

Creating More Moments of Calm and Joy in the Time of COVID-19



Becoming a new parent is a time of wonder and delight. It can also be stressful with uncertainty in navigating pregnancy challenges, baby care and new family roles. Of course, all of us also feel the stress of living in the time of COVID-19.

Some tips for finding more moments of calm and joy in our lives:

- ✓ Look after yourself-sleep, exercise, eat well, take time to recharge with meditation, breathing exercises, music or prayer, connect positively with those you care about be it those you live with or virtually.
- ✓ Be kind to yourself. Be mindful to talk to yourself as you would a dear friend.
- ✓ Be forgiving to yourself. There are no perfect parents (despite how it looks on social media) and all of us feel stressed at times.
- ✓ Anxiety is usually connected to fretting about what happened in the past or worrying about what might happen in the future. Instead, use past mistakes as learning opportunities to approach future challenges differently and then let them go. Don't borrow trouble from tomorrow. Mindfulness or being in the present is one of the best ways to have more calm. Just stop and focus on what is around you right now.
- ✓ Practice Gratitude -Look for things in the present to be grateful for. You could keep a gratitude journal and write down 10 things that you are grateful for each night before bed. Or just notice three things you are grateful for three times a day. Take heart in the many ways people are lifting each other up during this stressful time.
- ✓ Try to find one thing each day that brings you joy.
- ✓ Volunteer to help others
- ✓ Limit stressful internet activity. Ask yourself after each internet session, "Did that lift me up or bring me down?" Limit your internet time and choose sites that lift you up. If you need more health-related information about COVID see:

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/ppih/if-ppih-covid-19-prenatal-postnatal.pdf><https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16944.aspx>,

<https://www.alberta.ca/index.aspx> - these are reliable websites with trustworthy information! Limit these searches to at most two 15-minute sessions per day. Please try to use them and not possibly inaccurate and anxiety producing social media sites



Albatross Mom and Chick – Photos by Dr. Chapman

Some great sites to help create a feeling of calm and joy:

<https://hopepregnancyapp.com> Sign up for this great app all while pregnant to support your mental wellness now and for the first year post partum

<https://www.anxietycanada.com/>

<https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-health-and-covid->

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/amh/if-amh-mhpiip-disaster-pandemic-covid-19-and-your-mental-health.pdf>

<https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/covid19>

<https://www.baypsychology.ca/workshops>

<https://www.covidhope.net/>

Your Phone has Some Great Apps:

Hope pregnancy
Calm
Headspace
Mindshift
DBT 911
Relax Melodies
Palouse Mindfulness
Self-help for Anxiety Management

AHS have some great links:

Mental Health Moments
Help in Tough Times
Text4Hope
Healthy Together

Counselling Resources in Calgary providing Phone or Virtual Counselling

If you have an **Emergency** or **Urgent mental health crisis**, please:

Call 911 or go to ER or Urgent Care

For Non-Urgent Concerns:

Access Mental Health 403-943-1500

Other good counselling resources:

Families Matter <https://www.familiesmatter.ca/>

Sunridge or Foothills Perinatal Mental Health-or **Mosaic Perinatal Mental Health Counsellor**-you can ask your Family Doctor for a Referral

Calgary Immigrant Women's Association <https://www.ciwa-online.com/>

Eastside Family Centre - provides phone and etherapy counselling 403-299-9696 or email etherapy@woodshomes.ca

Calgary Counselling Centre <https://calgarycounselling.com/>

Carya <https://caryacalgary.ca/our-programs/family-support/family-counselling/>

Catholic Family Services <https://www.cfs-ab.org/>

Financial Stress

<https://www.canada.ca/en/financial-consumer-agency/services/covid-19-managing-financial-health.html>

There are free budgeting mentors e.g. <https://www.creditcanada.com/debt-assessme>

You may be eligible for financial support e.g. CERB or EI

You may be able to delay payment of your mortgage or utilities.

Medications and Substances

The benefits for the baby of having parents that can find a place of calm for a good part of the day is enormous and many people need medication in addition to counselling and self-care to help them find this. If you feel you might be helped with medications for depression or anxiety, please call your family doctor or your maternity care provider. They can have a phone or virtual visit with you about this. There are some small risks to the baby to take anti-depressants or anti-anxiety medication in pregnancy. The risk to the baby of anxiety and depression that cannot be well controlled with counselling and stress reduction measures is much larger than the risks of the medication. This stress can lead to babies not growing well, being born early and being at risk for mental illness when they grow up,

Cannabis might seem like a good option, but it stays in breastmilk for a long time and the baby can get a large amount through breastmilk. There is growing evidence that THC harms the babies' rapidly growing brain. **Why take the risk?**

If you are tempted to have drink or two, please consider the baby. No amount of alcohol in pregnancy is known to be safe and we know the more alcohol the baby is exposed to; the more permanent damage can occur to the baby's brain. Alcohol is a depressant – i.e. makes you more depressed; so probably not the best choice now. It is also easy to slip into more abusive drinking habits during times of stress. If you or your loved ones are concerned about your drug or alcohol use there are lots of supports in Calgary.

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/findhealth/service.aspx?id=1060378>

www.calgaryaddiction.com

<https://aventa.org/>

Domestic Violence

Unfortunately, violence can increase during times of stress. If you or your partner are having trouble controlling your anger or are unhealthily trying to control each other, reach out for help. Have an escape plan with ID and a credit card at a friend's place. You can call the Emergency Shelters <https://acws.ca/shelters> and most of the counselling centers listed above can help. There is also:

Province Abuse Line <https://www.alberta.ca/abuse-helpline.aspx> 1-855-4435722

Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse <https://calgarycasa.com/>

Infant Feeding in Times of COVID

When breastfeeding is going well, the close connection with baby and the calming oxytocin hormone can help us feel increased calm. Mindful bottle-feeding can also be a lovely calming way to connect with your baby. Really pay attention to how the baby is feeding. Give them little pauses to catch their breath and smile at you.

Infant feeding challenges can be stressful. There is support for any feeding challenges through your Public Health Nurse or the physician Infant feeding clinics eg Well Fed at Sunridge, Riley Park Breastfeeding clinic or NEST in Airdrie, They can usually help you either find a solution for your feeding problems or adjust your goals so that your baby is well fed and the process is enjoyable and not stressful for both of you. Maximizing mother's milk supply is a great goal in these uncertain times. We can also usually help you with this. If you need support with infant feeding, please reach out .The doctors at these clinics are available for virtual, phone and careful face to face visits.

Based on current evidence, COVID-19 is not transmitted through breastmilk. Giving your baby any breastmilk helps to support their immune system, so keep breastfeeding and if you are considering weaning, perhaps delay this until the health emergency is over. Make sure to use wash your hands, and keep pump parts and bottles sterile and clean.

It is still recommended to feed your baby breastmilk even if you contract COVID, you could either wear a mask while breastfeeding and wash your chest prior to breastfeeding or pump and have someone else feed your baby with a bottle of your milk. Frequent skin to skin contact between baby and mother is very important for bonding and establishing breastmilk. Many women are choosing to stop work and self-isolate from thirty-four weeks and have all family members decontaminated themselves upon entry to the house to minimize the risk of contracting COVID just prior to birth. This also helps protect our healthcare workers from exposure.

If you have an abundant supply, please consider donating to Northern Star Milk Bank: <http://www.northernstarmilkbank.ca/>. Our fragile preterm babies need this precious resource and supplies are low.

Some good websites about infant feeding are <https://www.healthyparentshealthychildren.ca/>
<https://globalhealthmedia.org/>

The best thing we can all do to minimize the spread of COVID is to take a self-sabbatical in other words -physical distancing, lots of hand washing, wear mask when going out and try not to touch your face.

Stay safe and look after yourselves and each other!