

Find your silver lining around the COVID cloud

Thank you to those who shared your silver linings, great ideas and strategies during our [webinar](#) on Oct. 8, 2020. These ideas are offered with the understanding that everyone's in a different place. For example, you may be a frontline or essential worker, have lost your job or be working under very different circumstances. The pandemic has also impacted personal lives and relationships, whether you're separated from friends and family, living in close quarters with those in your bubble or living alone.

With **so many different circumstances**, your 'silver linings' will be different from those of others, and in some cases, hard to find. You may find some of the ideas from webinar participants to be helpful.

Community and connection (the discussion about micro-connections resonated with many)

- Supporting local/small businesses contributes to a sense of community and feeling good about helping them
- Meeting your neighbours and socializing with them from a safe distance in the driveway or the yard
- Walking through the neighbourhood and saying "hello" to whoever you pass
- Starting a side business within your community to provide a valuable product or service that's sourced locally, like farmers' markets
- Hosting online events to create a forum where community artists and others engaged in creative projects can share with each other – bringing people together when we need to be apart
- Checking in with friends and neighbours you haven't seen or heard from in a while – it's good for you and them when you take time to 'notice' and demonstrate that you care
- Finding local parks or other hidden spots (places of beauty) you may not have noticed before

Ideas for managing our mental health

- Stopping to recognize and appreciate smaller things now that you have fewer distractions, like activities, social events and other gatherings
- Learning to quiet your mind with meditation breaks or move our bodies in a mindful way, like yoga and walks in nature
- Enjoying activities that raise your heart rate and create endorphins
- Stimulating your mind by spending more time on activities like:
 - Reading
 - Crafts
 - Sewing
 - Woodworking
 - Cooking
 - Listening to podcasts
 - Puzzles
 - Painting

- Learning that you like your own company from spending so much time alone
- Connecting with nature in your own backyard by tending to flower and vegetable gardens. You may also want to create a bird-friendly environment by making bird houses and feeding birds so you can enjoy watching them.
- Recognizing and appreciating the value of ‘self-care’

The benefits of technology:

- Collaborating with distant colleagues is easier – feeling closer than ever before
- Finding a meeting room was always difficult – now video meetings allow for connection quickly and easily
- Finding potential for greater work opportunities when location isn’t a factor
- Connecting with distant family members – and building stronger relationships
- Establishing regular group chats or video chats with friends or family
- Accessing a plethora of online entertainment content
- Playing online games with friends, family or independently
- Accessing online fitness programs – you can find subscription services and many free options
- Joining online meetings 5 minutes early to chat with the other participants – making micro-connections

Those able to work from home report their silver linings:

- Saying “good bye” to having to make a lunch to take to work – we heard that a lot!
- Eliminating commutes has multiple benefits, like:
 - Saving time
 - Not having to find and pay for parking
 - Avoiding traffic
 - Reducing concerns with bad weather and snow clearing
 - Contributing to a healthier planet
- Saving money on gas and lunches
- Sleeping more
- Wearing casual work attire
- Spending more time and having more contact with family by sharing activities together, like:
 - Preparing and eating meals
 - Taking family members to appointments
 - Walking kids to school
 - Being there to care for or support a family member in the home who needs help
- Enjoying the company of furry co-workers – people love having their pets close by – and taking a break to walk or play with them
- Exercising control over your work environment, like:
 - Noise
 - Lighting
 - Temperature

- Scents
- Who you interact with during the day
- Modifying our schedule to accommodate family or personal needs
- Having time to prepare and eat healthier meals
- Taking a break to go out and tend to the garden – this is great for mental health
- Adopting activities to replace the kids' regular activities that have been cancelled, like cycling and golf
- Taking yoga or meditation breaks throughout the day or after stressful events during the workday
- Taking pleasure in 'living' in your home – seeing it during daylight hours in winter months vs. only in the dark before and after work
- Working from home, in a small space, with several other people...but making it work by syncing work hours, taking coordinated breaks for yoga and taking time to make meals together
- Relocating to a community or residence that offers more space, rather than having to be close to the office

Always reach out for help when you need it.

As Mary Ann mentioned, you can search 'free mental health resources' in your community to find many publicly available resources. In addition, workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com provides a wide range of resources. Here are a few that were referenced, either directly or indirectly, during the live webinar:

- Resources for personal well-being, stress reduction, resilience and others: workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/employee-resources/personal-well-being
- Support for independent professionals or those working independently: workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/employee-resources/independent-professionals
- Mental health and peer support: workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/employee-resources/peer-supporters
workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/employee-resources/working-through-it
- Supporting family and friends: workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/employee-resources/family-friends
- Reconsidering what you want out of life (relationships, contribution, living comfortably, health and well-being): workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/employee-resources/retiring-well
- Back to school: workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/pdf/news/Back_to_school_resources.pdf
- Working parents: workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/employee-resources/working-parents