

Supporting pharmacists' mental health and wellness during COVID-19

COVID-19 has forced a new reality on the entire world. Pharmacists and other health care practitioners are bearing additional physical and mental stresses as they continue to provide care for their patients. This practice tool offers some tips to help you take care of your mental health and wellness during these challenging times.

Recognize that increased responsibility comes with heightened mental and physical stresses

During this crisis you've taken on enormous responsibility. Recognize that this increased level of responsibility can be accompanied by heightened mental and physical stress and anxiety. Some thoughts you may have, include:

- "My patients are scared and are coming to me for advice."
- "I am the only contact for some patients in isolation."
- "My family is afraid I'll get sick."
- "More patients are coming to me because our clinic is closed."
- "Symptomatic patients are afraid to go to emergency rooms and come to the pharmacy instead."
- "I can't self-isolate; I'm the only pharmacist in my practice."
- "My rural community needs me; I can't close down."
- "Patients are understandably upset, and some are behaving aggressively."

"This is the biggest challenge I have had in all my years of practice."



Staying calm in the storm

Anxiety makes it hard to stay present, but we can only help those who need it when we are present. These 4 quick practices can help bring you back to the now:



1. Stretch

Full body, hold for 10 seconds.



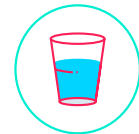
2. Slow your breath

Breathe in slowly and deeply while counting to 3; breathe out slowly & deeply to the same count.



3. Sensory Grounding

Name 3 items you can see, 3 sounds you can hear, 3 things you can touch, 3 things you can taste or smell.



4. Hydration

Take a sip of water. Bring your awareness to all of the sensations: texture, temperature, taste. (But not while wearing PPE!)

Managing COVID information overload

As a pharmacist part of your role is to keep up to date on the latest COVID-related news, evidence and treatment. But how can you make good choices without being overwhelmed by COVID information? Here are some ways you can avoid COVID information overload:

- Avoid checking your news feeds as soon as you wake up.
- Give yourself a designated time to review news relevant to your practice.
- Don't focus on all the details, just the overall trajectory.
- Keep your home calm and serene (e.g., keep the TV off).
- Distract your mind with other tasks (e.g., cleaning, physical activity, crafts or hobbies).
- Seek out stories of inspiration; those that showcase positivity, collaboration and creativity in the face of COVID.
- Consider beginning personal conversations with non-COVID related topics.



Remember: What you turn your attention to becomes your reality.

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Calming others' fears

Your family and friends may be worried about your safety. You can reassure them by:

- Instituting a regular routine every time you come home, involving a time for disinfection (e.g., disrobing, showering, putting on clean clothes) followed by family time (e.g., hugs and conversation).
- Talking to them. Their fears become magnified when not shared. Consider setting aside a specific time and space to discuss worries calmly.
- Telling them you are safe. Share the procedures you have in place to protect yourself.
- Giving them something specific to do that will help you (e.g., disinfect surfaces in the home, etc.).



Self care isn't selfish!

As a pharmacist you are always focused on helping others, but it is important to address your own needs so you have the energy and resiliency to care for others. You can:

- Create a soothing space in your home and fill it with things that bring you joy.
- Try to not neglect physical activity.
- Practise good sleep hygiene.
- Consider mindfulness meditation.
- Spend some time outdoors.
- Seek out humour.
- Don't be afraid to steer conversations to topics unrelated to COVID.
- Join a virtual community of peers (e.g., though Facebook) to share challenges and successes.



Don't forget to tend to your personal relationships! Create opportunities to bond with those in your circle through talking, laughter, games, making music together, etc., whether in the same household or virtually.



Resources

Pharmacists sometimes need to be reminded to seek help. Here are some mental health and wellness resources designed for pharmacists and other health care providers:

Pharmacy Resources

[Alberta Pharmacists' Association \(RxA\): Mental Health and Wellness \(Infographic\)](#)

[Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia: Mental Health Resources for Pharmacists](#)

[Pharmacy Association of Saskatchewan: Managing in Difficult Times](#)

[Whole Health Pharmacy Partners: Mental Health and COVID-19](#)

[American Society of Hospital Pharmacists \(USA\): Tips for taking care of yourself during COVID-10](#)

Resources for Health Care Professionals

[Canadian Psychological Association: Free counselling services for front-line health care professionals and Fact Sheets](#)

[Centre for Addiction and Mental Health: Mental health and COVID-19: Resources for health care workers](#)

[Mental Health Commission of Canada: Online Crisis Training for Essential Workers During COVID-19](#)

