

LGBTQI2S people are 1.5x more likely to have depression and anxiety compared to heterosexual counterparts¹. Due to the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, LGBTQI2S people are likely to experience higher levels of stress. These moments of panic and high stress can often be due to an overwhelming sense of uncertainty and lack of control. When this happens, it is important to pull back, take a breath and evaluate. Here are a few tips that might help ground you in those moments:

Disentangle what is in your control from what is not. Focus on the actions that you CAN take.

There are many actions that you can take that are within your control.

- YOU can wash your hands
- YOU can pick a movie to watch
- YOU can take your medication
- YOU can pick what colour of nail polish to put on next
- YOU can water your plants
- YOU can journal your feelings
- YOU can set boundaries, whether it is limiting your media intake on stressful events or creating distance between yourself and a person who overwhelms you.



Access nature.

- While we must keep socially distant we can still go out for a walk around the block to get fresh air and have a change of scenery.

1 Rainbow Health Ontario. (2012). LGBTQ Mental Health [Fact sheet]. Retrieved from https://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/woocommerce_uploads/2011/06/RHO_FactSheet_LGBTQMENTALHEALTH_E.pdf

Pay attention to your needs



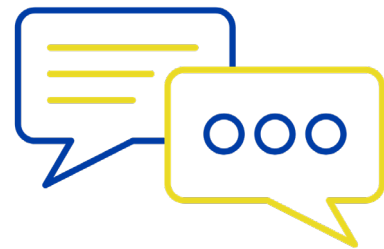
Create a safer environment for yourself.

- This will look different for everyone and it's important not to compare or judge situations.
- Do what makes you feel safer in your moment of anxiety or depression.
- These are exceptional circumstances so where possible, take the pressure off yourself. Absolve yourself of the guilt if you need to stay in bed for longer, have an extra snack or skip a day in your workout routine.
- If what makes you feel safer is high risk, please take a harm reduction approach; ask yourself how you can make that high risk factor the least harmful.



Stay in the present.

- Urge yourself to remain in the present. Overwhelming projections of the future can be spiralling and seemingly have no end.
- One way to do this is to name all the sensations you can feel physically, all the sounds you can hear, all the smells you can smell, all the colours you can see around you.



Get in touch.

- Reach out to one or two people you trust to see if they can talk out your feelings with you, reassure you and ground you in the present.
- Reach out to a professional therapist, see below for a list of therapists now operating online for free or at a sliding scale cost.



Tips for video and phone counselling

- Make sure you have the right equipment such as a laptop, tablet or phone.
- Use headphones with a microphone attached so that you can hear and speak to your therapist more clearly.
- Make yourself comfortable.
- Have all your necessities within arms reach (a glass of water, a notebook, tissues etc.).
- Stay away from distractions. Turn off your TV, try to keep any pets away, and turn off your phone if you do not need it for the session.
- Create a separate space so that you have some privacy may speak more openly away from your fellow quarantined people.
- If you cannot find any privacy, consider taking your session during a walk around the neighbourhood, your therapist may do the same too!

Online Counselling Resources

- [Affordable Therapy Network](#) - Now offering reduced rates, low-cost, sliding scale online therapy options
- [BetterHelp](#) - \$40 to \$70 weekly plans, text and chat services available as well as video sessions - US-based, but clients do not have to be in the US
- [Big White Wall](#) - Free, online mental health and wellbeing service
- [COVID19 Therapists](#) - Free mental health services for Ontario COVID-19 healthcare providers
- [Good2Talk](#) - Confidential support services for post-secondary students in Ontario and Nova Scotia.
- [Greenspace Mental Health](#) - Matches you to a therapist, GTA specific, online sessions available.
- [Inkblot](#) - Online video therapy sessions (\$37.50/30 min sessions, first session is free)

- [LGBT YouthLine](#) - Free peer to peer support, phone, text and chat services
- [Open Path Collective](#) - Offering sliding scale individual (\$30-\$60) and couples and families (\$30-\$80) therapy options
- [New Creations Counseling](#) - Offers online therapy for individuals and couples, sliding scale available
- [Pathway-Therapy](#) - Online options available. Currently offering sliding-scales to support a wider range of people during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- [Real Campus Student Assistance Program](#) (run by Shift Collab) - If you are a University or College student at eligible campuses you have access to free therapy sessions. Visit this website to find out your eligibility.
- [Shift Collab](#) - Online options available, sliding scale offered, free initial consult call.
- [Talkspace](#) - Promotion for \$100 off their plans
- [Umbrella Mental Health Network](#) - Queer mental health professionals supporting LGBTQ* health & wellness, now offering online psychotherapy & e-counselling services
- [7 Cups](#) - Caring listeners for free emotional support 24/7; or be a listener for others