

Keeping your mental health in balance while working from home.

Interview with Larry Borins
Marriage & Family Therapist, MSW, RSW



WE RECENTLY CHATTED WITH TORONTO PSYCHOTHERAPIST LARRY BORINS ABOUT STRATEGIES TO HELP KEEP OUR MENTAL BALANCE IN CHECK.

Maintaining mental health amid the stresses of working full time can be challenging enough on its own. Throw a pandemic into the mix and suddenly managing one's mental health can become a monumental undertaking. Fear and uncertainty seem to be everywhere; these can lead to anxiety and/or depression which in turn, can affect every aspect of your daily life. That's why we recently chatted with [Toronto Psychotherapist Larry Borins](#) about strategies to help keep our mental balance in check.

Like many people, the onset of COVID-19 had Larry move from working at his office to working virtually from home. He too found the process of adapting to the new world we're living in to be challenging. Larry admits to his reluctance to leave the office environment when the pandemic first hit. Like many of us, he believed he wouldn't be out of the office for very long. It was only in the last number of months that Larry actually accepted that this new reality was not as fleeting as he thought. Only then was he really able to let go and move forward in a positive way.

Find new ways to celebrate.

We're used to getting together to celebrate milestones like birthdays, engagements, weddings, baby arrivals and even work achievements. Since the pandemic, many people have

not celebrated those things because they can't do them in person. Larry advises that it's important to still honour traditions and cultural events. Get together with your family and your friends virtually to celebrate birthdays, holidays and other milestones. Applaud work accomplishments online, during team meetings. Even if you can't do it in person, celebrating virtually together still adds significance to an event.

Be kind to one another because we are all going through the same thing.

We're all navigating through the pandemic in different ways. And in a strange way, that can be a source of comfort. So be kind to others. Take the time to listen if someone is speaking to you; see if anyone needs any support in the form of a conversation, a warm meal, or just a friendly hello. If someone you know is under the weather physically or mentally, check in on them via email, a phone call, or a knock on the door. We're all in this together and supporting each other through it can make a huge difference for someone.

Now more than ever, it's time to get physical.

One of the best ways to turn around a low mood like depression or anxiety is to increase your activity level. So, put on some warm clothes, get outside and walk around – even if it's for just a few minutes. With the diminishing

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daylight up ahead, [seasonal affective disorder \(SAD\)](#) is going to go to affect some of us too. Vitamin D supplements and using a light therapy can help. If you find they’re not making enough of a difference, consider [finding a mental health professional near you](#).

Respect the power of a routine.

We all had routines to follow while we were in the office. Now that we are at home, many of us are finding ourselves at loose ends. Having a routine and “knowing what comes next” is really important in that it adds structure to your day. Try to start at the same time each day (hopefully after some exercise!), take time for lunch, and try and log off at a definite time.

Stay connected and communicate.

It can be really easy to retreat behind your laptop, hunkering down to just get the work done. Before you know it, the end of the workday arrives, and you realize that you haven’t spoken to a soul. Make sure to stay connected to people in your personal and work network by phone, video-chats or by email. It will do your mental health a world of good.

Limit watching the news.

It’s very easy to stay glued to your TV and fixate on “the COVID count”. Instead, try only watching the news 5 minutes in the morning and at the end of the day. For the rest of the time, use TV as your escape. Find TV shows that make you laugh, are entertaining or provide some type of escapism. Getting caught up in the negative news cycle will only cause stress and anxiety, and that won’t do you (or anyone around you) any good.

Expand your definition of self-care.

Unfortunately, a lot of the ways we used to practice self-care are no longer possible: we can’t go to the gym, the movies, or to see a concert. That means we now have to discover new ways of looking after ourselves. Meditation, at-home spa treatments, reading, exercise, or talking with friends and family are great ways to do this. If you’re struggling with depression or anxiety which many of us are right now, don’t be afraid to [reach out for help](#).



Larry Borins
Psychotherapist

Keeping your mental health in balance can be challenging.

The pandemic has unquestionably forced us all to discover new ways of looking after ourselves. Larry’s strategies can help you re-frame your daily life and re-adjust to living in challenging and uncertain times. Staying connected, getting active and celebrating old traditions in new ways can provide stability during these turbulent times. If you find that you’re still struggling emotionally, Larry counsels that there is no shame in reaching out and asking for help. Therapy has become more accessible than ever before; now it can be done virtually, right from the comfort of your own couch.

Take advantage of your GWLRA wellness benefits.

Your mental well-being has become more important than ever during this challenging time. So be sure to stay on top of yours. Fortunately, Canada Life/GWLRA has a huge array of resources for you to tap into. From online therapy to one-on-one counselling to online articles which may open up your world, they’re all available to use however you see fit. For helpful resources to help you navigate life’s challenges go to page 9 and remember, you can also access [Percipio](#) for excellent resources for mental well-being and stress management. Percipio not only offers mental health resources, it also offers thousands of books, videos and e-learning courses to support your personal development and your career.

Internal Resources

Your lifestyle Benefits plan includes \$5,000 of mental health services coverage for you and your dependants, and Registered Psychologists, Social Workers and Psychotherapists are covered within this.

Use these tips and resources to take the time to take care of yourself. We want you and your loved ones to stay healthy, both mentally and physically.