

Tips for Coping with the COVID 19 Pandemic

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This is a trying time for everyone, full of uncertainty and concern. Practicing these strategies may be helpful in building your coping skills as we patiently wait for this state of emergency to pass. These strategies are a collection of ideas shared by psychologists across the country:

- **Stay informed and obtain information (in small doses) from reliable sources (CDC, WHO, local public health).** Information can help you make educated decisions and has been shown to reduce anxiety. We do not recommend watching news or reading articles for extended periods of time as this may increase anxiety.
- **Create routine** – predictability creates a sense of calm. This is especially important if working from home, when children are out of school or when self-isolating to avoid exposure.
- **Practice daily movement and activity** – regular physical activity promotes health, provides a healthy coping strategy and can boost immunity.
- **Maintain connection with friends and family** – with social distancing and self-isolation efforts, loneliness can creep in. Find safe ways to connect with others – phone, facetime, email, text, letter, social media, and outdoor activities can all be good options.
- **Build simple pleasures into your day** – the media is full of bad news and our lives have been disrupted. Create balance by adding small moments of pleasure into your day. Things like sitting in the sun, fresh cut flowers, listening to music, funny videos or a favorite treat can go a long way in adding bursts of joy to your day.
- **Practice daily relaxation and self-soothing activities** – deep breathing, music, yoga, prayer, meditation, hot bath/shower, aroma therapy, a blanket and a good book or time with pets are all examples.
- **Practice good self-care** – choose healthy foods, limit alcohol and caffeine, maintain a sleep routine, and do regular activity.
- **Avoid obsessive or ruminating thoughts** – thinking over and over about what could happen or other “what ifs” have been shown to drive up anxiety. Try to maintain perspective, the vast majority of people who contract the illness develop only mild symptoms.
- **Practice good stress management strategies** – stress has a negative impact on immune function, identify healthy coping skills, problem solve, focus on things you can control instead of what you can't.
- **Talk about your concerns and practice active listening with others** - Just being heard can be very calming. Practice compassion for yourself and others.
- **Connect with your values** – choose to behave in ways that are consistent with your core values like compassion, generosity, patience, connection, productivity, respect, creativity, gratitude and others.
- **Practice psychological flexibility** – this is an important quality for resilience and psychological health. During challenging times, you need to adapt and adjust to changing information and conditions.
- **Engage in creative expression** – art is a great way to relieve stress and express emotions.
- **Be mindful** - Periodically stop. Listen to your breath. Calm your thoughts. Pay attention to the birds, wind and leaves. Connecting with your breath and with nature can help reduce your heart rate and your stress.
- **Let go of perfection**- During challenging times, things will not always go as planned. Setting expectations that are too high set you up for frustration and stress.
- **Have family conversations about expectations** - Sometimes increased togetherness can be challenging. Being clear about expectations of members during social distancing and isolation can help prevent conflicts. When conflicts do occur, practice assertive communication using the Fact, Feeling, Fair request format.
- **Look for ways to build hope and optimism** - Remember, humans are very resilient creatures and this too shall pass. Throughout history people have faced adversity (wars, famine, disasters, loss) and survived - we will too.
- **If quarantined or self-isolated, take the opportunity to do things you seldom have time to do** - Read, practice creative arts, play games, learn a language or instrument, write letters, watch movies, review old pictures, clean closets, try new recipes or explore new pastimes.