

Advice to MTS Members on Working from Home

The Manitoba Teachers' Society advises members to adhere to the following principles while working from home:

- Your first responsibility is to your students, so ensure that you are fulfilling your obligations by providing meaningful learning opportunities for students to experience/ explore while learning from home.
- Continue to adhere to and maintain professional boundaries with students and parents while teaching and communicating via electronic methods. This should include communicating only during daytime hours and limiting the volume of communication to a reasonable level.
- Continue to be responsible to make an ongoing effort to improve professionally. We encourage members to incorporate professional development activities during your day such as reading professional learning materials, listening to podcasts, watching relevant pedagogical or instructional media materials or even connecting via the various electronic media with colleagues.
- Continue to conduct all of your interactions with students, peers and the public with consideration and good faith. Be mindful of your use of social media. The use of social media is widely in the public eye and this domain is subject to a wide range of perspectives and opinions. Public monitoring and commentary can create unintended consequences.
- Members should remain at home and continue to follow the advice of public health officials during this important time of the COVID-19 crisis. Please pay attention to the advice regarding social distancing and limit human interactions outside of your home. The government has taken very serious and drastic steps to suspend classes so that we can all do our part to slow the spread of COVID-19.
- Check [here](#) for regular updates on COVID-19 for MTS members.

A reminder that the Manitoba Teachers' Society [Code of Professional Practice](#) still applies while you work from home.

My thanks to all our members for their extraordinary dedication during this uncertain time. We are truly in this together.



Roland Stankevicius
General Secretary, MTS

Resilience is a Super-Power

Resilience can be defined as *advancing despite adversity*. This seems appropriate in the uncertain reality of COVID-19. Many people experience anxiety about the unknown, and the media can be both a help and a hindrance to managing stress.

Consider the following tips and links for building resilience as we advance despite this adversity:

- **Keep a positive outlook.** Focus on the good things in your life rather than worrying about things you may not be able to control. This means acknowledging your own strength, resourcefulness and abilities. This will help you avoid seeing the pandemic as an insurmountable crisis.
- **Manage what is within your control** such as [proper hand washing](#), cough and cold hygiene, and self-care.
- **Stay Informed with reliable sources** such as [Manitoba Health](#).
- **Keep calm** by surrounding yourself with people who are level-headed and not reactive. Avoid people who trigger you to ramp up your worries or reading about the pandemic before sleeping.
- **Develop realistic goals** by having a plan and focusing on specific tasks that will help you move forward. By keeping yourself busy, your mind will be occupied, having less time to dwell on worries and fears.
- **Complete something. Anything.** When we cannot control our circumstances, self-efficacy suffers. This can lead to feelings of helplessness. While you self-isolate, complete smaller projects/tasks that you can pace. Bring the feelings of mastery into your “new normal”.
- **Plan ahead.** Is there something you could work ahead on? Prepare a daily or weekly plan and chunk projects into tasks. Gather materials you will need for the next while.
- **Manage your worries.** Intense worrying about what might happen or how the situation with ill family members might get worse can trigger our body’s automatic “fight-flight” stress response. Over time, this physical response to stress takes its toll on our bodies. Consider finding effective ways of managing stress, such as:
 - **Quarantine the worry.** Create a regular half hour each day as “worry time” to identify and tackle each worry as if it were a problem to solve. When you feel yourself slipping into a worried frame of mind, try to postpone the feelings and focus instead on what is actually happening at that moment. Read this: [How to Manage Anxiety During the COVID-19 Outbreak](#).
 - **Find a quiet place each day where you can write down your worries and fears undisturbed.** Sometimes by articulating your worries, it is easier to find solutions or simply deal with them.
 - **Breathe.** Use mindful breathing techniques when you are feeling overwhelmed. Check out [Stop Breathe Think](#) or [Calm](#) or [Insight Timer](#).

- **Learn from your past.** Think back to experiences and sources of personal strength that helped you through other crisis situations. How did you respond? Who did you turn to for support? How did you overcome the situation? What did you learn that would be helpful in this situation?
- **Stay connected.** The fear of infection and the desire to protect yourself and your family from COVID-19 may mean avoiding social situations and increased isolation, but maintaining **healthy connections** is important. Use phone, social media, email, video apps, and text. Consider joining an online book club.
- **Keep physically fit.** During a pandemic, you may not be able to enjoy your usual level of physical activity; however, it's important to exercise your body, stretch out tense muscles, eat a healthy diet and get enough sleep. By taking care of yourself, you'll be better prepared to deal with situations that require resilience. Check out these **free or discounted at-home workouts**. You can also download four free classes from **Modo Yoga International**.
- **Seek help.** If intense anxiety is preventing you from performing your job or other daily activities, consider contacting support services through your extended health benefits.
- **Reach out.** Don't forget to reach out to people who are especially isolated such as the elderly or immune compromised.
- **Lean in to joy.** Whether this is with music, film, reading, art, walking, observing birds, podcasts, comedy, singing, blogging, or crafting, do these things when you have the time. Improvise. Build these into your daily routine.
- **Donate blood.** Canadian Blood Services is also in need of donations – see their website for information on **donating during COVID-19**.
- **Use Manitoba Shared Health Resources.** If you are concerned that you or a family member is sick, use the **COVID-19 Screening Tool** in order to determine if you should contact Health Links – Info Santé (204-788-8200 or toll-free at 1-888-315-9257) or seek other medical advice.

Resilience tips adapted from Lifespeak.com, MarlaGottschalk.com, WorkHealthLife.com, and Onwardthebook.com