  
**COVID-19:  
Self-Care Strategies**  
Presenter: Glen Matadeen  
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 **Objectives of the workshop**

- Increase your awareness & understanding of what self-care is
- Enhance your knowledge of the factors that can support your health & well-being during the COVID-19 crisis
- Provide tools and strategies for the development of a successful practice of daily self-care to enhance your well-being during this challenging time



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### Agenda

- Defining self-care
- Importance of self-care during the COVID-19 crisis
- Making self-care a priority
- Foundations of self-care
- Practical application



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### COVID-19 and Mental Health

- This public health crisis can take a mental toll on people, especially those struggling with anxiety, depression and other conditions
- Stress, fear, worry and anxiety are normal reactions to the danger, threat and uncertainty around this pandemic
- These reactions are being exacerbated by many sudden lifestyle changes and disruptions



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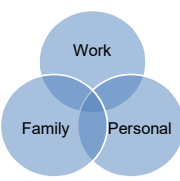
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### COVID-19

#### Possible changes and disruptions due to COVID-19:

- Increased/decreased workload and/or new responsibilities
- Worry over the well-being of yourself, family and friends
- Social isolation
- Absence or limits to recreation/hobby activities (missed vacations, closed movie theatres)
- Childcare issues
- Financial hardship
- Job insecurity



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 **Stress impacts us on many levels**

<b>Body</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Muscle tension</li><li>• Fatigue</li><li>• Indigestion</li><li>• Sleep difficulties</li></ul>	<b>Feelings</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Moodiness</li><li>• Depression</li><li>• Apathy</li><li>• Irritable / angry</li></ul>
<b>Thinking</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Low self-esteem</li><li>• Difficulty concentrating</li><li>• Worrying</li><li>• Racing thoughts</li></ul>	<b>Behaviour</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased smoking / drinking</li><li>• Poor job performance</li><li>• Neglecting responsibilities</li><li>• Crying / yelling easily</li></ul>

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 **When acute stress becomes chronic**

What happens when threat/anxiety does not subside?

- High levels of cortisol become toxic
- The immune system is impaired
- Cardiovascular disease increases
- Greater loss of neurons and diminished production of new neurons
- Memory, mood and mental functions are diminished



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 **What do we mean by self-care?**

**Self-care** refers to activities and practices that we can engage in on a regular basis to maintain and enhance our health & well-being and decrease our levels of stress.



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 **Importance of self-care during COVID-19**

Self-care activities and practices produce both short-term (immediate) & longer-term benefits

- **Short-term benefits may include:**
  - Better sleep
  - Increased energy
  - Improved self-efficacy
  - Improved mood & capacity to handle life's daily challenges
- **Long-term benefits may include:**
  - Prevention & protection against certain illnesses & diseases
  - Improved immune system functioning
  - Increased resiliency

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 **Self care is your oxygen mask**

*You have to put yours on before you can help others!*



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 **Awareness is key**

**We need to be able to understand:**

- Where am I now in my self-care journey?
- Where do I want to be?
- What steps do I need to take to help me reach my health & wellness goals?



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 **Making self-care a priority**



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 **Foundations of self-care**

1. Practice healthy thinking
2. Nurture your body
3. Support your spirit
4. Build a strong support network
5. Limit consumption of media



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 **Practice healthy thinking**

- 1. Create distance from thoughts**
  - Stop, observe and describe
    - What are your thoughts? What are you telling yourself?*
    - What are your emotions? How do you feel?*
    - What are your behaviors? How are you reacting and what are you doing to cope?*
- 2. Be curious about your thoughts**
  - Treat thoughts as hypotheses, not foregone conclusions
  - Collect evidence; be objective
- 3. Self-Compassion**

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 **Nurture your body**

1. Be physically active
2. Get enough sleep every day
3. Healthy eating



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 **Support your spirit**

- **Mindfulness:** paying attention in a particular way; on purpose in the present moment, and non judgmentally (Zinn, 2017)
- **Gratitude:** the quality of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness
- Daily practices are shown to help increase coping skills for stress and difficult life experiences, increase self-esteem, promote the savoring of positive life experiences and encourage moral and pro-social behavior

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 **Support your spirit exercises**

1. Mindful breathing
2. Concentration
3. Releasing tension
4. Gratitude journal
5. Gratitude letter



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### Stay connected

- Social support is a healthy, adaptive way to manage stressful events and to hear outside perspectives
- Check in with your friends, family, neighbors and co workers regularly
- Use technology to stay in touch – even better if you have video capabilities
- Support can come in many different forms
  - Emotional support
  - Practical help
  - Sharing points of view
  - Sharing information



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### Limit consumption of media

- It's important to stay informed but also try to avoid the overindulgence of news, articles, and social media posts, especially if you are feeling overwhelmed or anxious in the moment
- Set screen time limits for the day
- Rely on information that is evidence-based and provided by credible health and public officials and plan accordingly
- Avoid media before bed



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### Making a commitment to self-care

- Consistency is key
- Monitor your results
- Plan ahead
- Be kind to yourself



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 **Practical application**

What new habit do you want to incorporate into your self-care practice?



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 **Summary**

- Self-care involves deliberately engaging in regular activities and practices that maintain and enhance our health & well-being
- Self-care is a critical step in buffering the negative effects of stress during the COVID-19 crisis
- Consistency is key: Make self-care a priority & incorporate activities into your daily rituals
- Always be kind to yourself: self-love is a key component of self-care

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 *“Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation”*

~Audre Lorde

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 **Reference**

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Zinn, Jon Kabat, 2017. Mindfulness For Beginners. JAICO Publishing House.

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