

Today as has every day for the past 6 weeks started with morning coffee and an update on the latest Coronavirus pandemic. This included articles from the New York Times, Globe and Mail, Washington Post and MSNBC. I am quite certain that many mornings start the same regardless of your taste in beverage or news source. Probably what is common to us all, is the sense of insecurity ... Insecurity and loss of control over our daily lives, of what seemed so mundane last year such as getting up, showering, having breakfast, packing lunches for kid's school, planning for the day ahead at work and maybe who to meet for quick dinner after work. If you are retired .... It could be just not planning for anything which is part of the beauty of retirement. All has changed with a viral particle that has gripped the world in an equalizing deadly hold as it lays waste to much of that we hold dear, including threats to our health and that of our loved ones. It has decimated our economy with job losses, business closures, income insecurity, retirement savings that have cratered and a complete shutdown of global economy. No one has been spared.

Most of us are cocooning and social distancing has become the new way to interact with extended family and friends. For some we have literally "zoomed" into a new way of working and interacting with each other. But we crave the human touch, the face to face smile and laugh we love to hear and the hug from a joyful grandchild we cherish playing with. We are social beings; we need a community, a village.

As this new "normal" came quickly, there was no time to adjust to such a profound change in our day to day existence and with any unknown future comes fear, anxiety, irritability, depression and a host of other mental health issues. You may feel alone but you are not alone. That is why we must all work together to help one another in facing the challenges such as paying the rent, dealing with laid off housebound spouses, home schooling bored children and other sudden changes including losses of not seeing aging family and the worry about the care facility they may live in. It is all right to feel powerless, we all do. It is all right to give yourself permission to reach out to others and please do. There are friends and neighbors that can help, there are mental health hotlines, and many websites that you can access, so just do it for yourself and those you care about.

Many of these sudden disruptions in our lives lead to unhealthy ways to cope ... with increasing family violence, alcohol and substance use and a host of other destructive things that we can do. Please don't.

If you feel sad, confused, stressed and fear losing control, turn off the TV and gather the facts from sources that are credible and not on the websites that may be unsettling; stay with science based facts and avoid conspiracy theories and predictions. Try to maintain a healthy diet, take a walk and enjoy these beautiful spring days, we may have missed by working last year. Practice social distancing for a while longer. Remember that exercise and sleep are tremendously important to maintain both our physical and mental health.

My last point is be grateful to be Canadian, to have the social safety net that is inclusive, maybe it is not perfect but everyone is trying to help one another, everyone from the grocery clerks, truck drivers, psychologists, social workers, and many others including the heroic health care providers trying desperately to heal and save lives in extreme circumstances for which there is no playbook. Put

your pots and pans to good use; salute the people making a difference to keep us safe. Remember you cannot change the wind, but you can adjust your sails. Hopefully the winds will soon calm, so keep the faith in yourself and each other .We are resilient. The virus will not win!

I have titled this: You, your mental health and Covid -19