

# Coping Strategies during COVID-19

*Techniques to help Special Olympics BC athletes during the COVID-19 response period. Tools developed and adapted by Keltie Sommer, Mental Performance Consultant, MSc Sport Psychology (in progress)*

B.C., Canada and many other countries are trying to contain COVID-19 through public health measures including physical distancing, travel restrictions, and business and school closures to prevent the virus from spreading. All Special Olympics BC programs and face-to-face events are currently paused in order to be part of the efforts to keep everyone safe.

It is common and normal to feel anxious or worried about how COVID-19 will affect your day-to-day activities, your general wellbeing, and your sport training, competitions, and programs. Here are some strategies to help you feel calmer and more in control, and to help you manage any uneasy feelings you might experience.

## RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

The following are helpful strategies to help you manage your emotions and worries about COVID-19 and to help you move forward with your training, even though it might look and feel a little different.

### 1. Gathering Information

You are likely receiving a lot of information about COVID-19 through a variety of sources. Be careful when reading social media reports, because there is a lot of incorrect information out there. It is important that you find accurate, current information from trusted sources such as [Special Olympics BC's website](#).

Special Olympics BC recommends using B.C. and Canadian health authorities for information on COVID-19, including:

- [The BC Centre for Disease Control](#)
- [The Government of British Columbia](#)
- [The Public Health Agency of Canada](#)

### 2. Focus On What You Can Control

We can accept that some things are outside of our control, such as the weather, traffic, and other people's words. It is important to understand that these are things you cannot change. When we accept this fact, we experience less fear, stress, and anxiety towards them.

What are things we **CAN** control? Here are some examples:

- Brushing your teeth
- Getting enough sleep
- How much television you watch
- Your attitude

**When you compete as Special Olympics athletes, some moments can surprise you!** Sometimes, things happen that you do not expect to happen (like an injury, or bad weather that affects your chance to play). And even though it may be hard, you were able to continue on. This is what it means to be **adaptable**.

**Always remember to focus on what you can control and know that you can be adaptable.**

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Here are some other ways that you can practice focusing on what you can control:

- Write a list of all your worries (e.g. things that are on your mind) and separate what you **can control** and what you **cannot control**.
- Set a daily goal to focus your attention and actions on what you **can** control. Try to accept that some parts of your normal routine are not under your control and you can let go of these things.
- Your training schedule is different now, and that is OK. It is important to understand and trust that the changes to your routine will help you in new and different ways.
- Make a list of things you like to do that are healthy for your mind and body. For example: reading, laughing, listening to music, stretching, and sleeping.

These are healthy strategies to try at any time, and especially when you feel emotions like fear or anxiety.

### 3. Feel Your Feelings and Practice Self-Care

Sometimes we try to ignore and push away our emotions, like fear and anxiety. This might make you feel better in the moment, but it will not make you feel better in the long run. Instead, you can try to accept that your thoughts, feelings, and physical feelings, are simply a part of being human and a part of being who you are! When you let yourself feel emotions that you're not used to, or that may make you feel uncomfortable, try to think about these emotions calmly and describe them in as much detail as you can to yourself or someone you trust. You can even write them down.

**What is Self-Care?** Self-care is the act of taking care of your body, mind, and spirit. When you practice self-care, you are making choices that improve your overall health. Self-care can be very simple like drawing or painting, or maybe painting your nails, or putting gel in your hair. Doing simple and healthy things that can help you feel better!

Remember to **get enough sleep, practice your new routines, spend time in nature, and try different ways to relax (like yoga or meditation)**. These types of behaviors can help you to feel better mentally and physically.

### 4. Reframing

Reframing is something you can try that means looking at a situation in a different way. By doing this, you change its meaning. For example: If you feel disappointed that it's raining and you can't go for a run, instead of being mad or sad, you can be thankful that you now have time to practice a different skill, like yoga or piano! When you are faced with a stressful event, you can ask yourself, "How does this help me?" By showing that you are looking at the situation positively, you are setting a great example for your teammates.

### 5. Ask for Support from Your Team

Your team includes your coaches and the Special Olympics BC provincial staff who are available to support you during these types of events. If you are feeling overwhelmed, if you are facing challenges while training or in any other daily activities, please ask for support.

- **24/7 Crisis Centre: 1-800-784-2433** <https://crisiscentre.bc.ca/>