

# How to avoid information overload on COVID-19

One psychologist is telling the public it's important to limit social media as COVID-19 progresses

Mar 15, 2020 2:06 PM By: [Victoria Walton](#)



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Dr. Simon Sherry is telling the public it's important to limit exposure to social media during COVID-19.

"Talking about how this disease can jump from one person to another, we also have to realize that things like anxiety and fear and panic can jump from one person to another," he says.

The professor of psychology at Dalhousie University tells NEWS 95.7's The Todd Veinotte Show that too much negativity could have an effect on your mental health.

"I would encourage people to remain current and remain factual, but limit their exposure to social media, especially if they're finding themselves very anxious and very stressed," he explains. "Too much information at this point is reality."

The doctor encourages people to stay off social media and instead to check in with one or two reliable news sources once a day.

"There's no need around the water cooler or the dinner table to speak endlessly about this challenge," says Sherry.

In terms of taking care of your mental health, Sherry says the COVID-19 pandemic could increase anxiety among the general population.

"Most people, I'm going to say one in four, are going to have some sort of diagnosable problem with anxiety in their life," he says. "And a lot of us at times such as this are going to have levels of anxiety that are still meaningful and significant and important, but fall below a diagnostic threshold."

Sherry says the constant bombardment could make people more worried about their health or about the health of others at times like these,

"What anxiety wants you to do is overestimate that danger, and what anxiety wants you to do is to think catastrophically about these challenges we're facing," he says.

Anxiety in the short-term can also be around specific struggles, like finances.

"Many of us in Canada by the numbers at least live from paycheck to paycheck," Sherry explains.

But Sherry believes that once COVID-19 passes, things will return to normal for most of the population.

"This is not going to go on forever. Just as SARS passed and H1N1 passed, this is going to pass as well," he says.

Sherry thinks it's important not to give in to fearmongering and anxiety about what the next few weeks will look like.

"Fear is going to recommend that you buy a lifetime supply of toilet paper, when we might only need a week or two just in case," he says.

In the end, the doctor hopes people use critical thinking to figure out what's worth worrying about, and what's an overreaction.

"We know in these types of community-wise stressors that people have a variety of reactions," he says. "But the vast majority of people are resilient, are resourceful, cope well and rebound, and we don't expect people to have long-term problems from this."