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| **MENTAL HEALTH EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC & COPING IN A TIME OF CHANGE & UNCERTAINTY—using stress as a springboard for growth**Café Church, St. John’s Anglican Church, March 6, 2021, Marilyn Chotem, Ed.D., R.Psych.**Coping tools*** **Relaxation:** learning to relax the body through things like massage therapy, hot Epsom salt baths, slow calming breath, Yoga, etc.
* **Meditation:** helps calm the mind and body so that you can think more clearly and problem solve more effectively. It is taking the time to be still and to listen for God’s will or your own intuitive wisdom.
* **Prayer:** Faith can reduce fear and provide comfort.
* **Time in nature**: taking a walk in the woods and forest bathing can calm the nerves and give you a new perspective.
* **Know your limits**: if you are overwhelmed, narrow your focus, prioritize, and say no to what isn’t a priority. Not everything is equally important and you can decide what is essential, what can wait, and what can be deleted or ignored. Listen to your intuition.
* **Create routines**: to the best of your ability, maintain or create predictable routines that are realistic for you given your mental and physical shape, but do keep putting one foot in front of the other, especially if you are depressed.
* **Outlook changes**: changing “I can’t” to “I can”; or, “This is catastrophic” to “I have choices”; don’t take assumptions as facts; they are feelings, and often based on distorted perceptions.
* **Attitude of gratitude**:gratitude lifts our spirits. Take time to appreciate what you have.
* **Coping messages from AA**: “This too shall pass”, “One day at a time”, “Keep it simple”, “Let go and let God”; “Live and let live”; “Easy does it”; “First things first”.
* **Journal writing** can help with self-attunement by writing out feelings and thoughts, dreams and observations, or simply free associating on paper. This is different from keeping a reporting diary of events. It is a way to gain insight into the elusive shadow of hidden thoughts and feelings.
* **Exercise** releases tension and helps reduce anxiety and depression and improve sleep quality. Regular cardiovascular workouts create a natural high from endorphin production. Exercise is a healthy addiction as long as you are not damaging your body by overdoing it.
* **Regular balanced healthy meals:** nurturing yourself nutritionally can improve your mood and energy.It is also a way of showing that you care about yourself.
* **Sleep routine:** restorative sleep improves mood and outlook. Have a regular nighttime sleep routine to unwind and prepare for surrendering and letting go of worries and responsibilities.
* **Connections**: Remember the people who love you and hold them close to your heart. Keep them in mind and reach out to them. If you are feeling socially isolated, consider joining a group online, or in person outside or at a safe distance. Do not isolate.
* **Be curious and compassionate** with yourself and others. Know that everyone is struggling with something.
* **Moderate your use of substances, or commit to abstinence** if you are unable to control the quantities you consume. Alcohol is a depressant and also worsens anxiety.

**Mental Health and Addiction Resources*** YouTube Health Canada video: **FACE COVID**, <https://youtube/BmvNCdpHUYM>, 5-minute video on coping skills
* Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), [www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca) 604-987-6959, #300 – 1835 Lonsdale, North Vancouver, BC V7M 2J8, Bounce Back program & more
* Vancouver Coastal Health Services listed online at <http://www.vch.ca/your-care/mental-health-substance-use/community-mental-health-services>
* HOpe Centre, Vancouver Coastal Health, 604-984-5000, <http://www.vch.ca/locations-services/result?res_id=1401> physician referral required
* Stepping Stones Concurrent Disorders Services, Vancouver Coastal Health, 604-982-5616, <http://www.vch.ca/locations-services/result?res_id=993>
* Child & Youth Mental Health & Addictions, 604-904-4300, #301 - 224 West Esplanade, North Vancouver V7M 1A4
* Family Services of the North Shore, sliding scale counselling services, 604-988-5281
* Alcoholics Anonymous, 604-434-3933
* Al-Anon Central Services Society, 604-688-1716
* Crisis Line, <https://crisiscentre.bc.ca>, Greater Vancouver: 604-872-3311, Seniors’ Distress: 604-872-1234; 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)
* North Shore Crisis Services Society, safe & secure shelter for women & children in situations of family violence, 604-987-0366
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