



# The VOICE of Albertans with Disabilities

March Mental Health Edition 2020

## Things to do while stuck at home social distancing

Ride roller coasters, check out museums, tour historic and mysterious locations ... virtually, of course. Here are some ideas taken from <https://www.kvue.com/article/news/entertainment-news/things-to-do-in-self-quarantine/269-f002dfab-7edb-42cd-bc67-857b671dea1e>.

1. Learn a new language - Sign language, Spanish, French, whatever you're trying to learn, YouTube and Duolingo could help.
2. Workout - Take a virtual class with a local gym, or on YouTube.
3. Create a collage - Use old magazines and book covers to create something new.
4. Knit a hat (or something else) - Find patterns on Ravelry and tutorials on YouTube.
5. Cook a new recipe - Present it to your family as if you are on a chef show.
6. Dance - Turn on your favorite song to dance to and go crazy.
7. Become a photographer - Do a photo-shoot. Take new headshots. Take pictures of things around your home.
8. Puppet show - To take up extra time, make your own puppets.
9. Meditate - Use an app/website like Headspace.
10. Read all those books you've been planning to read - You know, the ones you keep on the shelf and haven't gotten to yet.
11. Write a poem/book/short story - It doesn't have to be the next Shakespeare novel. Just write.
12. FaceTime or Zoom your mom, grandma, or any family member - Check in on them. Let them know how you are.
13. Write a letter to a loved one. Remember when this was the norm? Let's bring it back!
14. Support local business by ordering take-out. - Look online for local stores that are open.
15. Play hide and seek - Generally works best if you have others at home with you.
16. Learn calligraphy. - Thin upstroke. Thick down-stroke. Take a tutorial online.



17. Learn how to do a new makeup look - Cut-crease, baking, contouring ... there's a lot. Now is the time to learn because you're alone. YouTube tutorials, anyone?
18. Take care of your skin - Do a face mask. Get better face care habits now.
19. Learn Meteorology - Learn about thunderstorms, tornadoes, the atmosphere and more. <https://www.kvue.com/video/weather/alberts-weather-classroom/269-c6b814a3-230e-41b7-a590-0ccbf5e9722c>
20. Color - This isn't just an activity for kids. Get an adult coloring book, or draw a picture in black marker and color it with colored pencils.
21. Re-arrange your furniture - Make it feel like a brand new home.
22. Take a virtual tour of the Winchester Mystery House - Check out the mystery and history behind the house. <https://winchestermysteryhouse.com/video-tour/>
23. Learn how to draw from children's author Mo Willems. New episodes are posted each weekday. <https://www.kennedy-center.org/mowillems>
24. Go on virtual rides - TheCoaster Views has rides from Disney, Six Flags, Cedar Point and more. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgQRLYCo3d-dB7hE6neK053A>
25. Learn how to make floral arrangements -The Flower Social is still teaching on YouTube. <https://www.theflowersocialaustin.com/>
26. Set up an indoor beach - No, you don't have to bring sand inside. Use a blanket as the sand.
27. Test out that green thumb - Plant seeds. Garden.
28. Paint your nails - Don't forget to take care of yourself!
29. Watch animal live streams - Elephants, pandas, monkeys and more. <https://www.earthcam.com/events/animalcams/>
30. Explore museums - Visit the British Museum in London or the Guggenheim Museum in New York



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virtually - look them up by name.

<https://britishmuseum.withgoogle.com/>

31. Go outside ... safely, of course - Fresh air can help!
32. Watch new movies.- Universal Pictures is releasing new movies through On Demand, Apple and Amazon.
33. Dress up in costumes - It does not have to be Halloween.
34. Dress up fancy, and have a nice virtual dinner with friends. - Fancy Friday has a nice ring to it.
35. Have an indoor picnic - Bonus: No ants
36. Scavenger hunt - Hide clues around your house. This could waste a lot of time.
37. Watch a show with your friends using Netflix Party - Get the popcorn ready.
38. Bake - Cookies, cakes, brownies or home-made pie.
39. Karaoke - No one will judge you.
40. Do a puzzle - Then take that puzzle apart and do another one.
41. Build a city with Legos - Then take that Lego city apart and build another one.
42. Make jewelry - It doesn't have to be fancy. Just use what you have.
43. Have a tea party - Pinkies up!
44. Yoga - Either through an app or YouTube.
45. Make a scrapbook - Gather all your old photos and organize.
46. Clean your house - like, really clean it ... with good cleaning supplies.
47. Clean out your purse or wallet - You don't need that receipt from three years ago ... probably.
48. Clean out your car - Those old, cold french fries have got to go.
49. Build a fort - Get your blankets, pillows and make a safe place.
50. Ice cream sundaes - Get out all the special toppings!
51. Play a board game - Monopoly will get rid of a lot of time.
52. Camp in the living room - Bonus: no mosquitos.
53. Write down your life goals - Then write the steps to help you achieve those goals.
54. Create a vision board - Start planning now!
55. Set up a new budget - Get your money in order!
56. Set your menu for the week - You're more likely to

follow through if things are planned and written down.

57. Listen to a podcast - There's a podcast for everything.
58. Start a gratitude journal - Happiness is directly related to gratitude, so taking this step will make you happier.
59. Play cards - Poker, blackjack, solitaire, rummy, crazy eights.
60. Take an online class - Learn how to do the things you've always wanted to learn.
61. Start a Vlog or a Blog - You might want to look back and remember these moments.
62. Origami - You only need paper and a tutorial.
63. Sing ... or learn how to sing - Let's hear those pipes.
64. Learn how to juggle - Then when we can finally go to parties you can show off your new skills.
65. Make a time capsule - Then let your family find it in 20 years.
66. Make some homemade greeting cards - For any holiday.
67. Learn a magic trick - People love magic.
68. Make a themed Spotify playlist - It can be based on your favorite show, or a genre you love.
69. Make a cardboard castle - Declare yourself the king or queen.
70. Video games - You can play alone or use Twitch to allow other people to watch. Also, it's your chance to seem like a world-class athlete.
71. Make a movie - You don't need fancy equipment to make your own movie.
72. Try your hand at stop-motion - Then share your hard work with your friends.
73. Pickle some food - Then throw that food on some tacos.
74. Play charades - Write characters on pieces of paper and put them in a bowl.
75. Watch celebrities on social media. - Josh Gad is reading children's books on Instagram.



*Together, We Hold the Power!*

**Full Participation - Accessibility - Equity**



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## Talking to Children

This time may be very challenging for children and adolescents, some of whom might not understand the reasons for school closures and the cancellation of extracurricular activities. In addition, they are likely to be bombarded with information through social media and from their friends that can cause anxiety and alarm.



Young people may also sense the anxiety of their parents, and worry about their own health and that of other family members. For example, young children may not understand

why they can no longer hug a grandparent. Children need to be reassured in a way that is age appropriate.

As a first step, you may consider a family meeting to:

- Acknowledge their fears.
- Explain the overall risk of getting the virus and what happens if they do get sick.
- Outline the steps you are taking to keep them and yourself safe during this pandemic.
- Reassure them that young children tend to get a mild form of the virus.
- Discuss any questions they may have.

You may also consider:

- Limiting your children's amount of TV and social media.
- Engaging them in activities that can help them feel empowered.
- Helping your children become better consumers of health information. For example, if they ask you a question, help them to identify credible online sources of information and help them understand the information provided.
- Helping adolescents understand the importance of social distancing, and encourage them to limit their socializing to fewer people who they know well.
- Encouraging your children not to share drinks, makeup or other personal items during this time.
- Advising adolescents not to smoke or vape, and as-

sisting them to stop immediately since sharing vapes or cigarettes are fairly common.

## How to Self-Isolate

### Stay home

- Do not use public transportation, taxis or rideshares whenever possible.
- Do not go to work, school or other public places.
- Your public health unit will tell you when it is safe to leave.

### Limit the number of visitors in your home

- Only have visitors who you must see and keep the visits short.
- Keep away from seniors and people with chronic medical conditions (e.g. diabetes, lung problems, immune deficiency).

### Avoid contact with others

- Stay in a separate room away from other people in your home as much as possible and use a separate bathroom if you have one.
- Make sure that shared rooms have good airflow (e.g. open windows).

### Keep distance

- If you are in a room with other people, keep a distance of at least two metres and wear a mask that covers your nose and mouth.

### Cover your coughs and sneezes

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hand.
- Throw used tissues in a lined wastebasket, and wash your hands. Lining the wastebasket with a plastic bag makes waste disposal easier and safer.



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- After emptying the wastebasket wash your hands
- Wash your hands
- Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- Dry your hands with a paper towel, or with your own cloth towel that no one else shares.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.

## Work Place Mental Health

In order to support the psychological health and safety of your employees, the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) recommends employers consider the following six tips:

1. Have a plan. Let employees know that you are thinking and looking ahead, that you will stay well-informed and that you can answer the questions they already have: What if I get sick? How do I take time off work? What if my family member contracts the virus? You may want to compile frequently asked questions and direct employees to them often.
2. Communicate, share and be open. Worry and fear grow in the absence of up-to-date information. Let your employees know that they can expect regular updates from you. Communicate even if the situation remains unchanged.
3. Empathize. Share that you know it's stressful. Recognize that it's okay to be anxious. Remind your employees of resources (Employee Assistance Programs - EAP) that are available for those who are experiencing stress.
4. Reassure—as best you can. You can refer to reports indicating that most people who become infected with the virus will recover.
5. Understand. Recognize when stress has become unmanageable for individual employees. Stress can lead to anxiety and even panic. Some employees

may need mental health days and medical intervention in order to cope. Encourage employees to practice self-care activities on-the-job and reassure them that it's ok to take steps to manage stress, such as relaxation exercises, listening to relaxing music or taking regular breaks.

6. Recognize this is not quite 'business as usual.' Know that work will likely be impacted—work will slow down, necessary travel may be canceled. Reassure staff that expectations will shift accordingly, and that's ok. We will get through this!

## Emotional Health

### Pay Attention to Your Body and Your Emotions

It's natural to experience stress and anxiety in the face of a threat we cannot control. Because every person reacts differently, notice what your body and emotions are telling you:

- Listen to your emotions, noticing any anxiety, sadness, anger, or detachment.
- Listen to your body, noticing any change in appetite, new aches and pains, or feeling particularly hot or cool.
- When you notice troubling symptoms, pause to care for your body and mind. If you become unable to manage or function well, seek the assistance of a professional.

The CDC suggests:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.



Healthy Employees



Healthy Organizations



Healthy Workplaces



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Employ self-care practices prove helpful in everyday living:

- Maintain your normal routines.
- Connect with family and friends.
- Eat well and stay active.
- Get adequate rest.
- Do enjoyable activities; and
- Employ coping skills that nurture your spirit, like mindfulness exercises or prayer.

*If you or a loved one is experiencing mental health distress during this time please call 211 (Alberta only) or the Mental Health Help Line at 1-877-303-2642.*

## Things You Can Do For Your Mental Health

### Value yourself:

Treat yourself with kindness and respect, and avoid self-criticism. Make time for your hobbies and favorite projects, or broaden your horizons. Do a daily crossword puzzle, plant a garden, take dance lessons, learn to play an instrument or become fluent in another language.

### Take care of your body:

Taking care of yourself physically can improve your mental health. Be sure to:

- Eat nutritious meals
- Avoid cigarettes
- Drink plenty of water
- Exercise, which helps decrease depression and anxiety and improve moods
- Get enough sleep. Researchers believe that lack of sleep contributes to a high rate of depression in college students.

### Learn how to deal with stress:

Like it or not, stress is a part of life. Practice good coping skills: Try One-Minute Stress Strategies, do Tai Chi, exercise, take a nature walk, play with your pet or try journal writing as a stress reducer. Also, remember to smile and see the humor in life. Research shows that laughter can boost your immune system, ease pain, relax your body and reduce stress.

## 10 WAYS TO LOOK AFTER YOUR MENTAL HEALTH



### Quiet your mind:

Try meditating, Mindfulness and/or prayer. Relaxation exercises and prayer can improve your state of mind and outlook on life. In fact, research shows that meditation may help you feel calm and enhance the effects of therapy.

### Set realistic goals:

Decide what you want to achieve academically, professionally and personally, and write down the steps you need to realize your goals. Aim high, but be realistic and don't over-schedule. You'll enjoy a tremendous sense of accomplishment and self-worth as you progress toward your goal. Wellness Coaching, free to U-M students, can help you develop goals and stay on track.

### Break up the monotony:

Although our routines make us more efficient and enhance our feelings of security and safety, a little change of pace can perk up a tedious schedule. Alter your jogging route, plan a road-trip, take a walk in a different park, hang some new pictures or try a new take out restaurant.

### Avoid alcohol and other drugs:

Keep alcohol use to a minimum and avoid other drugs. Sometimes people use alcohol and other drugs to "self-medicate" but in reality, alcohol and other drugs only aggravate problems.



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**Get help when you need it:**

Seeking help is a sign of strength — not a weakness. And it is important to remember that treatment is effective. People who get appropriate care can recover from mental illness and addiction and lead full, rewarding lives.

\*Adapted from the National Mental Health Association/  
 National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare

**Canadian telecom companies beefing up networks**

Several Internet providers have temporarily removed data overage fees for home Internet use and offered flexible payment options for those impacted by the pandemic.

Shaw has does not have data caps on their internet plans. Whether you're working from home or need to keep the kids entertained, Shaw is committed to ensuring you have the data you need to continue to live your life. You can now access Shaw Go WiFi hotspots if you're a Shaw customer or not. It's complimentary and unrestricted to everyone. It's simple to connect, and there's no login or Shaw ID required. Look for the Shaw Go network on your device.

Rogers will waive long-distance voice calling fees across the country from now until April 30, as well as waiving roaming fees for customers outside Canada. The company has also promised that services will not be suspended or disconnected for any customers experiencing financial difficulties during the next 90 days.



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Telus is also waiving home Internet overage charges for customers who are not on unlimited data plans until the end of April, while waiving pay-per-use roaming charges for postpaid customers. But the company's focus is on maintaining communication between Canadians in need. The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) has recommended practical solutions to assist those experiencing connection issues.

Users are advised to consider temporarily upgrading their home Internet plans, updating old or outdated modems, shortening the distance between the computer and wireless router, and limiting the number of devices on a single network.

Information take from <https://edmontonjournal.com/news/national/covid-19-canadian-telecom-companies-beefing-up-networks-as-usage-surges-from-remote-working/>

**VAD Office is Still Open**

The VAD office is still open for business by appointment only. Taxes, AISH and CPPD appointments are being made as people call for assistance. We ask that anyone experiencing flu or cold like symptoms please do not come to the office, but instead call to reschedule. Taxes have been extended until June 1, 2020 and there are a lot of appointment times available. Currently, VAD is booking 3 weeks ahead for appointments. If anything changes at the VAD office, a representative will contact scheduled appointments. We are taking precautions at the office and are wiping all surfaces and touch spots with disinfecting wipes. Please help us keep open by social distancing during appointments.

**Call 780-488-9088 for Appointments!**

