

Wellness While in Custody



Made by the ADVANCE Study



THE UNIVERSITY
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



BC Centre for Disease Control
Provincial Health Services Authority



BC MENTAL HEALTH
& SUBSTANCE USE SERVICES
Provincial Health Services Authority



This booklet was created through the “**Addressing COVID-19 Vaccine concerns Among people who are incarcerated**” (**ADVANCE**) Study.

The ADVANCE Study team co-developed educational resources (including this one) with and for PWAI. We asked **People Who Are Incarcerated (PWAI** for short) in BC provincial correctional centres what their concerns about COVID-19 vaccines are, what it’s been like being incarcerated during the COVID-19 pandemic, and how they like to get information about things like COVID-19 and vaccines.

We want PWAI in provincial correctional centres in BC to have access to the information that they need to make informed decisions about COVID-19, and to stay as safe and healthy as possible while incarcerated. We hope this helps you think about what would work best for you and to make informed choices about your health and wellness.

Check out our other resources, listed below. You can ask for a copy from a Programs Officer or from Healthcare Staff:

- Making Informed Choices: A COVID-19 Activity and Info Book
- Making Informed Choices About COVID-19 Vaccines
- Wellness While in Custody
- What You Need to Know About COVID-19 Testing
- Planning for Release
- Overdose Prevention & Harm Reduction
- COVID-19 FAQ Posters
- COVID-19 Myth Busting Posters
- Real Talk Comic
- Needle Hate Comic
- Making Informed Choices: A COVID-19 Activity and Info Book (Reference Edition)

Wellness While in Custody

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought new fears and frustrations into people's lives. Many people feel their mental health has suffered, especially during periods of isolation.

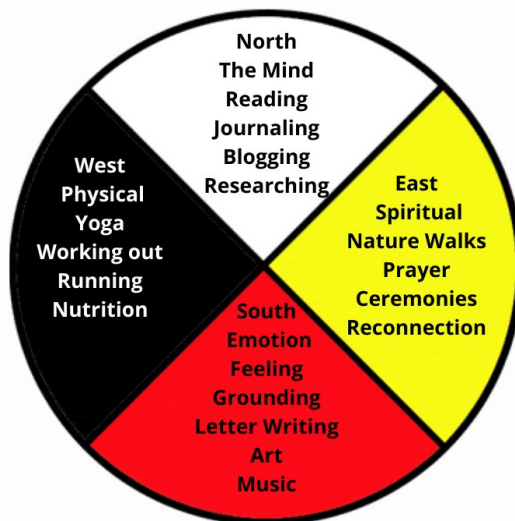
"Isolation tends to make it so that you have nothing to do but think [...] Anything that gives you your normal sense of peace [is taken away]."
-ADVANCE Study Participant



This booklet shares some strategies for wellness while in custody. These strategies were selected based on input from people who've been incarcerated in BC.

First Nations Models of Wellness

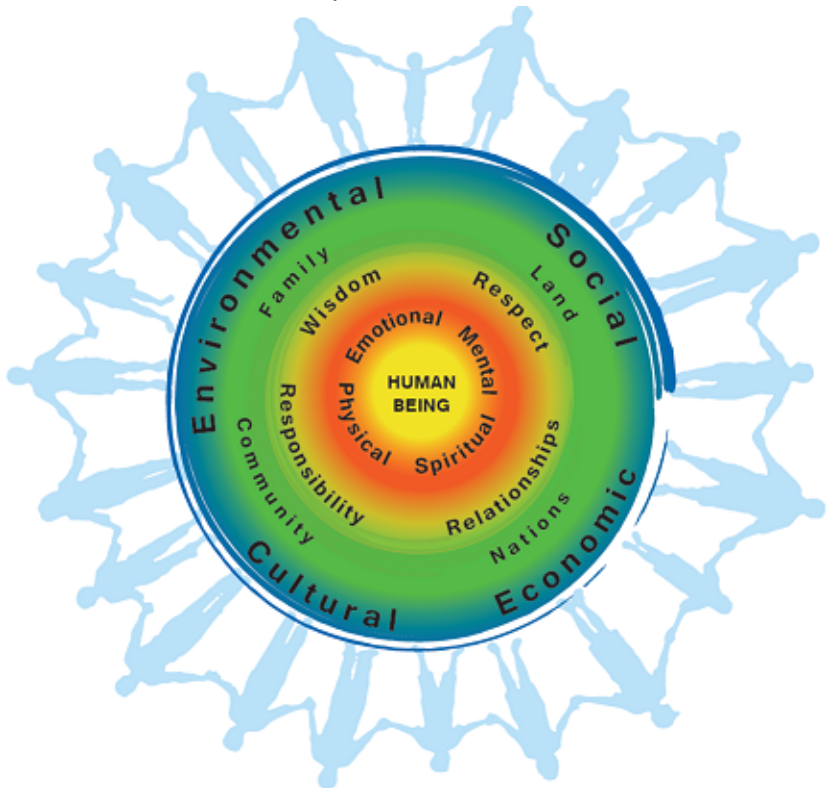
Many Indigenous cultures use the Medicine Wheel. This one depicts ways in which you can support mental (North), spiritual (East), emotional (South), and physical (West) wellbeing:



Created by Judy Hawley

There are differences in how the Medicine Wheel is used in different Indigenous cultures. What unites the many forms is the idea that there are many things that make up wellbeing, and they are all connected.

Another helpful way of thinking about wellness comes from the First Nations Health Authority. Their image (below) shows the connections between all aspects of health and wellness:



This way of thinking about wellness is similar to the Medicine Wheel. The four sections of the Medicine Wheel (Emotional, Mental, Spiritual, Physical) are shown in the second circle. The circles make their way outward from there, touching on core values (Respect, Responsibility, Wisdom, Relationships), the people and places closest to us, and other things that impact

wellbeing (Social, Environmental, Cultural and Economic). The figures of people surrounding the circle represent children, Elders, families, and people in our communities.

Both visuals offer ideas for how we can be well by tending to our relationships with our emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual selves, and to our relationships.

Tools for Wellness

The following sections provide tools to support your wellness while incarcerated.

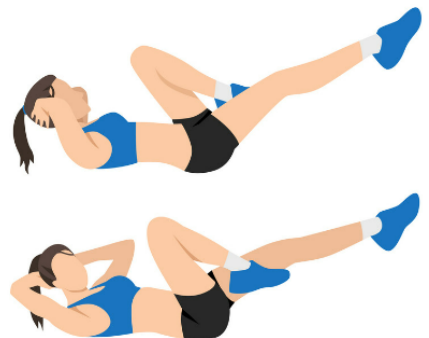
Body Weight Exercises

After being released from prison, Coss Marte launched ConBody, a workout program led entirely by formerly incarcerated people. The first studio opened in 2015 on the same corner where Marte used to sell drugs. Here are a few Marte-approved exercises that you can do wherever you are. Make sure to drink plenty of water and pay attention to your body: if something feels wrong, don't do it.

For more exercises and routines, check out the *COVID-19 Reference Workbook*, available at your Correctional Centre Library.

BICYCLE CRUNCH

Lie on your back and bring your knees up to form a 90-degree angle. Keep your hands by your temples, crunch up, and twist across the body while kicking



your legs in a bicycle motion. (For example, if you crunch up and to the right, you should draw your right knee in.)

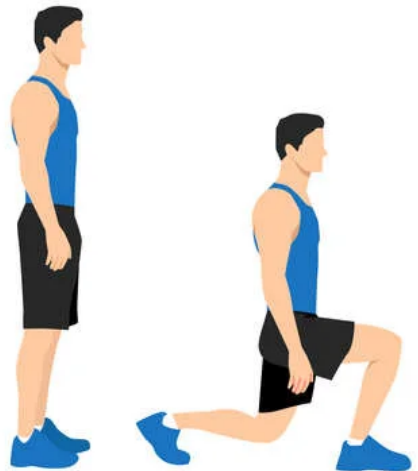
SQUATS

Stand with feet hip-width apart, holding hands pressed together at shoulder height, with abs engaged and toes pointed slightly out. Send hips back and down, bending knees to lower into a squat. Make sure not to arch your back, and keep your heels pressed into the floor. Press feet into the ground to stand back up. Repeat.



STATIONARY LUNGE

Stand tall with your feet hip distance apart then take a large step backward with one foot. This is your start position. Be sure to keep your chest lifted, chin up and abs contracted so your back stays straight. Lower the back knee so both knees are bent and your front knee is bent at a 90 degree angle (or to whatever your range of motion allows). Make sure your front knee does not bend beyond your toes. Squeeze your glutes and press back up to the start position. Repeat this for the desired number of reps, then switch legs and go again.

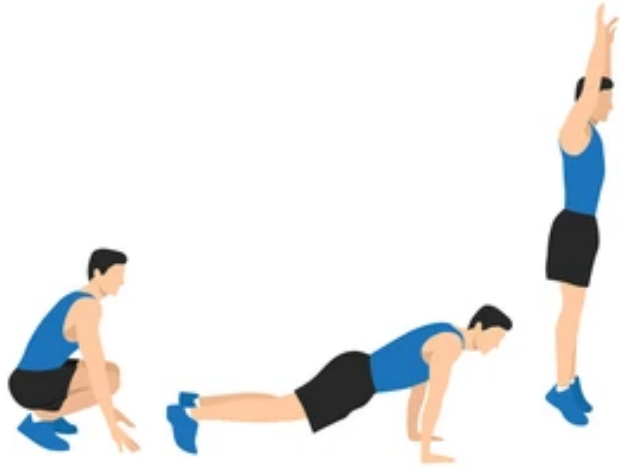


BURPEES

Burpees are a full-body workout that target the lower body, core and even your chest. Start in a standing position with feet together.

In one smooth motion, squat down and put your hands on the floor,

jumping your feet back into a plank, do a push-up, jump your feet forward towards your hands, and jump back up. Repeat.



DIPS

You can do dips against a bed, bench, desk or table. Sit on the edge of the bed/desk/table. Lift yourself to a full arm

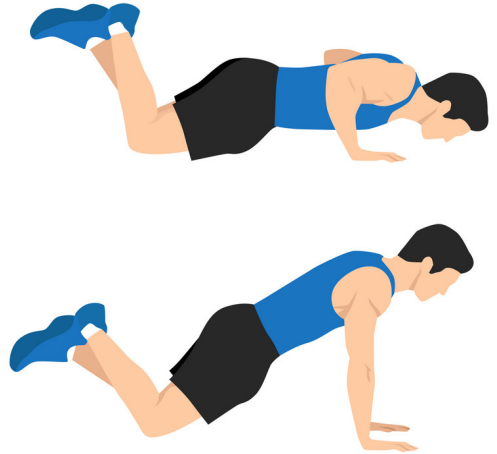
extension (arms

straight, but don't lock out elbows), and cross your feet over one another. With control, lower down and push through your chest and triceps to pull back up. Perform 10-20 reps. As you get stronger, move your feet further and further away from you to make it harder!



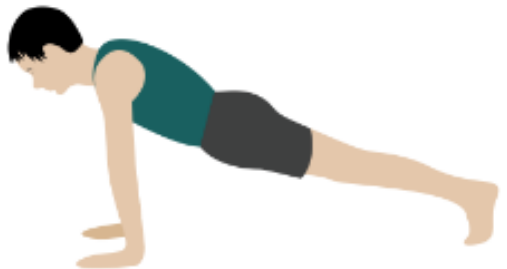
PUSH UPS

Push ups are one of the best bodyweight chest exercises around. They directly target your pecs and also your triceps. There are plenty of variations that you can do to help you level up your workout as you get stronger!



EASIEST VERSION: with hands planted on the ground beneath your shoulders, knees resting on the ground, and core locked, lower your body to about 1 inch above the ground, and then extend back up. Try to keep elbows pointing towards your hips (don't let them wing out), and keep a tiny bend in the elbows when arms are fully extended at the top.

BASIC PUSH UP: Same set up as the starter version, but with knees off the ground. Keep your core tight, and head, shoulders and hips all in one line to avoid your hips sagging to the ground.



Workout Routines

The ideas on the next page are just a few of the ways you could put together your own workouts.



GREASING THE GROOVE

In greasing the groove, you do reps throughout the day. You might set up a system where every half hour, or every hour, you do 10 push-ups (or any other exercise of your choice). Assuming you're up for 12 hours a day, that's 240 push-ups every day! This one is useful if you have a lot of time and want to create some structure to occupy yourself. It's a good

endurance-building workout!



EXERCISE TO FAILURE

For muscle growth or strength, do one set of each exercise of your choice for as many reps as you can. Each time you do this workout, try to do more reps than you did last time. Studies have shown that doing body weight reps until failure is an effective way to build strength!



500 REPS

Focus on just one exercise a day. The goal is to work your way up so that you can complete 500 reps continuously. It doesn't matter how many sets you break this up into, just try to get to that 500 rep count. Eventually, you can aim to do 500 reps in 60 mins, but try to start with some easier targets, like doing 500 reps in 180 minutes, and work your way up. This is a

great cardio routine, especially if you choose an exercise like burpees that will get your whole body moving.

Planning Your Workouts Over a Week

Try to space out strength workouts throughout the week, so that you don't workout the same muscle group one day after the next. This is so your muscles have enough time to rest and recover between workouts. It's important to have at least one rest day per week, so make sure you also include that in your schedule.

Eating Well & Nutrition

In custody, choices around food are limited. Even though you might not get to choose what the kitchen serves or what's on offer in the canteen, there are some ways you can support your wellbeing through what you eat while incarcerated.

Drink water. Your body needs water to function properly. It is important to drink a lot of it each day. Aim to drink water with most of your meals instead of pop, juice, or other sugary drinks.



Eat plants. Aim to make half of your daily food intake fruits and veggies. Frozen or canned fruits and veggies (without added sugar) count!

If you have a choice, go for **whole grains**. An easy way to remember this: "get down with brown". Opt for brown bread over white, and brown rice over white rice.





Lean protein is your friend. Fish, egg whites, beans, chicken, and tofu are great lean protein sources. Canned tuna or salmon and canned beans are examples of cheap, lean protein sources that don't need much prep. Protein strengthens your bones, muscles, and skin, and helps to regulate hormones.

For more info on nutrition, check out the *COVID-19 Reference Workbook*, available at your Correctional Centre Library.

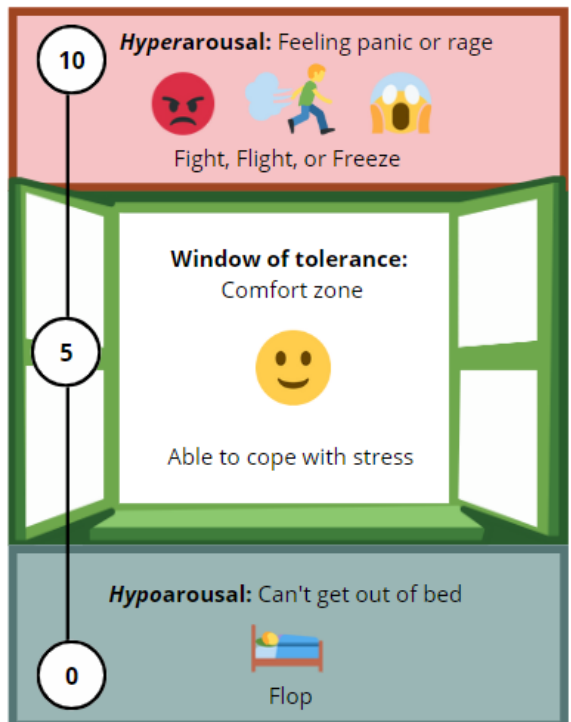
Supporting or Improving Your Mental Health

On the next page are a few tools you can use to support your mental health in times of stress.

Window of Tolerance

The Window of Tolerance is the state (way of feeling mentally and physically) where you are most able to deal with stress.

When you experience very stressful situations, your body's built-in response system is triggered and pushes you out of your Window of Tolerance into either hyperarousal ("Fight, Flight, or Freeze") or



hypoarousal (“Flop”). Everyone’s Window of Tolerance is different.

Knowing your signs of stress begins by recognizing how centred you are in your Window of Tolerance. Try to picture your stress level on a scale that ranges from 0 to 10, with 5 being the centre of your comfort . When under stress, the goal is to return to as close to 5 as possible.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

By purposefully tensing then relaxing your muscles, you can send messages to your brain that you’re safe, and you can move back into your Window of Tolerance. Try to find a place where you won’t be interrupted and can lay/sit down. Follow steps 1 through 3 for each muscle group.

1. Breathe in and tense the muscle group (hard but not to the point of pain or cramping) for 4 - 10 seconds.
2. Breathe out and relax the muscle group completely and quickly (do not relax it gradually).
3. Rest for 10 - 20 seconds before you work on the next muscle group. Notice the difference between how you feel when your muscles are tense versus when they are relaxed.

Muscle Group	What To Do
Hands	Clench them.
Wrists and forearms	Extend them, and bend your hands back at the wrist.
Biceps and upper arms	Clench your hands into fists, bend your arms at the elbows, and flex your biceps.
Shoulders	Shrug them (raise toward your ears).

Forehead	Wrinkle it into a deep frown.
Around the eyes	Close your eyes as tightly as you can.
Cheeks and jaws	Smile as widely as you can.
Around the mouth	Press your lips together tightly.
Back of the neck	Press the back of your head against the floor or chair.
Front of the neck	Touch your chin to your chest.
Chest	Take a deep breath, and hold it for 4 to 10 seconds.
Back	Arch your back up and away from the floor or chair.
Stomach	Suck it into a tight knot.
Hips and buttocks	Press your buttocks together tightly.
Thighs	Clench them hard.
Lower legs	Point your toes toward your face, away, and curl them downward at the same time.

When you are finished with all of the muscle groups, count backward from 5 to 1 to bring your focus back to the present.

The Three-Breath Trip

The regions of your brain linked to emotion, attention, and body awareness are activated when you pay attention to your breath. Breathing exercises involve consciously inhaling and exhaling according to a set rhythm, which can focus your attention and help you self-regulate.

1. **Take a moment.** Take three breaths and bring your attention to the internal sensations of them (e.g. the movement of your rib cage, the rise and fall of your belly).
2. **Shift your focus away from the external.** Move your attention away from what is going on around you. Focus on the physical sensations of your breath. You can feel this in your chest and belly, and in your nose as air moves in and out of your nostrils. Even the sound of the air moving in and out can be an anchor. Focusing internally is helpful when you aren't in a quiet or calm setting.
3. **Breathe naturally.** Since the body is always breathing on its own, let the body do what it does and simply observe yourself breathing for three breaths.
4. **Check in, but don't lose yourself.** You don't need to lose track of what is going on around you, but if you keep as much of your attention on breathing as possible, there is an opportunity for your concentration to become increasingly more focused with each following breath.
5. **Notice how you felt.** After the third breath, you can resume other activities and take note of whatever change has occurred in your experience.



Other Strategies for Coping

 An illustration within a circular frame showing two people sitting on a bench and talking. One person is in a wheelchair, and the other is sitting next to them. A speech bubble is above them, indicating conversation.	<p>Talk to an Elder, a trusted friend or family member, or a professional.</p>	<p>Reaching out to someone to talk or vent about things has been proven by many studies to relieve stress! Many Correctional Centres have Native Liason workers, or Elders, who you can access for support.</p>
 An illustration within a circular frame showing two hands raised in a prayer position, palms facing each other.	<p>Participate in cultural or spiritual activities.</p>	<p>Praying is something anyone can do, anywhere, anytime, regardless of their religious beliefs or cultural background. Prayer can help you feel connected to something, whether it's to a higher power, or to what you find important in life.</p>
 An illustration within a circular frame showing an easel with a canvas displaying a colorful abstract drawing. There are paintbrushes and a cup of paint nearby.	<p>Try colouring, drawing, or practicing another hobby.</p>	<p>Bring attention to your body by doing something you enjoy. Focus on how the activity makes you feel and notice why you like it.</p>

Other Resources to Support Mental Health

The resources and services provided on the following pages are just a few of the help lines and services that can be accessed for free by people anywhere in BC. We couldn't provide detailed info for every resource that exists, so think of this as a starting point if

you want support to help maintain or improve your mental health, or if you feel like you are not coping well.

Mental Health & Crisis Services



BC Crisis Centre

Phone: 1-800-784-2433 (1-800-SUICIDE)

Web: <https://crisiscentre.bc.ca/>

Suicide crisis line for those who are or know someone having thoughts of suicide. It offers immediate access to barrier-free, non-judgemental, confidential support and follow-up through 24/7 phone lines and online services.



Here to Help BC

Phone: 310-6789 (do not add 604, 778 or 250 before the number)

Web:

<https://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/get-help>

The website provides strategies to help you take care of your mental health and substances in healthier ways. Call toll free to access emotional support, information and resources for mental health.



Peer Support Warm Line

Phone: 1-888-768-2488

Web: <https://www.warmline.ca/>

If you are feeling lonely, isolated, anxious, depressed or in need of a friendly ear, you can call a Warm Line peer support worker to chat. They are available to talk from 1pm-9pm 7 days a week. The Warm Line is a confidential & anonymous service for adults (18+). The Warm Line is not a crisis line- if you are in crisis, please contact your local crisis support line, or 911.

WELLNESS TOGETHER

Canada

Mental Health and
Substance Use Support

Wellness Together

Phone: 1-866-585-0445

Web: <https://www.wellnesstogether.ca/en-CA>

Wellness Together is funded by the Government of Canada to improve the mental health and wellness of people across Canada. It provides free and confidential support for mental health and wellness, including free telephone and text based counselling available 24/7.



Trans Life Line

Phone: 1-877-330-6366

Web: <https://translifeline.org>

A grass-roots hotline that offers direct emotional and financial support to trans people in crisis, provided by members of the community.



KUU-US Crisis Services

Phone: 1-800-588-8717

Web:

<https://www.kuu-uscrisisline.com/24-hourcrisis-line>

A non-profit registered charity that provides 24 hour crisis services through education, prevention and intervention programs for Indigenous people in BC.



MÉTIS CRISIS LINE

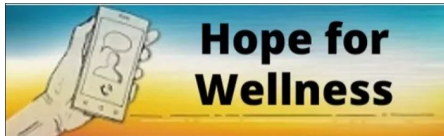
Phone: 1-833-638-4722

Web:

<https://www.kuu-uscrisisline.com/24-hour-crisis-line>

Toll-free number is available for immediate crisis intervention for Métis people across BC, as well as support with relationship troubles, depression and anxiety, financial issues, and bullying and peer pressure support. Staff have Métis information

available and information on Métis Service Providers in 5 locations.



Hope for Wellness Help Line

Phone: 1-855-242-3310

Web:

<https://www.hopeforwellness.ca/>

Helpline is available to all Indigenous people across Canada. Experienced and culturally competent counsellors are reachable by telephone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Services are available in English and French, or upon request in Cree, Ojibway (Anishinaabemowin), or Inuktitut.



**INDIAN RESIDENTIAL
SCHOOL SURVIVORS
SOCIETY**

National Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line

Phone: 1-866-925-4419

Web:<https://www.irsss.ca/faqs/how-do-i-reach-the-24-hour-crisis-line>

The National Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line is available 24-hours a day for anyone experiencing pain or distress as a result of his or her (or a family member's) Residential school experience.



Gambling Support BC

Phone: 1-888-795-6111

Web:

<https://www.gamblingsupportbc.ca/>

Free prevention, treatment and support services for anyone struggling with their own or a loved one's gambling. If you or someone you love needs support or treatment for the negative impacts of gambling contact the 24/7 toll free support line.



VictimLinkBC

VictimLinkBC

Phone: 1-800-563-0808

Web: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/justice/criminal-justice/victims-of-crime/victimlinkbc>

A toll-free, BC-wide telephone help line, available 24/7 providing information and referral services to all victims of crime, and immediate crisis support to victims of family and sexual violence.



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