

**From:** Lindsay Lefebvre  
**To:** MDL  
**Subject:** Covid-19 & Mental Health  
**Date:** Friday, March 13, 2020 11:24:01 AM  
**Attachments:** [Aetna EAP.PDF](#)  
[Manulife Financial Employee Assistance Program.pdf](#)

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Team,

There's no question that this is a challenging time, and many of us are experiencing a pandemic of this magnitude for the first time. It's easy to become overwhelmed with the amount of information over-flowing in a short amount of time. With emphasis placed on isolating yourself socially, maintaining impeccable hygiene, and being hyper-aware of changes in your health, extra stressors are placed on our mental health. Often our mental health is the last thing we think about, because we are busy digesting information and planning for the health and safety of ourselves and those around us.

How can we protect our mental health during a pandemic?

Pandemics, like COVID-19, challenge the way people cope. During a pandemic it's not uncommon to experience strong emotions. The Psychologists' Association of Alberta has released the following information to help us understand normal responses to abnormal events that can help Albertans cope. Novel and unfamiliar threats provoke anxiety, even unrealistic fears and racism. Social distancing, effective communication, and public health measures are realistic lines of defense.

**Stay Informed** – but not overloaded. With major news events, media inundates us with coverage & potential implications. Gather information that will help you **accurately determine your risk** so that you can take reasonable precautions. Framing risk with clear facts helps quell panic. Alberta Health Services, the World Health Organization, Public Health Agency of Canada, & the US Center for Disease Control are all reliable information sources. Minimize unnecessary exposure to stories or gossip about the pandemic.

**Stay healthy** -- A healthy lifestyle is your best defense against disease. Physical health has positive impacts on psychological health (and vice versa). Social distancing and good personal hygiene will keep you, and others, safe.

### **Manage your own Stress**

- Limit your media consumption to just enough to stay informed. Take some time for yourself, go for a walk, or spend time with friends & family doing things that you enjoy.
- Avoid getting into discussions about the event if you think they have the potential to escalate to conflict. Be cognizant of the frequency with which you're discussing the news.
- Stress & anxiety about the future is not productive. Instead, work on things within your control.
- Remember that life will go on. People have always survived difficult life circumstances. There is no reason why this situation cannot be similar. Avoid catastrophizing & maintain a balanced perspective.

- Build your resilience – we can learn to adapt well to stress – how have you coped with stressors before? Add resilience tools to your tool bag to manage life's adversities.
- Keep connected. Maintain your social networks (even via social media & telephone).
- Keep things in perspective -- Our government needs to prepare for possible worst-case scenarios in order to protect the public. The public, however, does not need to expect the worst.
- Have a plan -- How would you respond if you or a loved one were diagnosed with COVID-19? Developing contingency plans for potential scenarios can lessen your anxiety.

### **When to seek professional help**

Psychologists & Counsellors are trained to help people find constructive ways of dealing with anxiety & emotional stress. Contact a professional if:

- You feel overwhelming nervousness or lingering sadness adversely affecting you
- You notice persistent feelings of distress or hopelessness and you feel like you are barely able to get through your daily responsibilities and activities

### **Resources available to you and information on these resources are attached:**

#### **For our Arizona employees - Aetna Resources for Living:**

(p) <redacted>

(w) [www.resourcesforliving.com](http://www.resourcesforliving.com) Username: <redacted> Password: <redacted>

#### **For our Canadian Employees - Manulife Resilience**

(p) <redacted>

(w) [www.manulife.ca/groupbenefits](http://www.manulife.ca/groupbenefits)

### **Lindsay Lefebvre**

HR Manager

**a|** 900, 10310 Jasper Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T5J 1Y8

**w|** [Melcor.ca](http://Melcor.ca)

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