



Managing Mental Health When Engaging in Remote Learning: Mental Health Strategies and Resources for Students

Making adjustments due to remote learning, can take a toll on mental health. Here are some resources and coping tips to help you deal with the social isolation.

SELF- AFFIRMATIONS

Focus on positive thinking and interrupting negative thoughts. Some affirmations include:

1. Remote learning is out of my control, but I am not alone. I have support from my Accessibility Advisor, professors, TAs, and student colleagues.
 2. Remote learning is new, challenging, and at times, makes me feel anxious. That is okay. But I will see it as an opportunity to learn a new skill
 3. As I work on assignments and engage in lectures remotely, I will be self-compassionate that this is the best I can do right now. That is okay. Grades and ability to adapt to this new form of learning does not define me.
 4. I will not compare myself to other students' ability to cope with this change as my experience is unique.
 5. This anxious feeling is temporary and will pass.
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ENVIRONMENTAL MINDFULNESS

Combining your home and school space can be overwhelming. Here are some tips to organize your home space: and reduce distractions

1. Remove all distractions other than focusing tools that you have used/ find helpful (stress balls, fidget spinners, playdough, pipe cleaners etc.)
2. Ensure that you are in a space that has enough light, comfortable space, and the ability to reduce noise (as much to your ability during this time)
3. Create a routine start time and finish time and keep it consistent daily. Incorporate pieces of your previous routine that you found helpful (You can still listen to a podcast when you get ready in the morning, now without the commute!)
4. Create a list of assignments. Set a date and study block time that you will complete the assignment (i.e. discussion post, Friday April 6th 2020 from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m.)
5. Emphasize breaks and self-care outside of these study blocks.
6. Only have assignments out/ open on your computer that you have set to complete for that day
7. Organize your material chronologically based on how you would like to work through the assignment (i.e. 1st tab open on your computer is assignment outline, 2nd tab open is your draft, and 3rd tab open is references)

8. Count down from 5-1 out loud to manage procrastination. This will slow down your thinking and prepare you to start the task when you reach the number 1.
9. If tasks feel daunting, put a 5-minute timer to start assignment. When the timer goes off, walk away from the assignment. Increase the timer by the hour, as you get more familiar with the task

STRATEGIES

Here are some strategies that can help improve and maintain mental health:

Discussing fear with loved ones or your therapist - sharing your fears and concerns with trusted loved ones can help to alleviate symptoms of stress and anxiety

Daily Journal - one of the ways to deal with overwhelming emotions is to find a healthy way to express yourself. This makes a journal a helpful tool in managing your mental health

Positive Self Talk- daily self-affirmations (see above) or writing out a list of what your grateful for is a great tool to reduce stress.

Meditation- meditating can help with relaxation and inner peace, which can improve mental health.

Exercise- moving your body has also been found to alleviate symptoms of stress and can improve your mental health and well being

Structure your daily Routine- write out and try to stick with your regular routine to maintain structure (refer to the list above for strategies to keep your routine)

Humor - laughter is great medicine. Find opportunities to laugh and have a little fun

GETTING THE SUPPORT YOU NEED

College Registrars, Academic Advisors /Departmental Advisors and Accessibility Advisors. While each individual and office has unique roles and responsibilities, staff and Faculty will work to refer or transition you to the right person if they are not able to answer your question or provide you with the appropriate support. Your Accessibility Advisor is a great first place to start if you have questions about your accommodation plan and College Registrars / Departmental Offices / Academic Advisors are the best place to start with questions about academic policies and rules.

<https://future.utoronto.ca/current-students/registrars/>

Additional Supports. Resources such as [MySSP](#) , [CAMH](#) and [Good2Talk](#) remain available to students who may need additional opportunities for personal, non-academic support.

<https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/feeling-distressed>

Health and Wellness on all the campuses are providing virtual care via telephone and video.

- ✓ **Health and Wellness St. George** – Appointments can be arranged at 416-978-8030
- ✓ **Health and Wellness UTSC** appointments can be arranged at **416-287-7065** or email **health-services@utsc.utoronto.ca**

- ✓ [U of T MySSP](#) | 1-844-451-9700. Outside of North America, call 001-416-380-6578. Culturally-competent mental health and counselling services in 146 languages for all U of T students.
- ✓ [Good2Talk Student Helpline](#) | 1-866-925-5454. Professional counselling, information and referrals helpline for mental health, addictions and students well-being.

Remote Mental Health Resources:

During this time, there may be an elevated sense of stress with less community resources open due to social distancing. Here are some community mental health resources that are providing online mental health supports:

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| Mind Beacon | is customized digital therapy, guided by a registered mental health professional. It's there for you anytime, anywhere you want it. |
| Shift Collab | Offering phone and online therapy sessions. Shift has a partnership with Maple providing on demand therapy for greater flexibility and immediacy |
| Maple | Remote doctors, virtual health and prescriptions. Skip the waiting room! Instantly connect with Canadian doctors for medical care from your phone, tablet or computer – great after hour support |
| Balanced Mind and Wellness Inc. | phone and secure video counselling in GTA. Psychotherapy & Naturopathic Services. |
| Big White Wall | is a free , online mental health and wellbeing service that helps people who are dealing with everyday stressors or major life events. Available 24/7/365 |
| Naseeha Youth Helpline 1-866-627-3342 | talk on the phone with a peer supporter. |
| LGBT Youthline 1-800-268-9688 | confidential and non-judgmental peer support using telephone, text and chat services |

DISABILITY COMMUNITIES

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| Ability Online | An online safe online community for friendship, support and skill development opportunities for youth and young adults with disabilities/chronic illness, their friends and family. |
| SBA – Students for Barrier-Free Access | SBA is a student run organization that advocates for equity, access and the rights of students with disabilities at U of T, through the provision of non-academic programs that raise awareness. SBA and its allies work towards eliminating physical, informational and attitudinal barriers on campus. They offer an array of workshops, events and socials throughout the year. SBA is a St. George Campus group , but students from all three campuses are welcomed to use their resources. |

ACTIVITIES

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| The Gamer Words with Friends app Table top Simulator | online board games. A way to connect with family and friends online with others as well |
| Vault Zine | is offering one free story with code TAKECARE at checkout |
| Oh You Pretty Things | Filmmaker Gary Hustwit is streaming his documentaries free worldwide |

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| <u>Scribd</u> | is offering free book downloads for first 30 days of subscription |
| <u>Scribe</u> | is offering a free book writing course |
| <u>Online Museum Tours</u> | 12 Famous Museums offer tours online |
| <u>Art Gallery of Ontario</u> | Free Online tours of the collection |
| <u>Houseparty</u> app | A social networking platform with built in games |
| <u>Netflix party</u> | Host a Netflix party |
| <u>Virtual Book Clubs</u> | Join a virtual book club or you can start one with friends |

MINDFULNESS AND MEDITATION

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| <u>Headspace</u> | is offering some free meditations for COVID19 https://www.headspace.com/covid-19 |
| <u>Balance</u> | (iOS) They're offering a completely free one-year subscription to Balance to anyone who wants it. Email access@balanceapp.com for instructions |
| <u>Prana Breath</u> | (Android) - free app for guided breathing Send to: access@balanceapp.com |
| <u>Calm.com</u> | is offering free meditations |
| <u>Insight timer</u> | app for meditations with lots of great free meditations |
| <u>Sue Hutton Mindfulness</u> | Free online mindfulness events amidst COVID19 - every Friday 7-8PM (EST) via Zoom (<i>link goes to Facebook event page for more details</i>) |

MISCELLENEOUS

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| <u>Creeds</u> | Free pick up and delivery for Laundry and Dry Cleaning for those in self-isolation. Call 416-923-2500 to arrange |
| <u>99Strong</u> | Free online physiotherapy consultations for aches and pains. |
| <u>Shoppers Drug Mart</u> | Online consultation with doctors until 9 pm |
| <u>Well.ca</u> | Virtually connect with a doctor |