

## Episode 4 Transcript – Coping during the Winter break

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**Heidi:** Hello everybody, my name is Heidi Mehta. I use she and her pronouns. I am a counsellor at George Brown College and today I'm going to interview Clelia, Greby and Yaren from Peer Connect about coping with the pandemic during the winter break.

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**Heidi:** Welcome. So, I would love if each of you to introduce yourselves and maybe even share one thing about yourself that may be of interest to our listeners. Yaren, would you like to start us off?

**Yaren:** Yes, hi everybody and thank you Heidi for having us today. I am more than happy to be here. I'm Yaren. I use she/her pronouns. I'm a peer coach at Peer Connect community and also last semester student in the Project Management program, so it means that I'll be graduated in this December.

**Heidi:** Wonderful Yaren. That's exciting. And Clelia did you have something you wanted to share?

**Clelia:** Yeah, well now first of all Heidi, thank you so much for having us today. So, hello everybody, my name is Clelia, I'm a peer coach, I use she and her pronouns. I'm a third semester student for the Tourism and Hospitality Management program and one interesting thing about me is that I'm an international student from Argentina, which means that my first language is Spanish.

**Heidi:** Thank you for sharing that Clelia. I'm sure we have a lot of listeners who speak Spanish. And let's see, Greby.

**Greby:** Thanks Heidi for introducing me. My name is Greby Thomas and I'm an international student from India. I'm currently pursuing my Sports and Event Marketing at George Brown and as well as a peer coach at Peer Connect and pronounced as he and I think one thing about me would be I always try to be a constant learner and trying to make a better version of me every time. Yeah.

**Heidi:** Thank you so much Greby. Yeah, we definitely have a lot of students here from India and I also really appreciate that you shared your passion for lifelong learning. It's so positive. So, I'm gonna to ask you Greby if you can tell us more about what is Peer Connect?

**Greby:** Hey, hi. This is Greby again. So, Peer Connect community is basically a service provided by George Brown College for its students. This service includes guidance support and a sense of togetherness to get through while in school, especially during this pandemic and during this Covid hard times. We have a various programs under the banner of well-being inclusion and good food that aims at supporting of fellow peers to maintain a good balance in life, but all in all I must say that, of the services are really casual and friendly and the best part about it is you would be connected to a peer coach, who is a student just like you. So, it's gonna be a very, you know, a very casual service that any of the students can, you know, come and benefit out of, without thinking twice.

**Heidi:** Great to know Greby. Thank you. And Yaren, what are some reasons why students might reach out to Peer Connect?

**Yaren:** Yaren here. So, Peer Connect is here to link students with resources, information, any each other, to improve their experiences in college. So, we focus on three main pillars that are, well-being, good food, and inclusion. We provide workshops such as mindfulness, stress management activities like Mood Routes and lunch clubs and games like *Kahoot!* about those three pillars.

**Heidi:** Wow, those are some great sounding services, and Clelia, can you tell us how a student can connect with Peer Connect?

**Clelia:** Yes of course Heidi, Clelia here, our email is [peercommunity@georgebrown.ca](mailto:peercommunity@georgebrown.ca) and I think it's really important for students to follow us on Instagram as they can see our schedule and all the activities and updates on a weekly basis, so our Instagram is GBCPeerConnect so again, our email is [peercommunity@georgebrown.ca](mailto:peercommunity@georgebrown.ca) and our Instagram is GBCPeerConnect.

**Heidi:** That's wonderful, thank you so much for repeating that it's really helpful for our listeners to know about this great service that you provide and I know you're Peer Connect workers and you're also George Brown students. So, I'm gonna ask each one of you if you would like to share some of the things you look forward to, and don't look forward to about winter break 2020 given that we are under a pandemic. Can I start with you Clelia?

**Clelia:** Yes, of course Heidi, Clelia here. Um, to be completely honest I love winter and I love the snow. Especially where I come from back home, I didn't have it, So for me one of the things that I look forward to the most during the winter break will be you know, the holiday season and the Christmas decorations and of course the snow, but to be honest the things I don't look forward to this holiday is that having moved here to this country, my family back home and this will be my second holidays without them and it's pretty hard to acknowledge that but I feel like also a little bit harder because considering now with Covid, our social interaction has been minimized so there are not a lot of distractions right now, so I'm more I'm more aware of this feeling I'm having, but yeah. Thanks for asking.

**Heidi:** Thank you for sharing that Clelia. I think a lot of students might be feeling that. How

about you Greby?

**Greby:** Hey, so Greby here. I feel Heidi, like you know, the one thing that I always be looking forward for this winter would be the Christmas feeling, like all the gifts giving and all of that joyous moments I really cherish those and like, believe me, in North America, we celebrate Christmas so very you know, nicely, I'm really looking forward to it. And I would say I mean, I don't know if I'm sounding wrong like, you know different, but I'm really looking forward to the Black Friday sales too. I hope I, you know, you know, the man has to shop for himself, right? So, it is something that would really give me joy. I mean, some time to spend on myself as well and a very important thing that I feel is... so one thing that I'm really looking forward to is like, you know, during the Winter break, that means the by next year, I hope we all get a new beginning without the Covid, and the hopefully we get vaccine running and you know the pandemic just ends because we've had a lot of and I think the thing that I'm not going forward is, like as much Clelia loves snow, I don't think I do, because it's really, it's really cold for me and another thing that I really don't want is another Covid wave to be like, you know, we're already on the second wave right now. I hope you don't have any more waves and definitely the fact that I would miss my family too remains, but yeah, I mean, given that... I'm hoping for the best for this winter.

**Heidi:** Thank you for putting some hope in there Greby. I really appreciated it because it's a difficult time for many people and I love how, you know, Clelia loves the snow and Greby's worried about the cold and you know, like, I feel like so many people, you know, either love it or don't, so thank you for sharing that and of course we can't forget Yaren. Yaren, what are some things you are looking forward to, not looking forward to about winter break?

**Yaren:** So Greby, just so you know, you're not the only one, I'm also looking for that like, sale, but I am also definitely looking forward to the Distillery District for like a stroll through history because I very much enjoy when they decorated with all a lot of lights and those beautiful decorations, it just looks gorgeous to me. And one thing that I don't look forward to is the winter itself. I never get used to that much cold and snow, but I um, definitely have to be here.

**Heidi:** Yeah, oh thank you so much for sharing that. I like you know, I like the things that you've identified as things to look forward to right and to have optimism. I think that's you know, something that's hard to hang on to this year and I hope that that gives inspiration to students and anyone who's listening but there are some things that you know, we can do during the pandemic. And I'm gonna... just before we even like get to those things. I wonder if you know working at Peer Connect, if there's any things that you want to mention that you see as issues that are facing students. Maybe we could start with Greby.

**Greby:** Hey, so Greby here again. I think Heidi like a while talking to students as well as ourselves. I think with this pandemic, our physical and psychological health is something that's really something that we need to start investing and something that we need to start worrying about. I mean this new anti-social order as a dominant way of living is completely foreign to us, so I think most of us are just trying to adapt to the new normal in our lives like you know, with all

the social restrictions and everything. So, I think that's one thing that I've always found in students and as I said, even in our own day-to-day lives that we, you know are like without that social life being absent, it's a little difficult to cope with all of that yeah.

**Heidi:** For sure! Thank you so much Greby for sharing that. I'm gonna give others a chance as well to share and then we'll look at you know, what kind of tips we have for actually enjoying the break in addition to things that people have already shared. Yaren did you have something you wanted to say about that like in terms of you know issues that you've seen students facing right now?

**Yaren:** Yes, so Yaren here. I will probably say that the feeling of loneliness, being told to stay away from one another physically is the opposite of our innate response as humans to seek out support or even like supporting them, another one. Um doing especially during this kind of stressful times. We are definitely experiencing a lot of it, but I know it is hard [and] we, do need to stay physically away from each other but definitely stick together and it can be through media or our phones.

**Heidi:** Yeah, thank you for sharing that Yaren, and I think that you know, both you and Greby touched upon some really important things, right? I mean, you just talked about the importance of still finding ways to connect with people even if it's a different way of connecting with people and both of you mentioned, you know, self-care and how like everybody's on a budget. And you know, like maybe being able to either treat yourself to something or you know, at least to you know, use the opportunity to save some money, right? So, thank you both for those. Clelia, I'm wondering if you've noticed any other issues that students have been facing that come up.

**Clelia:** Yeah. Thank you, Heidi! Clelia here again. I completely agree with both Greby and Yaren's perspectives. Unfortunately, I believe that during the Winter season not only the weather but also the holidays might affect us all, especially now with Covid, I do believe, hopefully I'm wrong. I know there's a lot of students who are facing either food insecurity or financial instability and I know this has to do a lot or as it is during the Winter season with most jobs, most companies might not be hiring for example, but I know that now with Covid those people have been laid off or have had their hours reduced. And [indistinguishable]... Covid has had a financial impact on us all. Again, hopefully I'm wrong. I know that, especially international students might be facing these kinds of scenarios.

**Heidi:** Hmmm, thank you so much for bringing that up Clelia. That's certainly a concern for some people and I think at the end maybe we'll go through some resources that are available to students to make sure that we covered that. So, I appreciate you bringing it up. In the meantime, you know, I was wondering if you had any tips to share with regards to how students can enjoy this small break or this time off.

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**Heidi:** Can I get, can ask you again Clelia?

**Clelia:** Yeah Heidi! Clelia here again. For me, personally, I know this answer will change depending on everybody's personality [and space] but for me, for example something that I enjoy a lot is, first of all is to [acknowledge] about how I'm feeling each day. For example, if today I'm not feeling like doing much – I just, you know, I kind of listen to whatever I'm feeling and whatever my body is telling me. If I feel like resting, especially when we're talking about the break right? When we don't have any classes and probably many of us will still be working but if I have the option to let's say rest - I feel like doing so I will and another thing that I do a lot is to go for a walk. So, even though I love the snow! I know that Yaren, that it's hard to get use to the weather and it's hard to get use to the lower temperature.

So, going for walks and having a good jacket on and just going for some fresh air. And now of course we are practising social distancing, now so if that means by yourself, go for a walk! For me, personally, it's changed a lot my perspective about the Winter and to just go for a walk and kind of warm myself up and then maybe going for a walk in the neighborhood that I've never walked around by or something else. I don't know maybe a window from a shop that I've never looked at [and] trying to appreciate more the simpler stuff. But I really do think it's important to go out for a small walk which is possible and not staying indoors as much as we might do during the Winter.

**Heidi:** Wonderful! Thank you so much Clelia! Those were some really great tips and I like how you talked about. Just the sort of like mindful awareness of you know, the little things in life, right? And taking time to observe those. And Yaren, I'm wondering if you have some tips?

**Yaren:** Yaren here. What I would say is, that probably is limiting the social media or any kind of media really, related to Covid or any kind of bad news. Limit, like ten minutes in the morning or at night, but if we can limit that I am pretty sure that we are not gonna wake up to the bad news or any kind of news related to Covid. And, of course using consistent and credible news like news sources for our information is very important where we get the information - if it's credible or not? I would definitely suggest that.

**Heidi:** Thank you so much Yaren. Those are really great tips and yeah, definitely by not allowing ourselves to be bombarded with, and sort of containing the amount of news can be really helpful in the time when you know, things are already tough. So, thank you for that idea. Greby I was wondering if you have some tips that you want to share?

**Greby:** Hi Greby here. So, I think the one thing that I would always suggest is that, to try to keep it simple and safe. For example, try talking to people, you know, take a small break. Just like Clelia rightfully mentioned like go for a walk or something like that. Also, this is a very good time to you know, add some additional feathers to your hat like, you know, maybe you could do an online course or something like that, which could actually, prove a better for you like, you know in your career as well. And don't forget like, you know humans are always are social animals so make sure you surround yourself with good people most definitely by adhering to regulations by the government; but trying to surround yourself with the people and you know be connected to

people because these are hard times that we face alone, so it's better to face it together as a community rather than facing it alone and individually.

**Heidi:** Thank you for sharing that Greby! You know that concept exists in positive psychology, that we're wired to connect with each other. So that you know, obviously we risk that, we have to respect the restrictions because they're there for a good reason to protect us and at the same time, you know, being connected to the people we care about. I really appreciate that - those are all really good great tips. And you know to kind of wrap up our segment today, I'm just wondering if I can ask you. What are some resources that may be of help to students? Yaren did you have any resources or ideas that could be helpful?

**Yaren:** Yes! Yaren here. I know that this is a bit of a full time for many students, so I would probably say counselling services are one of the best ways to cope with any kind of situation especially during these stressful times.

**Heidi:** Thank you so much Yaren and I appreciate that. Yes our counselling services are there for students and after hours or on weekends there's also there's also [realcampus.ca](http://realcampus.ca) so in addition to our counseling services, you also have access to [RealCampus.ca](http://RealCampus.ca). It's a website you go to, you fill out a form and they call you back, and there's access to a counsellor and so there's lots of ways for getting support when we're open and when we're closed. So appreciate that, how about you Greby, did you have any supports that you wanted to share?

**Greby:** Hi Greby here again. I wanted to just talk about ourselves that's the Peer Connect Community like, you know, just to tell you guys that don't we are all time accessible and terms of I mean, you can always find all our details on our Instagram page, as rightfully mentioned by Clelia, so our Instagram handle would be at GBCPeerConnect and you can follow us on YouTube as well because we have some amazing workshops and some tips that we give out on our YouTube channel, so the YouTube channel the name of the YouTube channel is GBC Peer Connect Community, you can also follow us on our Facebook page and always emailing is always an option that you guys have. Even to book an appointment or like, you know have any queries or doubts or like, you know, anything that you have for a concern you can always email us at [peercommunity@georgebrown.ca](mailto:peercommunity@georgebrown.ca). So I just wanted to say that I mean, we at GBC Peer Connect is always there to support and to like, you know with anything and it may not may not be a problem or anything but it's always good to 'vent out' you know, yourself to someone - Peer Connect is the place to place for you.

**Heidi:** That's wonderful. I think here can it sounds like such a great resource and students are very lucky to have all three of you and the whole team. So, I am going to ask Clelia. Celia how about you? Was there any particular resource you wanted to recommend, to help students?

**Clelia:** Yeah, thank you Heidi for asking again. I do have to recommend the Good2Talk services. So, for anybody who hasn't hear about them, Good2Talk again is a counselling service that I believe they have a judgement free and confidential service, that goes 24 hours, 7 days a week, every day of the year, which means you can call them during the holidays and

weekends. Very late night or very early in the morning! I do have their numbers here. Yeah. [indistinguishable] So, if you're in Ontario the number is 1-866-925-5454, or you can text them at Good2Talkon, and the number 686868, but of course if you have more questions, you can always check them online. I feel like this is a really good resource. For anybody who might need someone to talk to, there are sometimes when, you know the topics that we need to actually you know, say out loud or whether we are looking for some advice. And you feel it's hard to talk to either family members or friends or maybe we don't have somebody to relate to and contact? So, I believe I have used this service before, and it's a very professional platform that you can use, and you can talk to them for as long or as little as you might want. And I do encourage students to use this tool and again when you don't need to be feeling at your lowest, extremely sad, to use them or just need to 'air' things out and have somebody to talk to. I really do encourage you all! And again, I feel it can be a really useful resource.

**Heidi:** Wonderful! I want to thank you so much for sharing that Clelia. So [Good2Talk.ca](http://Good2Talk.ca) is a resource. Those were all really wonderful suggestions and it's been a pleasure talking to everyone. I'm just gonna add one more resource that may be of help to students if you're really struggling. So the number 311 in the city of Toronto is a number that you can contact if you're looking for specific services, and that could be things like food banks that could be access to emergency shelters, that could be information about your rights as a tenant, and you know anything like that that comes up but you can also call 311, and see if the city can offer you help.

**Heidi:** So, I want to say thank you to Peer Connect! Thank you so much Greby, Yaren, and Clelia for taking the time to talk to me today and I'm sure our viewers will be also very appreciative of your wonderful work and your wonderful participation in this podcast today.

**Guests:** Thank you. Thank you for being such a wonderful host and it was definitely a pleasure for all of us to be a part of this. Thank you, Heidi, for your time and hope that this conversation might have been useful to some of our students! Thank you, so much and Happy Holidays!

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**Announcer:** So, this concludes today's episode. Thank you for joining us. If you have any questions and feedback on our episodes, suggestions for future topics or wish to book an appointment with our counselors. Please send us an email at [letstalk@georgebrown.ca](mailto:letstalk@georgebrown.ca).