

5 Tips to Care for Yourself & Others During COVID-19

The following are offerings from the ThriveRU team. They are gentle invitations to help bring resilience to the moments of overwhelm, uncertainty, and fear that we are all experiencing right now. You may find that one or two strategies can support a generosity of spirit, clarity of thought, considerateness for others, compassion for ourselves, or a lifeline in this very stressful time.

1. The Four S's: Structure, Stimulation, Social, and Significance

[Neil Pasricha's](#) 4 S's can bring shape and meaning to these days of self-isolation:

- Create a regular **schedule** and rhythm to your days (structure)
- Spend time **engaged** in purposeful work or creative pursuits (stimulation), away from news and worry
- Nourish **connection** with others (social) with a windowed visit, video chat, or online game
- From afar or virtually, seek ways to support and be **in service** of others (significance)

Attending to routine, engagement, virtual talk/play with friends/family, and offering generosity to others can uplift our days. What could *your* 4 S's look like?

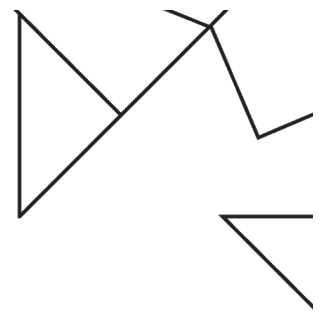
2. Mindful Planning

With growing to-do lists and competing work, home, and caregiving demands, it can be hard to know *what* to do *when*. How can we mindfully plan and manage our time?

- Begin with the hardest tasks first when willpower, motivation and energy are highest
- If procrastination sets in, practise "the 15-minute rule" by committing to the task at hand--whether work, physical exercise, or a challenging chore--for 15 minutes, with permission to stop after they're are up
- To help keep overwhelm at bay, chunk big tasks into smaller, manageable sub-tasks
- Keep yourself motivated by saying to yourself, "follow the plan, not your mood"; our moods fluctuate, but we can help motivation grow by achieving what we set out to do
- And, out of all that feels pressing, decide upon 1-3 things that would make the day feel accomplished and complete

3. Offer Gratitude for What *IS* Going Well

- Let the first text that you send each day be one of appreciation
- At the dinner table, in a journal, or in bed before falling asleep, savour three good things that surprised, delighted, encouraged, or inspired you that day, even if small or nuanced
- Watch this [TED talk on Gratitude](#) to enhance your experience of savouring



4. Prioritize Connection

- Connect to nature: if it feels comfortable and safe for you to spend time outside at a generous social distance, try to notice spring flowers emerging, songbirds returning, the feel of the wind on your skin, and the sensation of your body walking/moving
- Connect to others: when visiting by phone or any online tool, devote 100% of your attention to the conversation and relationship by offering deep listening and eye contact, and by avoiding multitasking
- Connect to your physical wellbeing: weave energizing and restorative movement into each and every day, for example through online offerings
- Connect to humanity: practise this [Lovingkindness Meditation](#) to extend hope and best wishes for yourself, your loved ones, your communities, and the world

5. Constructive Rest and Sleep

Sleep improves our immune function, ability to think clearly, solve problems, focus on the task at hand, nurture our friendships, and experience greater wellbeing; it also decreases anger, moodiness, stress, and impulsivity.

- Prioritize getting 7- 9 hours of sleep per night, and as much as possible schedule *around* this window
- Honour your individual body clock by tuning into the cues of fatigue, noticing when you need to sleep and not pushing through or past this; if you find it difficult to hear what your body is asking for, consider incorporating in a [Body Scan](#) practise in your week
- Create an hour-long buffer zone before going to sleep during which you turn off news and unwind by engaging in restorative strategies like [Progressive Muscle Relaxation](#), [Guided Imagery \(“The Beach”\)](#), [Deep Breathing](#), and any of the mediations on the Ryerson University [ThriveRU website](#):

Amidst all that is uncertain, what can you do *today* that can contribute to your thriving? What are your 5 Health Non- Negotiables that you *need* in order to keep well? Exercise, time in nature, nourishing sleep, connection with others, work, learning, getting lost in a book, laughing? Aim to craft your days with your non-negotiables as the pillars.

Be well,
Dr. Diana Brecher & Dr. Deena Kara Shaffer