

# COPING WITH CRISIS DURING A HEALTH EMERGENCY



## Common Reactions to Abnormal Events

Everyone who has lived through a crisis will probably experience stress. This brochure highlights common reactions to stress and gives suggestions on how to cope with them.

**It's important to remember that stress reactions are common reactions to an abnormal situation.**

## When to Seek Professional Help

The stress reactions experienced while adapting to the current situation might last for some time. If the reactions persist and make it impossible to function as you normally would over a long period of time, seek help. One option is to contact your local health facility or a local crisis support line.

## Here are some ways stress can affect you:

- Feeling fear and worry, especially focused on one's own health and the health of loved ones.
- It can be difficult to relax and to get a good night of restful sleep. Your appetite and eating habits can also be affected.
- Being stressed can worsen the symptoms of existing health problems, including mental health problems.
- For some people we can see an increase in the use of substances such as commercial tobacco, alcohol and other drugs.
- Feeling stressed and afraid – as well as self-isolation and physical distancing – can make it difficult to maintain close social relationships, which are important to well-being and to maintaining our resilience in the face of a crisis.

# What You Can Do

The steps you are taking to protect your health may prevent you from supporting those around you and your community as you normally would during difficult times. You may not be able to babysit your grandchildren, visit friends, volunteer, or go to work. You may also find isolation frustrating or worry about what will happen next. That said, there are helpful things you can do:

## Understand that you are part of the solution

- By following the physical distancing instructions, you are doing your part to ensure the protection of your neighbours.
- Experience is one of your strengths. You have probably had other difficult times. What you have done to get through those times may help you now.
- By calling your friends and family, they can benefit from your experience and your support.
- Try using internet and mobile applications to keep in touch with your loved ones.

## Stay in touch with your friends and family

- Talk regularly to your friends and family by phone, over email or online.
- Don't hesitate to let them know how you are feeling.
- Your children, grandchildren, family and friends will also benefit from staying in touch with you.

## Take care of your mental health

- A daily set amount of time dedicated to news can help strike a balance between staying up to date and avoiding stress by being exposed to too much information.
- Adopt a daily routine that you can stick to for the next few weeks (such as meal times, sleep, exercise, calls with your loved ones, etc.).
- If the weather is nice, open the windows in your home and let in some fresh air and sunshine.
- Exercise regularly at home and ensure you stay active every day.
- Try to eat healthy and balanced meals, drink enough water, and avoid smoking or drinking alcohol.
- If permitted, go out for a walk while following physical distancing recommendations.
- Do activities you enjoy: reading, cooking and other indoor hobbies, listening to the radio or watching TV.