



Dear Learners from the ISoN, SCSD, and SPOT,

In light of the challenging and rapidly evolving situation with COVID-19 and in recognition of the implications to your academic and personal lives, this newsletter is dedicated to the topic of managing and coping with COVID-19 related anxiety in healthy and practical ways.

Anxiety is understandable and normal in this context of uncertainty, collective distress, and rapid changes. During these times, it is important to dedicate cognitive efforts to focus on what is within your control, as opposed to that which is beyond. Using relevant resources, gathering reliable information, adopting self-care practices, connecting with loved ones (virtually when necessary), and knowing when to seek help is within your control and can help you better navigate these times.

In this letter, you will find resources that address how to deal with the pandemic-related uncertainty, stress, and anxiety. You will also find activity suggestions for your time in self-isolation. Given the transition to online instruction at McGill, we added resources with tips to become a successful online learner. Lastly, you will find the contact information of the Wellness Consultants/Counsellors for the ISoN, SCSD, and SPOT so that you can schedule a virtual/phone appointment, if desired.

The WELL Office is here for you.

## A Personal Message from Assistant Dean, Professor Deborah Friedman

Dear students,



I hope that you are safe and staying healthy during these truly challenging and uncertain times.

Like everyone, I too am trying to effectively manage the day to day evolving reality and impact that COVID-19 is having on my academic world, professional life in the hospital, and personal responsibilities. It is reasonable to feel anxious, worried, scared and overwhelmed with the vast amounts of rapidly evolving information we receive during these unprecedented circumstances.

As future health professionals in your respective fields of study those around you may turn to you for guidance, explanations and support. We all have a responsibility to ourselves, our families, each other, and the greater community. Although physical/social isolation must be respected to prevent the spread of this highly contagious virus it is also very important to continue to have contact with family and friends through the use of modern technology. Try to get some fresh air at

a significant distance from others, exercise, and take some time to relax and do activities you enjoy doing like reading, cooking, painting, playing games on the computer, writing or whatever.

It will take time but we will get through this. Take care of yourselves, and please adhere to the important news and guidelines being provided by the [provincial government](#) and [Department of Public Health](#).

The Faculty of Medicine WELL Office will remain available to learners for guidance, advising, and counseling as needed. Please do not hesitate to reach out. Although services are being provided remotely our goal remains to ensure that they are provided in a time sensitive and confidential manner.

If you are in need of the expertise of the Wellness Consultants/Counselors please see details in this newsletter about how to access their services. They have been working very hard to meet learner needs.

To better times for all.

I remain available for guidance, advising, to hear your ideas and try to address concerns.

Take care, stay healthy.

**Professor Deborah Friedman BSc pht MMgmt**

Assistant Dean Student Affairs, Schools, Faculty of Medicine  
Associate Professor Department of Pediatrics and Pediatric Surgery  
Co-Director, The WELL Office  
[deborah.friedman@mcgill.ca](mailto:deborah.friedman@mcgill.ca)

## COVID-19 and Anxiety and Stress Management

The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 is stressful for people. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Coping with stress will make you, the people you care about, and your community stronger. As a future health care professional, those around you may turn to you for guidance.

**Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations.** How you respond to the outbreak can depend on your background, the things that make you different from other people, and the community you live in.

**Stress during an infectious disease outbreak can include**

- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

Taking care of yourself, your friends, and your family can help you cope with stress. Helping others cope with their stress can also make your community stronger.

**Things you can do to support yourself**

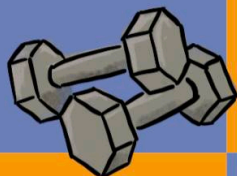
A GUIDE ON

# Mental Health & Wellbeing

DURING QUARANTINE & RESTRICTED MOVEMENT

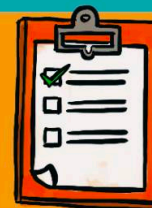
## Stay Healthy Physically

...and not just about washing hands! Eat as well as you can, get quality sleep, and stay active (walk around, follow some stretching exercise on YouTube, clean your house even!) - strong body leads to healthy mind.



## Routine, Routine

Set up and maintain some routine helps our mind to hold on to some form of normalcy. Try to structure your schedule with a balance of productivity, leisure, and rest, following a fixed time schedule. Don't over-stress yourself by being too strict too!



## Try Something New

...or add some twists to what you like to do! Try new skills or hobbies (origami, writing poems, boardgames etc.) which require minimal resources. Sign up for online classes. Set themes for movie night. (90's comedies, cool-car-chase scene etc.). Be creative!



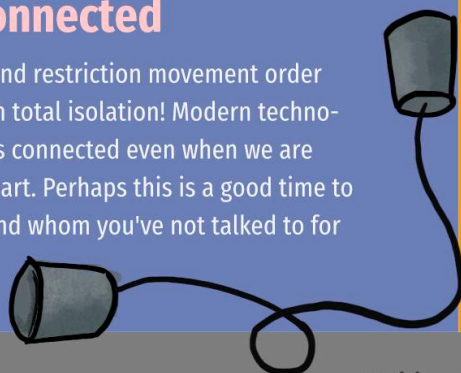
## Limit News Consumption

It is normal to want to keep up to date with the on-going situation, statistics, government directives and all. But it's very easy to be overwhelmed with this endless stream of information. Set a limit to what you read and talk about the topic everyday.



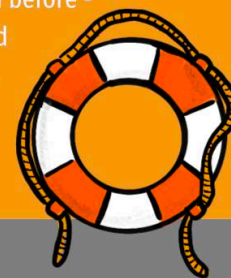
## Stay Connected

Quarantine and restriction movement order doesn't mean total isolation! Modern technology keeps us connected even when we are physically apart. Perhaps this is a good time to call up a friend whom you've not talked to for some time?



## Don't Be Afraid to Get Help

We might be in a situation of heightened tension where many of us have not faced before - it is okay if you are more affected emotionally by this than others. It's a real concern - and you don't have to face this alone!



### Additional Reading

- COVID-19 Lockdown Guide: How to Manage Anxiety and Isolation During Quarantine ([bit.ly/ADAA-guide](https://bit.ly/ADAA-guide))
- The Family Lockdown Guide: How to Emotionally Prepare for Coronavirus Quarantine ([bit.ly/THEGUARDIAN-guide](https://bit.ly/THEGUARDIAN-guide))
- How to Care for Your Mental Health During the Coronavirus Lockdown ([bit.ly/SLATE-guide](https://bit.ly/SLATE-guide))
- 10 Tips For Preparing To Stay At Home Due To The Coronavirus ([bit.ly/BUZZFEED-guide](https://bit.ly/BUZZFEED-guide))

A small, handwritten signature in the bottom right corner of the page.

Retrieved from: <https://i.imgur.com/gvKSZbA.jpg>

## Additional Strategies for health care responders

Responding to COVID-19 can take an emotional toll on you. There are things you can do to reduce secondary traumatic stress (STS) reactions:

- Acknowledge that STS can impact anyone helping families after a traumatic event.
- Learn the symptoms including physical (fatigue, illness) and mental (fear, withdrawal, guilt).
- Allow time for you and your family to recover from responding to the pandemic.
- Ask for help if you feel overwhelmed or concerned that COVID-19 is affecting your ability to care for your family and patients as you did before the outbreak.
- Avoid or limit caffeine and use of alcohol.
- Realize that it is okay to establish boundaries around your limits
- Talk with your colleagues about your experiences and offer support to one another.
- Give yourself permission to ask for help if you need it.

Information retrieved and adapted from: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2020). COVID-19. Manage Anxiety and Stress. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

## Online Resources

### Podcasts and Webcasts



**March 26 at 12pm!** McGill Checks In. [Managing Anxiety During a Pandemic: A Special Alumni Webcast.](#)

Join the webcast to see two of McGill's leading health experts tackle your most pressing questions about coping with anxiety and social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Ten Percent Podcast.** [How to Handle Coronavirus Anxiety.](#)

This episode discusses mindfulness-related strategies on how to stay sane, balanced, and calm in the midst of this pandemic. Guest speakers are Dr. Luana Marques, an anxiety specialist from Harvard University, and Jay Michaelson, a meditation teacher. Practical tips for handling fear, uncertainty, and denial are addressed.

**WHYY Radio Times.** [Coping with Coronavirus Anxiety.](#)

In this podcast, WHYY's Radio Times explores the fear and anxiety that many people are feeling around the pandemic and strategies to manage our stress in a healthy way. Guests include Cathering Belling, Associate Professor at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, and Jane Shure, a psychotherapist and co-founder of The Resilience Group. The episode starts with a discussion of the director of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Anthony Fauci's Congressional testimony on the severity of the spread of coronavirus with Ezekiel Emanuel from the University of Pennsylvania.



## Videos



### [Dealing with COVID-19 Anxiety](#)

In this video, therapist Kati Morton discusses techniques to manage pandemic-related anxiety from a trauma-based approach. She talks about how to alleviate our stress-response and ground our activated nervous systems during these unsettling times.

### [Ask an Expert: Coping with Anxiety during COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

Dr. Kirsten Lind Seal, Marriage and Family Therapist, presents practical behavioural strategies to create a sense of normalcy, control, and calmness during times of uncertainty.

---

## Websites



### [Coping with Anxiety and Stress](#)

#### [Face COVID: How to Respond Effectively to the Coronavirus Crisis](#)

Dr. Russ Harris, author of *The Happiness Trap*, presents Face COVID-19: a set of key steps for managing the crisis, using the principles from Acceptance and Commitment Therapy.

#### [How to Cope With Anxiety About Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Learn strategies for managing stress during a pandemic —Very Well Mind](#)

This article practical strategies to manage pandemic-related stress and offers considerations for people with existing mental health conditions. Reflections related to responding to the unfamiliar and appropriate media consumption are discussed.

### [Tips for Successful Online Learning](#)

#### [What Makes a Successful Online Learner](#)

While online learning offers flexibility and convenience, it can also present some challenges. This article discusses 7 skills that are critical for successful online learning, including time management, perseverance, and motivation.

#### [Tips for Online Study](#)

This blog post offers helpful advice on getting the best out of studying online. Setting time aside, effective note taking, using a reference manager, and problem-solving are some of the tips you will find.

## Activities for Self-Isolation

### [You Can Take Care of Yourself in Coronavirus Quarantine or Isolation, Starting Right Now](#)

Self-isolation is not easy and can lead to feelings of boredom, stress, and demotivation. This article explores six activities you can do to preserve your physical and mental well-being while in self-isolation.

### [An Exhaustive List Of 100 Things To Do In Self-Isolation](#)

Take a look at this creative list of activities you can engage in during self-isolation.

---

## WELL Office Online Resources



### [The WELL Office Podcast](#)

Join Wellness Consultants, Dr. Jade-Isis Lefebvre and Camila Velez as they discuss wellness-related topics (e.g., relationships and mental performance) and address common learner questions with a variety of experts. Special appearances will be made by Career Advisor, Elizabeth Lefebvre to talk all things career with learners and professionals in the healthcare field.



### [Yoga on the Go!](#)

The WELL Office has teamed up with International yoga pioneer and Physical Therapist, Lara Heimann to bring you efficient, time-friendly workouts designed specifically for McGill Health Professional Learners. LYT™ (Lara's Yoga Technique) is a sophisticated method of practice that is based on the three principles of Physiology, Kinesiology and Neurology.

### [Take Home Messages – Wellness Curriculum Sessions](#)

Here you will find the main practical strategies, tools and knowledge of each Wellness Curriculum Session so that you can actively support your learning and well-being. Topics include study skills, and stress and time management.

## Wellness Consultants

The WELL Office will be working remotely pending further directives. The Wellness Consultants/Counsellors will continue to offer virtual and phone appointments. Please schedule with them via calendly.



**Camila Velez, M.A., C.C.C. (Certified Canadian Counsellor)**  
Wellness Consultant  
[Calendly](#)



**Emily Wasylenko, C.C.C. (Certified Canadian Counsellor)**  
Wellness Consultant  
[Calendly](#)

## Questions

We hope that this special newsletter is of benefit to you. Please do not hesitate to [contact us](#) if you have any comments, suggestions, or concerns.

We wish you continued health, safety, and well-being.

Warmest regards,

The ISoN, SCSD, and SPOT Team @ The WELL Office