



## MENTAL WELLNESS AND COVID-19 TIPS AND CONSIDERATIONS

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) is providing this overview of Mental Health and Wellness during the COVID-19 pandemic for First Nations. Some may feel overwhelmed with physical/social distancing or socially isolating themselves. During these times, it is important to be aware of your thought patterns and to address them in a healthy way. As the situation is evolving rapidly, we encourage you to visit the AFN COVID-19 webpage to access up to date information and resources at [www.afn.ca/coronavirus](http://www.afn.ca/coronavirus).

### Be kind to yourself and one another

Human coronaviruses cause infections of the nose, throat and lungs. They are most commonly spread from an infected person through:

- While you focus on protecting yourself physically, do not forget about your mental health. Practice self-care.
- COVID-19 has affected people from many countries. Be vigilant and responsible with your actions, but mostly be respectful of others' personal space.
- Use language that is respectful and does not further isolate those who may have or are being treated for COVID-19.

### Take a break from the news

- It is good to stay informed but ensure that you limit your intake of news broadcasts and focus on your health and wellbeing.
- Watching, reading, and listening to coverage of COVID-19 too much can induce anxieties and, in some cases, exacerbate depressive symptoms.
- Focus on news coverage that promotes wellness and creates a sense of hope, meaning, belonging, and purpose. You can find some useful resources here: <https://thunderbirdpf.org/crisis-butto-wellness>
- Connect with information that is credible and that is from your local health authorities.

### Be supportive

- Helping others who need assistance can be mutually beneficial. Create a sense of solidarity by staying engaged with others through social media, facetime or texting.



### Resources

#### Asking for help is Self-Care

NIHB Mental Health Services: If you are in need of mental health supports, you may be eligible to receive 22 hours of counselling covered under the Non-Insured Health Benefits for First Nations and Inuit (NIHB). Your initial session (up to 2 hours) will be covered without any prior approval requirements. Eligible mental health counselling providers include Psychologists, Social Workers, Psychiatric nurses or other regulated mental health providers. For information on NIHB eligibility criteria please visit: <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1574187596083/1576511384063>.

**Telehealth:** The NIHB program covers mental health counselling through telehealth, including telephone or video conferencing. When inquiring about counselling, please confirm with your provider what telehealth services are available. To find an enrolled mental health counsellor in your area, please contact your NIHB regional office here: <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1579274812116/1579708265237>

#### For immediate support:

First Nation and Inuit Hope for Wellness Helpline at 1-855-242-3310 or connect with their chat option at [hopeforwellness.ca](http://hopeforwellness.ca).

Kids Help Phone at 1-800-668-6868 or by texting CONNECT to 686868 or [www.kidshelpphone.ca](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca) for live chat option.

#### Additional online resources:

Thunderbird Partnership Foundation: <https://thunderbirdpf.org/>

World Health Organization: <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf>

Canadian Mental Health Association: <https://cmha.ca/news/covid-19-and-mental-health>

Public Health Agency of Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html>

Indigenous Services Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/indigenous-services-canada.html>