

# Conoravirus Anxiety Workbook – A tool to help you build resilience during a difficult time suggests the following for students to do to ensure they are also creating structure for themselves

Maintaining structure can work wonders for your mental wellbeing. Routines help you increase your sense of control and defuse feelings of overwhelm. Planning Tips

- Schedule regular breaks. Take time to mindfully drink your tea or focus on your breathing – Calm or Headspace are great apps to download
- Write a weekly goals list. Identify what you need to do to achieve your weekly goals. Break tasks down into smaller steps and cross them off as you go to maintain a sense of progress throughout the day.
- Identify 1-3 “Most Important Tasks”. Creating a daily MIT list helps you prioritize your most important and urgent tasks.
- Review your crossed off items at the end of the day. Taking stock of your achievements can help boost mental wellbeing.
- Try a to do list app. You may prefer a digital format such as Google Keep.
- Write your daily to do list the night before. You might find that being able to start work straight away helps increase your productivity. Also, this practice can help you clear your mind and switch off in the evening.
- Tidy your workspace at the end of the day. Research finds that cluttered environments interfere with your ability to focus.
- Decide on a regular sleep schedule. When it comes to improving sleep, research suggests that maintaining a regular sleep schedule is of high importance.
- Create an end of work day ritual. To enforce work-life boundaries, you might find it helpful to create an end of day ritual such as changing into comfier clothes, switching off work email notifications and putting on some music.
- Create weekly family traditions. Strengthen family routines through traditions such as “Board Game Fridays” and “Movie Night Mondays”. Find more advice and resources for setting up a family routine [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).
- Be kind to yourself. You might suddenly have a lot more on your plate. Be mindful of your inner critic, and remind yourself that you can only do the best you can.

## Developing a Regular Exercise Routine

“Walking is man’s best medicine.” - Hippocrates

Exercise reduces the overall activation of your amygdala and sympathetic nervous system – the parts of your brain and body that generate your stress response.

Research suggests that aerobic exercise (such as walking, cycling, and jogging) provides the same benefits as non-aerobic exercise (such as yoga and pilates).

Studies also suggest you need around 21 minutes three times a week to experience the benefits. So, you don’t have to spend hours doing it – it’s something most of us can fit in to our lives when it becomes a priority.

It’s important to find something that you enjoy when it comes to building an exercise habit. Now more people than ever are interested in fitness, you have endless options. These include ‘bedroom fitness’ resources and tools that make it easy to keep moving indoors.

Here are some ideas. Tick the ones you may be interested in adding to your Stress Resilience Action Plan:

1. Schedule a daily walk.
2. Complete YouTube video workouts.
3. Do a free trial of Les Mills at home workouts.
4. Do online yoga with Yoga with Adriene.
5. Do the 5 week strength and flexibility plan from the NHS.
6. Set yourself a challenge to run 5k with the support of the Couch to 5k running plan for beginners.
7. Invest in some indoor exercise equipment.
8. Do this 10 minute home cardio workout from the NHS.
9. Find an outdoor gym to visit.
10. Browse Pinterest for indoor workouts.
11. Do an affordable at home cardio workout with a jump rope.
12. Invest in a Fitbit to track your progress.

Don't forget: Motivation follows action!

Click this link for reference of the information below <https://smho-smsso.ca/covid-19/students/>

- **Focus on healthy habits and routines.** Some of the things we do for our physical health, like getting enough sleep, eating well, exercising and minimizing screen time, are also good for our mental health.
- **Do things you enjoy as much as you can.** Even if you aren't leaving your house much, perhaps there's a hobby you used to really like that you could try again. (p.s. what makes you happy may not be what others find fun, and that's okay!).
- **Notice the good things.** It's easy to get caught up in the negatives that happen in life. Instead, look for the positives each day, even in situations that might seem bad—like a pandemic. For example, there are a lot of stories about people helping neighbours and spreading positive messages.
- **Stay connected.** Even if you're stuck at home, you can still maintain social connection. Chat with your family members. Call a friend or video chat. You could try a group video chat with multiple friends. Remember, your friends and family are in a similar situation as you so you can lean on each other.

As parents and family members, the best thing we can do is maintain communication with our children and teens and to be patient and understanding.

We've prepared the following tips to give you some ideas to keep in mind. Of course, you know your child best, so consider these tips based on your own family situation.

## Children

- **Stay calm.** Children look to us for how to respond to stressful situations. Remember you being calm, helps your child to remain calm. Think about ways to manage the stress you might be carrying (talking with a friend, going for a walk, focusing on gratitude, etc.) so that you can be

at your best in supporting your children. If you are feeling overwhelmed or extremely worried, pause and take a breath before speaking with your child about COVID-19.

- **Keep it simple.** The COVID-19 situation can feel overwhelming and complex. There is a lot of information coming at us at once. You can help your child by breaking it down into more manageable parts and focusing on the things that are most important to them. For example, reminding them that they are safe, explaining that cancellations are happening to help keep them and others in the community safe, telling them that by washing their hands regularly they are helping everyone, etc. Having some language to help them to understand the situation, that you can repeat in calm ways, can help.
- **Listen.** Let your child talk through how they're feeling. Acknowledge their emotions and help to label them. You can say, "Yes, I can see you're feeling worried" or "it is okay to feel angry that you can't see grandma right now." Some children may not easily talk about their feelings or have the vocabulary to identify and label different feelings. If you're noticing different behaviour, you can say, "I wonder if you might be feeling worried, or sad?" and, "what might help you feel better?"
- **Keep information age-appropriate.** Answer their questions as factually as possible but keep responses age-appropriate. Balance the facts with reassurance. Your child needs to know that they, and you, are safe. See the [Additional resources section](#) below for links to factual information sources about COVID-19.
- **Limit exposure.** Avoid listening to or watching news coverage about the pandemic with young children around. Avoid having adult conversations about your own worries in front of children. Encourage older children to be aware of their social media use and to take breaks from this. Help them to think critically about what they are reading on-line, sorting myths from facts.
- **Try to establish a flexible routine for your child.** This might include a regular, but relaxed, time for waking and sleeping, and perhaps for meals and snacks. Some parents will be working from home and may have new opportunities to connect with their child during the day. Playing and talking together can help everyone to feel more relaxed. This can take some planning at first while new schedules are being worked out. Watch for those natural moments when you can just be together and follow your child's lead.
- **Be patient and understanding.** You may notice behaviour changes in your child. Children react differently to changes in routine and stress. They may become frustrated more easily, or more emotional, or engage in things they did at a much younger age. Try to be understanding with your child, as they may just need more reassurance and calm during this time.

## Teens

- **Be patient and understanding.** Think back to when you were a teen and how important your social connections were (and likely still are!). Teens are dealing with less social contact and cancelled events. This can be upsetting. Try to be patient and understanding – try not to minimize their feelings. Instead, listen and express compassion.
- **Encourage balance.** Some teens may turn to Netflix, social media or gaming as a distraction from the day-to-day reality of social distancing—this is to be expected and you may also find you're looking for distractions yourself. Taking breaks from screen time is helpful. Plus, too much social media exposure can have a negative impact on mental health. It's a good idea for all of us to prioritize wellness as much as possible at this time. Try to encourage regular sleep habits. You could invite your teen to get outside for daily walks with you, or to do some cooking together.
- **Pause before talking.** With so much news coverage and talk about COVID-19, over exposure is very possible. You can provide a break for your teen by not discussing the situation in front of them unless they want to talk about it.
- **Listen and provide reassurance when you can.** Some teens may be worried about the health of their friends and family members, about the size of the pandemic locally and globally,

or about lost class time and their ability to complete courses. If they express concerns to you, listen to their concerns and try to provide reassurance. You can talk about how measures are in place to keep people safe, how you've prepared as a family, and how life will return to normal. For teens who are concerned about lost class time and completing courses, reassure them that school staff understand and appreciate their concern. Tell them more information will come and you'll work through it together.