Maintaining Meaningful Occupation during COVID-19

COVID-19 has brought a lot of changes to all of our lives. We have been directed to engage in *self-isolation* and *social distancing* in order to decrease the impact COVID-19 has on us, our communities, and the greater world. What happens next is uncertain and unpredictable, which undoubtedly increases stress, anxiety, and fear in all of us. Our daily routines have been changed and limits have been placed on what we can do. So, **what can you do when your regular schedule is disrupted?**

Self-care

What is self-care?

Self-care activities are those that you do to take care of your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health. This can include your hygiene routine, lifestyle, nutrition, and spiritual or religious activities. These activities can be impacted when our routine has been altered. The list below provides some examples of ways to maintain your self-care routines while preserving your health and the health of others through self-isolating and social distancing:

- Maintain a regular sleep schedule – this means getting to sleep and waking up at a consistent time, aiming for 7-8 hours of sleep every night
- Complete your morning routine as you would before going to school (put on clean clothes, brush your teeth, do your skin care/makeup routine)
- Try to eat regular healthy meals and snacks
- Take a bubble bath or hot shower
- Do an at-home manicure and pedicure
- Try a new makeup style (watch a YouTube video)
- Exercise, stretch, or try a new physical activity within your home – There are many online resources offering free exercise videos, movement activities, yoga, etc., such as: https://www.doyogawithme.com/ *Do Yoga with Me* – 2 months of free yoga for people staying at home during COVID-19 quarantine
- Practice mindfulness or meditation – there are many guided mindfulness or meditation videos offered for free through YouTube

- Create a coping kit/box – include items around the house (e.g. pictures of pets and loved ones, toys, candies, tea). Get creative!
- Access a livestream church service – many churches in the community are moving to a virtual/livestream format via YouTube or other streaming services

Productivity

What is productivity?

Productive tasks and activities are those that give you a sense of community contribution. Some examples of these activities are going to work, going to school, or volunteering in the community. Given the closures of schools, businesses, and community agencies, participating in these activities may be more difficult. Here are some examples of ways that you can build a sense of contributing to your community and family while self-isolating and social distancing:

- Watch an online cooking or baking class
- Complete chores together as a family
  * Laundry
  * Dishes
  * Spring cleaning (clean out closets and other places in the house)
  * Re-arrange your room
- Organize photos (create photo album or scrap book)
- Give back to the community (e.g. go for a walk, pick up trash)
- Online school programs/courses – check out **https://www.ontario.ca/page/learn-at-home** for information about learning resources to stay academically focused while away from school
- Create a resume – explore online resources to help guide you
- Take a career survey
- Learn a new skill! YouTube has a wealth of tutorials for all kinds of skills – knitting, crocheting, cooking, photography, playing musical instruments, at-home science experiments – the possibilities are endless!

Leisure

What are leisure activities?

Leisure activities are things you do that are enjoyable and bring meaning into your life. We all have hobbies that we typically enjoy doing during our free time. However, these activities may be impacted while we are self-isolating and practicing social distancing. There are many ways that we can still engage in meaningful leisure activities – be creative and think outside of the box!

- Arrange a video call with friends – stay connected with your community via FaceTime, Skype, or group chats
- Drawing/colouring (print off colouring sheets online)
- Go for a walk to enjoy nature (while maintaining social distancing) – be mindful of the various sights, sounds, etc. you encounter along the way
- Movie night with family
- Write letters/postcards and send to friends and family members

- Read a new book
- Write in a daily journal – get into the practice of writing down three things you're grateful for each day
- Spend time with your pet
- Board games/card games – there are many online forums through which you can play board games "together" with friends/family
- Create a vision board – set short- and long-term goals for yourself – things that you can achieve in this current life stage, and things that you'd like to work towards in your future
- Check out your city's webpage, as well as your local library's webpage, for links on various businesses in your area that are providing free online leisure classes

IMPORTANT: mix up leisure activities to maintain a variety of activities in your daily life. Limit social media and screen time throughout the day. Limit consumption of COVID-19-specific news. Try to limit screen time before bed in particular to maintain a healthy sleep routine.
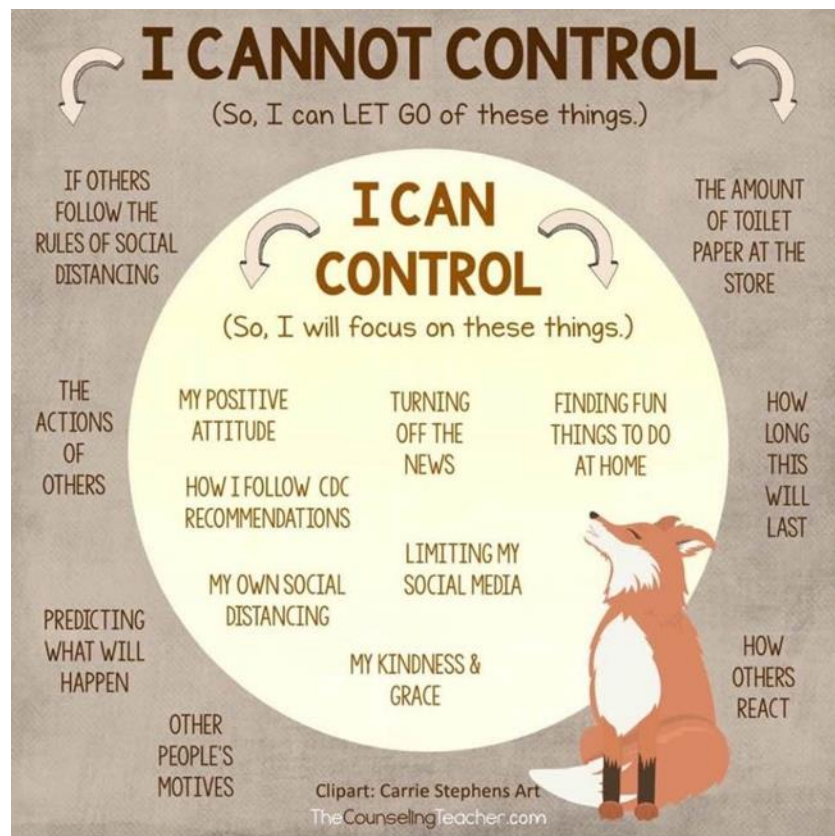
Additional resources
- How Teenagers can Protect Their Mental Health during COVID-19 https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/how-teenagers-can-protect-their-mental-health-during-coronavirus-covid-19
- Mental Health and Coping during COVID-19 https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html