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## COVID-19: 10 TIPS TO HELP INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SURVIVE **SELF-ISOLATION**

**For the 642,000 international students currently in Canada, COVID-19 presents a challenging situation, leaving them isolated and financially vulnerable, with few options available.**

Studies have shown that loneliness can damage mental and physical health, leading to depression. Some students may face problems processing information, and have difficulties with memory retention, recall and decision-making.

Our minds can serve as our best friend or worst enemy during such times. As guardians for and carers of international students, we want to share these **10 tips to help them survive the COVID-19 crisis.**



### 1. Kill isolation with daylight

Our circadian rhythm can change in only 24 hours without daylight, impacting our sleep cycle and making isolation feel worse. An increase in daylight exposure reduces levels of melatonin, helping students to feel more alert and awake.

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### 2. Encourage moderation of online activities

Find activities that don't require a screen. Students are accustomed to stimulation from mobile devices so disconnecting is important for them to reconnect with themselves. This may be accomplished by simple tasks such as preparing a meal or house cleaning.

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### 3. Teach them to be their own best friend

The truth is students only have themselves right now so the need to find inner strength and peace is crucial. There are multiple exercises that can help such as meditation, self-affirmation and writing a journal.

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### 4. Practice xenophobia-awareness

International students, especially those of Asian origin, have dealt with micro-aggressions stemming from xenophobia (prejudice and the fear of foreigners) with the spread of COVID-19.

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### 5. Start a community WhatsApp or Facebook group

Reaching out to isolated students can be meaningful and helpful. Stay connected with students and keep them in the loop.



### 6. Find cross-cultural counsellors

Reach out (virtually) to cross-cultural counsellors with experience with international students. Take this as an opportunity to find volunteers who want to help.

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### 7. Re-adjust rule structures

Create a list of at-home activities and rules to avoid boredom for students. Have a game plan to keep them busy and entertained.

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### 8. Give yourself space

In these moments, stress levels and short fuses can increase for everyone. Decide upon and recognize a signal that means “enough”, then take a moment to collect yourself in a different room. Remember to stay positive and learn how to find peace when someone strains your patience.

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### 9. Encourage them to exercise

By Increasing our heart rate, more oxygen is pumped to our brain. This results in a plethora of hormones to better our brain function.

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### 10. Help them create a new plan

Students need to understand that these challenging times will not last forever. Help them to see the light at the end of the tunnel so that they can think about the next step and what they plan on doing after this has passed. This will teach them a great life lesson to reapply in future difficult situations.