

Acknowledging Our Mental Health During The Coronavirus Outbreak



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The feeling of uncertainty and all the potential thoughts and feelings that arise from unpredictable circumstances – panic over the unknown, frustration towards what we can't control, fear of the worst-case scenario. It is important to circle back on the topic of uncertainty, as the risk of coronavirus remains a hovering uncertainty that all humans are currently experiencing on a global level. We are constantly being bombarded with updates regarding COVID-19, from social media opinion articles to government guidance, and we might even find ourselves actively seeking new information about the progression of the virus and

suggestions of what we should/shouldn't be doing presently to protect ourselves and others. As time goes by in the midst of uncertainty, we might find ourselves in a continuous state of high alert, scanning our environment for immediate threats (e.g. people sneezing), engaging in more repetitive behaviours (i.e. excessively checking the news) and predicting potential negative possibilities so that we can try to plan for what could come in the future. Sometimes, these attempts to keep ourselves safe can become overwhelming to the point where they become debilitating – feeling paralyzed in the wake of mounting worries and feeling helpless in a situation that we cannot control.



If you find yourself seeking more information, engaging in new behaviours or experiencing any unsettling thoughts and feelings right now, please know that this is absolutely normal and you are not alone. Our primary drive as humans is to keep safe, so it makes sense that most of our energy right now is directed towards protective behaviours. It is necessary for us to focus on our outer environment right now and put energy into creating a “protective armour” around us that has a high probability of safety.





So perhaps while this Armour is already on, we can take the opportunity to duck into our protective tortoise shell and give some needed attention to our internal environments also. By turning inward to cultivate an inner space of reflection, we can connect back to ourselves as the constant amidst the chaos. If you can give yourself space for pause, try scanning through the following reflections around the uncertainty of COVID-19 and see what responses intuitively arise within you:

- What enables me to feel the most comforted/hopeful/reassured during times of discomfort?
- Am I engaging in any behaviours that are potentially putting others at risk?
- Is there anything that I could be doing more deliberately right now?
- Am I focusing most of my mental energy on facts or fantasy right now?
- Does the discomfort that I am experiencing belong to me, or is it coming from sources around me? (e.g. friends, coworkers, the media)
- Is there anything I've learning about myself during this uncertainty?
- Who is someone I can turn to for support when I feel nervous/afraid?
- How can I let _____ (person) know that I am here to support them?
- What actions do I need to take to stay informed?
- What do I need in order to accept the current state of things?
- What's one small thing I can control in my life right now?

The purpose for reflecting on these questions is not intended to stir judgment or responses (although that might naturally be a byproduct) – it is simply to facilitate greater awareness.

The reality of the situation is: We cannot fully control this situation, no matter how much we would like to. This means that no one has all of the answers, so let that burden fall from your shoulders. Still, there are many actions that are within your control right now, and it is helpful to take stock of these. One small action – when initiated on with intention – can protect many. **What is your one small action today?**

