The coronavirus pandemic has quickly become the No. 1 global health concern for governments and health organizations trying to contain the spread and to fully understand the nature of this new virus. The resulting onslaught of information can be worrisome, regardless of if you’ve been directly affected. Keeping calm during these times of crises can be difficult but there are ways in which you can ease your levels of stress and anxiety.

Below are some tips on how you can maintain a healthy mind during this challenging time.

1. **Limit your news intake and focus on trusted sources.**
   
   Like with any crisis that dominates the news cycle, the sheer amount of coverage can be overwhelming, and it’s easy to lose yourself in a sea of online and social media updates on the coronavirus. Try and limit your time reading, watching and listening to news updates to once or twice per day. Avoid reading sensational media that can provide unreliable information that can increase levels of fear and anxiety. Stick to communications from reputable organizations such as the Government of Canada and the World Health Organization (WHO).
2. Encourage yourself when you build healthy habits
Instead of stressing about all the different ways you’re exposing yourself, take pride in the fact you’re learning how to reduce risks. Give yourself props for washing your hands more thoroughly, and for creating the habit of sneezing into your elbow. It might take some time, but once you’ve achieved this it will feel like you’ve taken positive steps to guard against any infection, let alone coronavirus.

3. Keep a realistic outlook
There is still a lot we don’t know about this illness, and as with any crisis, the situation moves quickly. What we know today might change within 24 hours. Therefore, try not to worry about unknowns - we tend to catastrophise when faced with a new crisis that takes up a majority of media coverage and conversations round the dinner table.

4. Acknowledge the things you can control
Despite the many unknowns around the coronavirus there are things that you can control, such as following recommended precautions around hygiene and social interaction. In this challenging time where a lot of us are adapting to a ‘new normal’ for at least the next while another aspect you can control is maintaining a routine. For example, if you are used to getting up at a certain time to commute but are now working from home try to get up at the same time as you usually would and fill that space with some activity whether you do some exercise, meditation, or go for a walk with your kids or whatever helps ease you into the working day. Sticking to your usual routine as much as possible and controlling what you can, should help you feel more in control and less anxious.
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Find something positive to do with your spare time

Remembering to take time out to look after yourself and relax is always important but particularly so at a time of heightened stress and uncertainty. Even if you can just allocate a few minutes per day to switch off and let your mind rest it can be helpful. Something as simple as taking 3 minutes to focus on your breathing can help quiet the mind.

You can follow the simple breathing exercise below:

*With your eyes closed breath in deeply for a count of 10 seconds through your nose, hold for 10 seconds and breath out through your mouth for a count of 10 seconds. Be mindful of how deep your breath is aiming to not just fill your lungs but fill your belly with air. Repeat this several times all the while focusing on your breath filling your belly. If your mind wanders that's OK just gently try to bring your focus back to your breath.*

Self-care and taking time out

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7. Encourage yourself when you build healthy habits
Being at home a lot and not being able to see friends or family in person may cause you to feel isolated and down. Make sure to stay in touch with them using social media messaging or by phone. Seeking out new ways of keeping in touch such as having a video call can be a good way to still see and feel connected to those closest to you. We all must understand that this involves a communal effort to keep each other calm and safe. This is the concern of every country and citizen, and you might be surprised as to what we can achieve when we pull together.