy every day:** Think about what you like to do and make time for these activities (e.g. cooking, reading, gardening, listening to a podcast, reading to your children).
8. **Know where to find support in the community:** Remember that services, such as sexual assault centres, shelters, crisis lines, and hospital emergency rooms are still providing supports even if they are doing it in different ways.

References

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[6] Conroy, S., Cotter, A. (2017). Self-reported sexual assault in Canada, 2014. Juristat: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics.

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