Finding Your Shine amid COVID-19

Updated March 27, 2020
Self-care and developing resiliency skills can be a challenge at the best of times. As change is a constant while we physically distance ourselves from our work, school, and loved ones we are presented with new and additional challenges. The suggestions through this document are meant to be helpful considerations as we attempt to find routine amongst the change. While we all self-isolate, each of our realities are different and may include unique hardships.

A global pandemic can feel scary, hopeless, and sad at times. So, what can we make of it? A key feature in working through difficult situations or experiences (whether it’s a global pandemic, a breakup with a partner, or a failed midterm) is to search for ways to re-find your agency (i.e. your ability to control your world), the positive outcomes you can affect, and the meaning you can construct through it all.

Trying some of the ideas listed here may help to find some of that control and can help your overall well-being.
THINK WELL:
Keeping calm and hopeful

**Limit COVID-19 news**

It’s important to keep updated and informed, but this can be anxiety-provoking and upsetting. Try the following instead:

- Allocate limits on checking the news: maybe once or twice a day, for 10 minutes.
- Try to focus your “news time” on information updates and practical guidance around COVID-19
- If you’re worried about missing key news, have a buddy system. Have a buddy update you on important news!
- Look for positive news stories: communities coming together, people making recoveries, something that will bring a smile to your face

**Allocate “worry time”**

Give yourself 30 minutes a day to worry, then get up and move on to something different.
Focus on what you CAN control

There’s a lot of uncertainty right now. And, this can be overwhelming. Find one thing everyday that you can control, and control this little part of the world. Tidy up your space, have virtual hangouts, decide to cook a delicious meal. Focusing on what we can control will help ground us through uncertainty.

Notice the good

There’s a lot of scary, negative, overwhelming information around the global pandemic.

It’s important to counter-balance our exposure to such information with hope and gratitude for what we still have, so that we can remain positive and keep perspective.

Look for positive news stories: communities coming together, people making recoveries,

Look for something that will bring a smile to your face (e.g., live puppy camera, stand-up comedy, etc.).

Focus on the little pleasures you do have. For example, a warm blanket, a cup of tea, your favorite ice cream. No act that brings you joy is too small to savor, remember, or celebrate at this time!
Practice breathing and grounding techniques

Grounding techniques

5-4-3-2-1 technique: List 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste

Stretches: Take a moment to stretch your fingers, toes, legs, arms, slowly. Bend over to touch your toes, and then rise slowly.

Breathing techniques

4-7-8 breath: Breathe in quietly through your nose for 4 seconds, hold your breath for 7 seconds, and exhale loudly through pursed lips for 8 seconds

Boxed Breathing: Inhale for a count of 4, hold for a count of 4, exhale for a count of 4, hold for a count of 4, repeat.
Challenge worry-thoughts

If you have persistent thoughts such as “people I love might die from this virus”, challenge them with factual statements, such as “most people who get COVID-19 make a full recovery”

Remind yourself that thinking something doesn’t make it true!

Pay attention to your own needs and feelings and be kind to yourself

Engage in healthy activities that you enjoy and find relaxing.

Have a bath, read that magazine or book you’ve been wanting to get to, or put on your playlist. Maybe start an album club with friends! Share your favourites and have them listen to the whole thing!

Make an activity jar: write down different activities you enjoy (e.g., listen to a podcast, paint your nails, have a cup of tea, color) on pieces of paper and put them in a container. When you feel restless, pick an activity and engage in it for at least 15 minutes!

Remember to keep things in perspective: this, too, shall pass.
## RESOURCES TO HELP YOU THINK WELL

### Managing uncertainty

**This video** outlines a helpful 3-step process for managing uncertainty amidst the ever-changing news.

**Psychology Tools** offers a free guide, which includes exercises and resources, on living with worry and anxiety.

### Mindfulness and Meditation

The meetup group **Active Mindfulness** runs online mindfulness events, including free yoga and meditation classes.

**Mindfulness yoga** specifically geared toward relieving stress and anxiety in uncertain times.

**Free guided meditations** and exercises on self compassion from Dr. Kristin Neff.

### Online Learning and Ebooks:

The [Guelph Public Library](#) has many free resources for music, movies, ebooks, online courses, and more.
EAT WELL: Nourish your body

Make a menu plan for the week

Have fun with this by discussing & sharing ideas with friends (communicate virtually; e.g., in a group chat or over e-mail).

Don’t forget to include non-perishable items and essentials!

But also food that you enjoy. Remember...all foods fit!

Use your menu plan as a guide for grocery shopping to avoid picking up things you don’t need.

Be flexible by thinking of substitutes or alternatives for ingredients. For example, if there’s no pasta sauce, you can buy canned or fresh tomatoes!
MOVE WELL:
Keep active, keep moving!

Incorporate activity throughout your day

Try some of these options:

- 10 jumping jacks/squats/push-ups/sit-ups on the spot!
- Need a glass of water? Lunge your way to the kitchen!
- On your way to take a shower? High-knee run to the bathroom!
- Do the OV boogie (check out @UofGStudentExp on social media).

- Get outside at least once a day, for 30 minutes, if you can. Go for a walk in an open and isolated place (e.g. Guelph Lake, U of G Arboretum). If you’re worried about contact, go early in the morning or late in the evening. If you’re high-risk, open the windows and enjoy fresh air as much as possible!
Need more tips?

Gryphon Fitness and Recreation is running an Instagram Live Monday-Friday at 12pm for folks to join in a fitness class virtually!

Follow them @gryphons_fitness.

Online exercise

Online hip hop classes run by the Underground Dance Centre.

Follow The National Ballet of Canada on Facebook for free online classes.

The Sydney dance company is offering free online classes.

The YMCA has a YouTube channel that has free workouts you can do from home.

Curable is offering free exercises and resources for managing chronic pain through guided mental health practices.

STRONG by Zumba has free Zumba workouts.
SLEEP WELL:
Getting a good night’s rest

Keep up with your regular sleep routine

Go to bed at a regular time and wake up at a regular time

Limit caffeine 3 hours before bed

Get a good amount of sleep; maybe a little bit more than you usually would during busy periods!

In case cats are more your speed, here’s a sleeping kitty. Mental well-being is for everyone!
SOCIALIZE WELL:
Staying connected

Social distancing is important. Only people in your household.

Remember that social distancing is really about keeping apart physically. Now, more than ever, it’s important to maintain social connections by calling or texting the people you care about. Just because you’re physically apart, doesn’t mean you can’t be together!

Stay connected virtually

Use social media, phone, e-mail, group chats!

Use WebEx, UofG’s online platform, to hang out with other gryphons and continue social connections!

Reach out for help if you need it

- Here 24/7, good2talk, crisis text line
LIVE WELL: Building healthy habits

Continue your regular routine and life as much as possible

Keep your regular sleep, eating, exercise, and social routine as much as possible. Modify as needed. For example, if you usually workout at the gym at 5pm on Mondays, continue to do home workouts at 5pm on Mondays instead!

Add new habits

View this time as an opportunity to something new, or something you’ve been wanting to do! Now’s your time to learn new skills or try a new healthy habit! Set a SMART goal and work towards it. For example, read a book, take an online course, or learn how to cook a new meal!
Develop your very own self-care toolkit a.k.a. ShinePack!

A lot of successful self-care strategies involve engaging your senses (touch, taste, sight, hearing, smell). Some ideas include: a soft blanket or stuffed animal, hot chocolate, photos of vacations, comforting music, lavender or eucalyptus oil, a small swing or rocking chair, a weighted blanket.

Build a schedule for your day at home

Chunk out productive time, fun time, creative time, eating time, exercise time, social connection time!

As usual, practice safer sex

Pick-up safer sex supplies (e.g., condoms) while you’re getting other essentials!
FOCUS ON THE “WE” IN WELL:
Getting involved with your community

Look for ways to give back if you’re healthy and at low risk

Leave notes for your neighbours, call seniors to offer help, donate to your local food bank, etc.

Reduce stigma

COVID-19 has been linked to many countries. Be empathetic to those affected around us, those who are more vulnerable, and those who need support.

Self-isolate

Self-isolating is an excellent way to contribute to your community and your loved ones! It’s a key strategy in slowing down and flattening the curve: slow down the number of folks who get infected across a longer period of time, so that the capacity of our healthcare system is not exceeded.
RESOURCES

Help Lines

Here 24/7: 1-884-437-3247

Mental health crisis texting hotline: text “U of G” to 686868

Good2Talk: 1-866-925-5454 and also support via text by texting GOOD2TALKON to 686868.

Help Phone is available 24/7 to all U of G students seeking mental health support: 1-800-668-6868

Mental health peer support via phone for Guelph CMHA clients

Telehealth Ontario: 1-866-797-0000

Health Services Clinic

If you are experiencing symptoms or have questions related to COVID-19, you may call Student Health Services at ext. 52131 to speak to a nurse. You can also call your local Public Health unit.

Counselling

Call Student Wellness (519-824-4120 ext. 53244) to book a phone or video appointment with a U of G Counsellor, or to set up an appointment with a Student Wellness Navigator if you haven’t accessed services before.

Online Video Counselling covered by your Student Health Insurance Plan is available.
Online mental health support

**Feeling Better Now** assesses individuals’ risk for a mental health condition and provides recommendations about treatment and information about resources and services.

**Big White Wall** is an online peer-to-peer support community.

**Woebot** is a free mental health app where you can have conversations with a bot about your mental wellness, and the bot provides you with personalized CBT-based tools and mindfulness strategies based on your conversations.

**MindShift** is a free mental health app that uses CBT-based strategies to help you learn to relax, be mindful, and use active steps to take charge of your anxiety.
It’s important to get your news from credible sources to ensure you have the most up-to-date and accurate information about COVID-19.

**Local Information**

U of G posts daily campus updates.

For up to date information, local to the Guelph community, go straight to the source at [Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health](https://www.wdgpublichealth.ca).

**Provincial Information**

The province of Ontario is updating important regulatory information, case count status, and health care notices twice a day. You can also use the [province’s self-assessment tool](https://www2.gov.on.ca/life_style/health/self-assessment) if you believe you are symptomatic.

**National Information**

For regularly updated information from the government of Canada, please view the [Health Canada website](https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/coronavirus-covid-19.html).

**International Information**

Follow the [World Health Organization’s updates](https://www.who.int/).