

Addressing Your Stress During COVID-19:

PART 2



By now you may be experiencing “pandemic fatigue,” a phenomenon coined by health care professionals as the lasting impact of stress, such as weariness and fatigue, from the continuous adaptations to COVID-19.¹ In my previous article, published in *CJMLS* Vol. 82, No. 3, I discussed the impact of stress, how you may experience stress and how to address negative and overwhelming thoughts. This article discusses a few more ways to address stress during these unprecedented times. I also want to reinforce the importance of taking care of yourself, given your essential roles on Canada’s frontline and within the COVID-19 contact tracing and testing processes.

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF DURING COVID-19

When you think of the words “self-care,” what comes to mind? You may recall the words “treat yourself” or you may imagine a fancy spa day. However, self-care is the act of responding to your physical, emotional, social or spiritual needs. It may encompass

engaging in exercise, treating yourself kindly, spending time with family or friends or connecting with nature.² Due to life’s chaos and responsibilities, we often postpone self-care rather than ensure it is a priority. We also may see it as an expensive treat. Self-care is a priority and a necessity, not a luxury, in the work that you do. In colloquial terms, you’ve got to nourish to flourish!

TYPES OF SELF-CARE

Take a moment to review the list below and consider how you may engage in self-care within one or all of these facets.²

- Physical: sleep, stretching, walking, healthy food, yoga, rest
- Emotional: stress management, forgiveness, compassion, kindness
- Social: setting boundaries, establishing support systems, positive social media, communication, time together, asking for help
- Spiritual: time alone, prayer, meditation, yoga, connection, nature, journaling, sacred space

LEARN MORE

Visit the Learning Centre to view Rosina Mete's full presentation *Creating Calm During COVID-19: Is it possible? (Yes!)* and access additional resources.

Get started at learning.csmls.org.

WHAT ABOUT TOUGH LOVE?

One common approach to stress I often hear in my role as a clinician, as well as socially from friends and family, is the "tough love" approach. When the going gets tough, just push through it. When you're upset, just "get over it." As a clinician, I have to mention that this approach may be used in a short-term setting, as in a race about to be run by an athlete. However, it may be detrimental to your mental health and coping skills over time. The tough love approach often uses fear, anger, guilt or shame as motivators to complete a task or overcome an obstacle. As a result, this type of messaging may have negative impacts on how you view yourself and your abilities.

If tough love is not recommended by mental health therapists, then what is a more ideal approach? The answer is affirmations.

AFFIRMATION EXAMPLES AND DEVELOPMENT

Affirmations are positive or neutral realistic statements. They can provide comfort, foster positive emotions and provide a more realistic viewpoint. Some examples of affirmations include:

- I am the architect of my life; I build its foundation and choose its contents.
- Every morning is a chance at a new day.
- Every day may not be good, but there is something good in every day.
- I accept myself even though I sometimes make mistakes.

To create your own affirmation, implement the following steps:

1. You could start with "I am...", "Life is..." or "Every day..." or modify an affirmation that was provided.
2. Write something that is meaningful or comforting to you.
3. It may acknowledge difficulties and move towards solutions or foster a sense of peace.

Over time, affirmations assist in cultivating more realistic and adaptable thoughts along with positive and compassionate approaches to stress.

IN SUMMARY

Implementing self-care and affirmations are two strategies to support your emotional wellbeing, especially during these pandemic times. While they may take time and effort, they are an investment in your mental health which can yield great rewards. Medical laboratory professionals are shining stars who provide vital information for health care and pandemic planning across Canada. While your vast knowledge and skills are appreciated, I also want to emphasize that your mental health and emotional wellbeing should be prioritized. 📌

REFERENCES

- ▶ ¹UCLA Health. 7 Steps to Reduce Pandemic Fatigue. <https://connect.uclahealth.org/2020/07/07/7-steps-to-reduce-pandemic-fatigue/>
- ▶ ²Blessing Manifesting. Types of Self-Care You Need to Know. <https://www.blessingmanifesting.com/2017/07/what-is-self-care.html>

HELPFUL RESOURCES

CSMLS Mental Health Toolkit provides additional tools, strategies and handouts for mental wellness. You can find it at mentalhealth.csmls.org

The Government of Canada has funded free counselling via video, chat and text during these pandemic times. There is also an online support community and online courses and apps. This free bilingual resource, Wellness Together Canada, is available 24/7 and can be accessed at [ca.portal.gc](https://ca.portal.gc.ca)

Additional COVID-specific mental health resources can be found on the Mental Health Commission of Canada's website mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/covid19 and Anxiety Canada's website anxietycanada.com/covid-19



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