

## Ideas for Mental Wellness through the COVID-19 Pandemic

### I. Resources being offered by Dr. Macdonald's Clinic:

Dr. Brent Macdonald and his team at [Macdonald Psychology Group](http://MacdonaldPsychologyGroup.com) has been consulting on an ongoing basis with a number of public, charter, and independent schools for the past number of years. Through the pandemic crisis, he and his team are available to provide support in a number of areas, including:

- 1) **Counselling** – Dr. Macdonald and his team are seeing clients using secure video therapy. We are offering both hour and ½ hour sessions as needed both to students and parents. We work extensively with students with complex learning needs including Learning Disabilities, ADHD, ASD, anxiety, giftedness, among others.
- 2) **Learning Strategies** – Macdonald Psychology Group also employs Learning Strategists to support students with their learning in relation to getting started on tasks, scheduling time to complete them, and the process of getting those tasks completed in a timely and with as little frustration as possible. Again, hour and ½ hour sessions are available and are offered via video. Working with a Learning Strategist can be very helpful for parents who are working from home, managing multiple children, or who may feel a bit overwhelmed by the New Normal of multiple roles colliding all at once. Our Learning Strategists are carefully selected and matched with students to ensure the best fit possible.
- 3) **Consultation** - Dr. Macdonald is happy to have video session with parents and others (including teachers and administration team members) who may need some more general support on managing the complex demands associated with our New Normal or physical distancing, online learning, and keeping kids' development in all areas on track (including social, academic, physical, and emotional development).
- 4) **Staff Wellness** – Dr. Macdonald is happy to support the mental wellness of school and corporate staffs by providing virtual “mini-workshops” that can be attended live and/ or recorded for later viewing on a wide range of topics, including
  - a. Finding time to just be you (i.e. turning on/ off the teacher/ parent brain)
  - b. Managing multiple roles (i.e. caring for self, family, students, clients, etc.)
  - c. Saying NO – when enough is enough
  - d. Saying Yes – when you are ready for more!
  - e. This too shall pass – dealing with uncertainty
  - f. Identifying at-risk kids for teachers – using the online lens to identify and provide support for students who may be struggling with emotional/ social/ familial challenges
  - g. Cabin fever – finding ways to keep routine from becoming “ugh!”
  - h. Fighting fair – managing conflict at home – and support parents who are experiencing conflict with their kids

To get a sense of Dr. Macdonald and his team and their work, or to contact Dr. Macdonald directly, please go to [complexlearners.com](http://complexlearners.com)

Services offered live or remotely. Dr. Macdonald is registered for service provision in Alberta, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, & the Northwest Territories and Yukon Territories.

## II. Virtual Community Workshops

These sessions will be facilitated by Dr. Brent and his team via videoconferencing that would allow for interaction AND recording for later distribution to people who may not be able to attend in person.

### 1) The Home-Based Classroom: How to Manage in Challenging Times

Many parents and kids are all now working from home. How can we work together in often close quarters with, in many cases, limited access to technology? If our co-workers used to frustrate us, how do we now deal with those feelings being associated to our kids and partners?

*Work Life Balance is a myth – shoot for work life integration and harmony – balance is not achievable, therefore destined to fail.*

#### GLOBAL VIDEO LINK:

A good reference: [https://psychologistsassociation.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/PW\\_COVID-19\\_Working-from-Home.pdf](https://psychologistsassociation.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/PW_COVID-19_Working-from-Home.pdf)

### 2) Using Mental Toughness to do more than "cope" with stress

Mental toughness is about HOW we face a challenge – the personal factors of facing a challenge

- *Challenge* – how do we perceive challenges
- *Commitment* – to what extent are we willing to do the hard work necessary
- *Control* – what is/ is NOT under our control
- *Confidence* – do we have the personal abilities to face the challenge

#### GLOBAL VIDEO LINK

### 3) The Next Stage: Going Past Shock and Alarm to Maintenance and Management

#### General Adaptation Syndrome

- 1) *Alarm*: we become aware of a stressor, our sympathetic nervous system initiates the fight/ flight/ freeze response – typically short term (think about how long you can remain in panic mode before your body can no longer maintain that level or arousal – as an analogy, how long can you sprint before you slow down? Effect is both physical and psychological)
- 2) *Resistance*: Parasympathetic Nervous System activates, trying to restore body to homeostasis – psychologically, this is the need to return to a sense of control and routine, even if the stressor is still in place (in relation to pandemic/ economic breakdown, we are starting to seek out some sort of return to normality – which is why reporters constantly ask politicians “How much longer?”)
- 3) *Exhaustion*: Initial resources start to fail us if the stressor is still in place; can cause deterioration of mental health; it is very important to develop mental wellness strategies *before* we get to this stage

Stress depends on *perception* – do we perceive the current situation with fear and anxiety? Or as a challenge to overcome and, in some ways, an opportunity? [Global Interview Link](#)

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**Other Possible Topics (please contact Dr. Macdonald at [brent@complexlearners.com](mailto:brent@complexlearners.com) for other topics of interest):**

- Avoiding cabin fever
- Managing multiple roles (parent, partner, “teacher” employee, etc.)
- Working through conflict and fighting fair at home
- Anxiety management for parents
- Anxiety management strategies for students
- Other topics based on parent/ community interest

**Fee-for-service:** Available at [complexlearners.com](http://complexlearners.com)

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