

Dear Fellow Sunshine Coast Residents:

The last few weeks feel like a cruel April Fool's joke. Unfortunately, as we look across the province and the rest of Canada, and around the world, it is clear that COVID-19 is not a joke. We are facing a challenge unlike anything the world has seen in the last 100 plus years. As we look ahead to what the next weeks and months may bring, we have been thinking about supporting mental health and wellness in our community.

It has been incredible to see our community come together and work to support and protect each other. We believe that the social distancing that most of us have taken has helped to slow the spread of COVID-19 in our community, but we won't know for sure until the end of the month at the earliest.

Even then, it is looking more and more that social distancing measures may be required for a number of months beyond that, so we must all be prepared for this to continue for a significant amount of time. Needless to say, this is not and will not be easy, and for those of us who may struggle with depression, anxiety and other mental health issues, it may be even harder to manage.

So how can we help to support each other through this? Connecting with neighbours, friends and family can be crucially important. If you know someone who might be struggling, reach out and check in. If you are struggling, try to maintain your connections with your support network, even if that can only be virtual right now.

While we continue to stress the importance of staying home unless there is an essential reason to be out, it is also important to take time to get outside and be as active as you are able: go to the beach, take a hike in the forest or a walk through your neighbourhood.

At the same time, make sure that you maintain social distancing whenever you are outside of your home. Whether you are at the grocery store or the beach, make sure there is always six feet between you and anyone next to you. This is crucial if we are going to successfully slow COVID-19 down on the Coast.

Make sure to take care of the other basic things that keep us all well; eat a healthy diet and practice good sleep hygiene: try to get to bed on time and at the same time every night, try to get up at the same time every morning, avoid caffeine and excess alcohol in the evening, stay active and limit screen time prior to going to bed.

If you have a faith tradition, it is often helpful to connect with your faith community and its associated practices. It is also helpful to engage in practices like meditation and mindfulness and there are many excellent resources online for this, including [The Awaken Network](#)

If you are doing all of the above and finding that you are still having a tough time, or you are unable to do the above because of how you are feeling, please reach out to a local counselor or your family doctor to discuss how you can access additional support.

If you are in crisis and not managing, please remember that there are people around you who care about you, and reach out for help. If a friend or family member is not available, please visit the [crisiscentre.bc.ca](http://crisiscentre.bc.ca) to access help. If you do not feel safe with yourself, please call 911.

It is going to be a difficult road ahead, but if we all pull together we will continue to grow stronger as a community and make our way through this. In the meantime, it remains imperative that everyone continue to maintain strict adherence to social distancing measures. We only have to look at Italy, Spain and the United States to see what can happen if we do not take this seriously!

Returning travelers must self-isolate for 14 days from the date of return, and everyone who develops even mild cold or flu symptoms must self-isolate for ten days from the onset of symptoms (with or without a travel history). Self isolation guidelines are available at [BC Center for Disease Control](https://www.bccdc.ca/health-services/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19)

If you develop more severe cold or flu-like symptoms and feel you need to see a doctor, please call or text our new **Respiratory Assessment Clinic at 604-740-1252 or email <mailto:coastrespclinic@gmail.com>**. If your symptoms are severe enough to require an ambulance to get to hospital, call 911.

The Respiratory Assessment Clinic is open seven days a week from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM. Please note that this clinic is only for people living on the Sunshine Coast and that it is by appointment only.

Please check the Coast Reporter and the Local Weekly websites regularly for updates on COVID-19 in our community, and tune in daily on Eastlink Community TV at 5:30, 7:30 and 10:00 PM. Also stay tuned to Coast FM for breaking news on COVID-19.

**Keep well, wash your hands, keep your distance, and stay at home** unless you have a medical emergency or another essential task!

#### **The Sunshine Coast COVID Physician Task Force**

-Dr Jennifer Baxter  
-Dr Herman Mentz  
-Dr Daren Spithoff

-Dr Ted Krickan  
-Dr Brian Nelson