

The COVID-19 SURVIVAL TOOLKIT for Healthcare Heroes



Leisure Resources for Staying Resilient During the COVID-19 Pandemic

*Created by the recreation therapy (RecT) staff
at Vancouver General Hospital*

Recreation's purpose
is not to kill time, but to make life;
not to keep a person occupied,
but to keep them refreshed;
not to offer an escape from life,
but to provide a discovery of life."

– *Author Unknown*

Fact Sheet

Leisure for Stress Release



Leisure Engagement Helps Increase

Happiness Resilience Relaxation Rejuvenation

Leisure Engagement Helps Decrease

Anxiety Depression Burn-out Distress

What is leisure? Leisure is the time we have to do what we like to do because we enjoy doing it.^{1, 3, 4} Improving your satisfaction with leisure positively impacts your wellbeing.⁶ This effect is similar across cultures, age groups, and professions, but is even more important for those with high-stress jobs such as healthcare workers.²

There is significant evidence to support short- and long-term benefits of a variety of leisure activities. Creative activities, physical activity, and outdoor time are all examples of rehabilitative processes that decrease anxiety, depression, and job-induced burnout.^{5,8,9}

Involvement in meaningful leisure enhances your health by allowing you to successfully recover from workplace demands.² Over time, routine leisure experiences can help stop work-related stress from contributing to chronic health issues, including the development of stress-related mental health problems.^{2,5}

Leisure activities help to build and maintain resilience,⁷ which is a necessity for people with high-stress jobs. Many of the aspects of resilience inherent in leisure participation are

transferable to working in a healthcare setting including being a team player, initiative, tolerance, organizational skills, adaptability, humor, and a sense of self-worth.⁷

During times of high work stress is when people often engage in the least amount of leisure, even though leisure itself can provide the most recovery and rejuvenation from work stress.⁹ Time and environmental pressures, a heavy workload, being overloaded with information, and difficult interpersonal situations can all have negative effects on your ability to engage in leisure.⁷ Keeping physical and mental boundaries between work and leisure spaces, including leaving work tasks at work, is one way you can stop the transference of job stress.⁹

Research shows that participating in quality satisfying leisure experiences is more important than the overall quantity of leisure and that enjoying more than one type of leisure activity has a greater positive impact your wellbeing.⁶ Choosing leisure activities that develop positive experiences will help you to recover, replenish, and refocus so that you can effectively cope with the inevitable stressors of life.

Search Terms: “acute stress + leisure + healthcare providers”, “leisure + healthcare workers”, “importance of leisure for healthcare professionals”

Databases: Google Scholar

Years Included: 2010 - 2020 **Articles Found/Used:** 7/9 **Date to be Reviewed:** April 2025

References

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Recreation Therapy Vancouver General Hospital (2020)

(adapted from Sunny Hill Health Centre for Children template (2017))



The COVID-19 Survival Toolkit

Resources for Staying Resilient During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Be COVID-19 Informed

<p>World Health Organization (WHO) Updates, travel advice, frequently asked questions, situation reports and more.</p>	Link
<p>Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) Information from the government of Canada including the current situation with COVID-19, your health, financial support, travel, safety and information specific to the public and health professionals.</p>	Link
<p>BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) Information on what to do if you suspect you have the COVID-19 virus and how to protect yourself, your family and your community.</p>	Link
<p>VCH Infection Prevention and Control (IPHAC) COVID-19 resources for healthcare professionals and the public.</p>	Link

Stay Resilient

<p>Employee Wellness (website) Access to wellness, counselling and critical incident services.</p>	Link
<p>Mind Control: Managing Your Mental Health During COVID-19 (online course) Offered by the University of Toronto, this course is intended to help you develop effective strategies for coping with the stress of COVID-19.</p>	Link
<p>Managing Stress and Anxiety from COVID-19 (online course) Offered by Starling, a Vancouver-based organization that strives to increase access to mental healthcare, this free 60-minute course focuses on coping skills, emotion regulation, managing negative thoughts and setting healthy boundaries.</p>	Link
<p>Compassion Resilience Toolkit (website) A nine-part toolkit to help you stay resilient including expectations, coping with stress, relationships during social distancing, boundaries, mindfulness, compassion and more.</p>	Link
<p>The Crisis Kit: 5 Tools for Helping Clients Through Turbulent Times (website) Created by PositivePsychology.com, this resource provides five of the most relevant, science-based tools to help you help others navigate turbulence and uncertainty. Includes guided meditation, learning to cope with uncontrollable situations, etc.</p>	Link
<p>Anxiety Canada (website) Resources and strategies to help you cope with anxiety, including being uncertain about the future, getting sick, feeling isolated, talking with young children, etc.</p>	Link

<p>BounceBack Online (website) Free instant access to nine self-paced online modules that use cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) to help improve your coping skills.</p>	Link
<p>BounceBack Coaching (website/telephone) With physician referral, work on CBT-based materials with a trained coach for free. Physicians can submit referrals online via the website.</p>	Link

Stay Fit While Socially Distancing

<p>CBC Life (website) An article highlighting some great free website/app options for at-home fitness.</p>	Link
<p>Down Dog Yoga (website, iOS and Android) Until July 1st, healthcare workers can access more than 60,000 HIIT, barre, 7-minute workouts and yoga, including beginner and prenatal classes all for free!</p>	Link
<p>Do Yoga with Me (app) Free classes, meditations, programs and yoga challenges with the ability to sort by difficulty, class length, style and teacher.</p>	Link
<p>Yoga with Adriene (YouTube) Free yoga videos for all levels, genders, bodies and souls.</p>	Link
<p>Nike Training Club (website, iOS and Android) Usually a paid app, NTC is currently free until further notice and offers a variety of classes for yoga, cardio, HIIT, strength training and running.</p>	Link
<p>Body Bible Fitness (website) Body Bible promotes their free workouts as a fun way for individuals or groups to work out, including completing daily challenges and winning prizes.</p>	Link
<p>YMCA (website) Offers a variety of video fitness programs for children to active older adults including bootcamp, spin, barre, tai chi and weightlifting.</p>	Link

Meditation and Mindfulness

<p>Do Nothing for Two Minutes (website) Take a two-minute break and just listen to the waves. Every time you move your mouse or touch your keyboard, the timer restarts.</p>	Link
<p>Trauma Tapping Technique (website, iOS and Android app) Information on how to use this proven self-help method for calming emotional responses related to stress and traumatic experiences.</p>	Link

<p>Palouse Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (website) Free online mindfulness-based stress reduction course founded by Jon Kabat-Zinn at the University of Massachusetts Medical School.</p>	Link
<p>Self-Compassion (website) Free access to guided meditations and self-compassion exercises including writing, self-talk and supportive touch.</p>	Link
<p>Shambhala Vancouver (website) Free mindfulness/awareness meditation sessions starting at 7pm every Wednesday via Zoom. All levels welcome, extra support available for beginners. At 8pm, attendees are encouraged to make themselves a cup of tea and virtually social with others before a formal talk/discussion takes place at 8:20pm. Attendees can join/leave at any time.</p>	Link
<p>Breath2Relax (iOS and Android) Available in app format only, users learn how to use diaphragmatic breathing to help reduce stress, regulate mood and help with anger and anxiety management.</p>	N/A
<p>Ten Percent Happier (website, iOS and Android app) Free access for healthcare workers to tools for practicing meditation, reducing stress and improving sleep and overall happiness. Offers weekly podcasts, newsletters and live streaming videos Monday to Friday at noon (access videos any time after via app).</p>	Link
<p>Calm – Meditate, Sleep, Relax (website, iOS and Android app) Free resources to navigate the stress of COVID-19 including guided meditations, mindfulness tools, calming music, natural soundscapes, sleep stories and guided movement videos. Also includes resources for children.</p>	Link
<p>Headspace (website, iOS and Android app) Free selection of meditation, sleep and at-home workouts to support you during COVID-19.</p>	Link

Journaling

<p>How to Journal + 30 Journaling Prompts (YouTube) An introduction to different ways to journal plus a downloadable sheet of 30 questions for self-discovery to help you get started on your journaling journey.</p>	Link
<p>How To (And How Not To) Keep a 30-Second Gratitude Journal (website) A step-by-step guide to starting and using a gratitude journal, including free tools, templates and downloads.</p>	Link
<p>Wreck This Journal (YouTube) A completely different take on journaling that goes far beyond just writing. The goal is to keep it simple, keep it easy, keep it fun!</p>	Link

Performing Arts

Social Distan-Sing with Choir! Choir! Choir! (website/Facebook) Sing along with this online Canadian choir via live events on Facebook. No fees, auditions or ability to read music required.	Link
Fender Play Through (website) Get three months of free guitar, bass and ukulele lessons.	Link
Gaga Movement Language (website/Zoom) By donation dance classes and workshops for dancers and people of all backgrounds.	Link
Dancing Alone Together (website) Attend live streaming dance classes including ballet, contemporary and jazz.	Link

Creative Hearts

Recolour (iOS and Android) Colour more than 4,000 images on your smart device.	Link
PencilStash (YouTube) 7 top adult colouring tips.	Link
Mugworts Designs Colouring Contest (website/Facebook) Download a PDF colouring sheet, colour it and upload it the Mugworts Facebook page to be entered to win prizes.	Link
Just Color (website) Offers 1,500 free adult colouring pages including nature, travel, art, history, stories, mandalas and special events/holidays.	Link
Artists Network (website) Offers free courses, including live stream classes for drawing, painting, mixed media, watercolour and more.	Link
ArtyFactory (website) Free art lessons designed to share the knowledge, understanding and experience of art to improve your artistic skills and to increase your enjoyment in creating artworks	Link
Michael Woodside – Social Distancing Drawing (YouTube) Learn how to draw Disney characters like Mickey Mouse and Dumbo from a real Disney animator.	Link

For Book Lovers

Libby, By OverDrive (website, iOS and Android) Free access to library eBooks and audiobooks.	Link
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<p>Vancouver Public Library (website) Access the VPL digital library by using your library card. Don't have one? Apply online and get instant access. Not a Vancouver resident? Check your local library's website as many communities have similar programs including Burnaby, New Westminister, Coquitlam and Surrey.</p>	<p>Link</p>
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Style at Home

<p>Apartment Therapy 94 fun things you can do at home, often for free.</p>	<p>Link</p>
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The Brainy Bunch

<p>Coursera (website) More than 1,900 free courses on a diverse variety of topics including the science of well-being, how to build an app, relationships, graphic design – there is something for everyone! Audit for free or complete designated courses for certification.</p>	<p>Link</p>
<p>Classroom Central (website) Access to courses from 13 different subject areas including courses in science and cooking, robotics, astronomy, mindfulness and more. Free to audit.</p>	<p>Link</p>
<p>Duolingo (website, iOS and Android) Learn a new language for free.</p>	<p>Link</p>
<p>Learn to Code From Home (website) Learn computer coding skills for free thanks to freeCodeCamp, a public charity.</p>	<p>Link</p>

Be an Armchair Traveller

<p>Incredible Virtual Tours You Can Take to Pass the Time (website) Take a tour of a museum, nature walk, graffiti tour or virtual adventure all from the comfort of your home.</p>	<p>Link</p>
<p>Montreal Museum of Fine Arts Explore a variety of topics including a digital tour of <i>Portrayals of the Human Body</i>, peace in art or take part in an art-inspired meditation.</p>	<p>Link</p>
<p>12 Famous Museums That Offer Virtual Tours (website) Virtually experience the best museums from London to Seoul.</p>	<p>Link</p>
<p>World of Wonder Travel LLC (website/Facebook) Download your virtual passport and collect stamps as you virtually travel to different of US states, Ireland and Jamaica.</p>	<p>Link</p>
<p>Google Earth Virtual Tours (website) Visit the International Space Station, look at historical maps from around the world,</p>	<p>Link</p>

take a tour of national parks in the USA, explore cities around the world including Queenstown, NZL, Quebec City, CAN, Oslo, NOR and more.	
Google Arts and Culture (website) Explore spectacular selfies from art history, spend a day in Kenya’s remarkable parks, view 9 amazing street art murals in NYC or discover art activities you can do at home.	Link
Vancouver Aquarium (website) Live streaming of otters, jellyfish and penguins.	Link
Explore (website) Watch live camera feeds from across the globe on everything from bald eagles, puppies, jellyfish and waves crashing on Hawaiian beaches.	Link

Enjoy a Night Out from the Comfort of Your Couch

National Arts Centre (website/Facebook) Stream free theatre, dance, music, storytelling, talks and workshops as part of #CanadaPerforms.	Link
CBC Music (website) An up-to-date list of Canadian live streams to watch during COVID-19.	Link
Stay at Home Online Music Festival (website) Discover new music while staying at home.	Link
Cirque du Soleil (website) Watch a live performance by this Montreal-based entertainment company.	Link
National Public Radio Live Sessions (website) Virtually attend live performances by different artists from across the USA.	Link

Stay Connected While Keeping Your Social Distance

Google Hangout (website, iOS and Android) Turn any conversation into a free video call whether it’s a one-on-one or a group chat of up to 10 people.	Link
Zoom (website, iOS and Android) Enjoy video calls with multiple people. As long as you talk for less than 40 minutes, it’s free to use.	Link
Skype (website, iOS and Android) Talk, chat and collaborate with up to 50 people for free.	Link
Houseparty (website, iOS and Android) A social platform to connect face-to-face with friends and family.	Link

<p>Netflix Party (website) Watch Netflix with others! Netflix Party uses Google Chrome to synchronize video playback and adds group chat to your favourite Netflix shows.</p>	<p>Link</p>
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Get in the (Virtual) Game

<p>8 Online Games for a Virtual Hangout (website, iOS and Android) Get together virtually and play Texas Hold'em, Cards Against Humanity, Chips and Guac, UNO, Scattergories, Fibbage XL, MarioKart or even complete a puzzle together.</p>	<p>Link</p>
<p>7 Board Games You Can Play Online with Friends (website) Settlers of Catan, Dominion, Ticket to Ride, Monopoly, Words With Friends, Pandemic and more than a dozen popular card games can all be played virtually.</p>	<p>Link</p>
<p>The Sims FreePlay (website, iOS and Android) From the creators of The Sims™ series of best-selling simulation games comes a complete Sims experience on mobile!</p>	<p>Link</p>
<p>Tabletopia (website, iOS and Android) Play more than 800 games online with friends, family or other players. Offers games in 8 different languages.</p>	<p>Link</p>
<p>Playing Cards Create your own a virtual game room and share the link with friends and family to play match up, checkers and any card game that uses a standard deck of 52 cards.</p>	<p>Link</p>
<p>KrazyDad Printable Puzzles, Mazes and More! (website) Free access to sudoku, logic puzzles, games and mazes you can print off. Puzzles are even organized by level of difficulty.</p>	<p>Link</p>

Virtual Escape Rooms

<p>Hogwarts Digital Escape Room (website) Try to escape solo or with friends from a Harry Potter themed virtual escape room. Suitable for all ages.</p>	<p>Link</p>
<p>Marvel's Avengers: Escape from the Hydra Base (website) Your mission is to find and decipher the city location of a world-ending doomsday device currently being controlled by undercover Hydra agents. Suitable for all ages.</p>	<p>Link</p>
<p>Escape from Wonderland Digital Escape Room (website) Based on Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland, this escape room is good for individuals or groups. Suitable for all ages.</p>	<p>Link</p>

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