



COVID Burnout Resiliency

Burnout is a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress. It occurs when you feel overwhelmed, emotionally drained, and unable to meet constant demands. Although burnout is often associated with work and life imbalances, it has become associated now with the continuing nature of the COVID 19 pandemic.

Burnout can be recognized in mental, emotional and/or physical exhaustion, and a growing recognition of reduced personal capacities and accomplishment. Signs of burnout may also include sadness, depression, irritability, frustration, isolation, poor hygiene, social isolation, feelings of hopelessness and low job satisfaction. Physical illnesses and interpersonal conflict are also possible.

During times like this, our focus on wellness choices can be challenged. It is imperative to keep personal health and self-care on the top of our minds and commit to daily behaviors that allow us to stay as protected and resilient as we can. Here are some ways to develop these things in response to COVID’s ongoing presence in our lives.



1. Know that what you’re feeling is a normal response to an abnormal set of circumstances.
Exercise self-compassion and allow yourself to be less than your best. On any given day, we may not be at our very best, so let’s simply give the best we have in the moment. All of us who are working (from home or office or both), going to school or volunteering during this crisis are being challenged in new ways. Feeling a wide range of emotions is understandable. This is a normal response of normal people under abnormal circumstances.

2. Engage in consistent self-reflection to identify your emotional experience and other signs of stress.
Take a few moments at different points throughout the day for a personal mental health check-in. It may feel as if there’s no time to spare, but this is a critical aspect of managing stress. Some emotional signs of stress include the persistence of fear, irritability, anger, sadness and other overwhelming feelings. Cognitive signs may include loss of concentration, short term or working-memory deficits, inability to make decisions, disorientation and confusion.

3. Prioritize your basic needs.
In times of crisis, we tend to ignore our basic needs, including food, water, exercise and sleep. To reduce stress and prevent burnout, see if you are able to create healthy meals every day while avoiding inflammatory ingredients such as sugar, saturated fats, refined white flour and alcohol. Drink water throughout the day to stay hydrated. Exercise for at least a few minutes daily to maximize the release of endorphins.

Take a walk outdoors during work or class breaks. As much as possible, set a routine time for bed to cultivate the benefits of quality sleep. Try incorporating breathing exercises, getting into nature, and moving your body (walk, hike, bike, dance, play, sing) in your daily self-reflection routine to help calm the body's reactions to the stressors you encounter throughout the day.

Consider inviting members of your "COVID bubble" to join you.

4. Take brief mental breaks throughout the day.

It's important to take scheduled breaks to rest your mind and reset. Find a quiet space during your work breaks or at home or school. It's important to be mindful of any internal chatter that may try to convince you that you don't have enough time for a break or don't deserve it. Ignore the chatter and take a break anyway.



If you are able, consider a "COVID news fast". Although it seems so challenging to get away from news about this virus, consider abstaining from anything COVID for a day. At least consider a break from the daily "scroll of doom" through Facebook, Twitter and other repetitive sources of information.

5. Experiment with sensory-soothing techniques to facilitate calm and relaxation.

Research supports the effectiveness of embracing sensory-soothing activities to calm the nervous system, regulate activated brain chemistry and promote healing from acute and chronic stressors. Be intentional in taking time throughout the day to engage in sensory-soothing techniques, such as listening to your favorite calming music, visualizing the places where you tend to feel at peace, or enjoying a favorite healthy beverage or food.

6. Create and nurture supportive connections with coworkers.

Check in with your coworkers and remain open to giving and receiving support. The validation will help normalize your experiences and prevent feelings of isolation and ongoing distress. Be sure to talk about the positive things occurring within your organization and personally during this pandemic. This is very effective even if it's of a "virtual" nature.

7. Seek support to cope with overwhelming personal and interpersonal impacts.

When a crisis has an ongoing and uncertain healing trajectory, we can feel stuck in our emotional experience. It can be helpful to talk about the impact and effect of this with a counsellor, spiritual advisor or trusted confidante.



We, at Vancouver Island Counselling, understand the deep impacts of ongoing distressing times, chronic stress-rising conditions and how to support and heal their effects. If it would be helpful to you, call our offices to set up a Telehealth or Secure Video counselling appointment. We are here for you...always!



Vancouver Island Counselling

Duncan 250 746 6900

Nanaimo 250 754 8222

Port Alberni 250 723 7001

Victoria / Lower Mainland
1 877 746 6911