

SELF-CARE

Learn Self Massage Techniques to Manage Stress Levels During COVID-19

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IPMA
PILATES
METHOD
ALLIANCE



Overview

Reasons for stress, discomfort or pain in these days of isolation and social distancing

- Eye strain from too much screen time
- The demands of kids at home
- Stresses from the “new normal”
 - a. Homeschooling and child care
 - b. Pets
 - c. Work/home balance or loss of work and income
 - d. Front line working
 - e. Learning new technologies
 - f. Concern for the unknown
- Change in activities
 - a. Stiff from inactivity
 - b. Sore from over activity



Tools for self-massage

- Hands, forearms, elbows
- Pressure tools:
 - a. Wooden/plastic objects
 - b. Balls and rollers
 - c. Home-made: two balls in a sock; knotted towel
- Vibrators



Sensing

Identify your stressors

- Visual: notice any swelling, bruises, discoloration, cuts, etc.
- Feeling: identify aches, pains, discomfort
- Emotion: notice influences from separation; loneliness; concern



Doing

- Go to a quiet or calming place
- Follow contours: bones and muscles
- Sense for quality of tissue (hard, soft, pliable, etc.)
- Respect “edge of receptivity”
- Compare one side to the other
- Sense for change in tissue



Care for yourself and stay safe



[Watch instructional video here.](#)



Head, Neck, Face

1. Sit somewhere quiet or away from the fray

- Rub hands together to generate heat
- Cup warmed hands over eyes
- Take in a deep breath and slowly exhale
- Repeat breathing for a minute or so (at least 10 breaths)

2. FOREHEAD: Start with the muscles on your forehead (frontalis) - these start above the eyebrows and goes up to the top of your head

- Press and rub in a circular motion with flat fingers
 - a. Move the surface tissue over the deeper. Sense for freedom of movement and sensitivity.
 - b. If there is pain, go as lightly as needed but stay there (even if you only hold it in place).
 - c. Sense for a release or easing of tension or discomfort.

3. EYE AREA: Move to the eye area (remove contacts if you wear them)

- Press thumbs into the upper middle edge of eye socket at the top of the nose.
 - a. Hold steady pressure and move in small circles until the tension pattern is relieved.
 - b. Breathe in, focusing on the area, and breathe out releasing the tension; repeat.
 - c. Be gentle but firm, respecting the “edge of receptivity”.
- Following the contour of the upper eye socket (orbital ridge) from nose outward to temples
 - a. Pinch along the orbital ridge stopping to release any points of sensitivity.
 - b. With the first two fingers, press into the temple with direct pressure and circular rubbing.
 - c. Breathe in, focusing on the area, and breathe out releasing the tension; repeat.
 - d. Be gentle but firm, respecting the “edge of receptivity”.



Head, Neck, Face (continued)

4. CHEEK AREA:

- At the outer corners of the eyes, feel for the cheek bone (zygomatic ridge).
 - a. Pinch along the zygomatic ridge from the outer corner of the eye to the nose.
 - b. Hold steady pressure and move in small circles until the tension pattern is relieved.
 - c. Breathe in and focus; breathe out and release; respect the “edge of receptivity”.
- Press into the bony portion of the nose from the bottom of the nose upward to the space between the eyes.
 - a. Breathe in and focus; breathe out and release; respect the “edge of receptivity”.

5. MOUTH AREA:

- Press into the gums above the upper teeth from the center to the outside of the mouth.
- Continue pressing and tracing the underside of the cheek bone (zygomatic ridge) from the side of the mouth outward to the ear.
- Press and/or glide along the lower jaw starting at the chin and move outward to the jaw joint (TMJ) and then move inward from the TMJ to the chin.
- Breathe in and focus; breathe out and release; respect the “edge of receptivity”.

6. THROAT AREA:

- Grasp the loose skin under the chin and gently pull to open the area, breathing in.
- Shake from side-to-side while breathing out to release.
- Breathe in and focus; breathe out and release; respect the “edge of receptivity”.

Head, Neck, Face (continued)

7. SCALP:

- SIDE OF SCALP: the side of the head above the ears (temporalis muscle) from the top of the ear to the top of the head
 - a. Press and rub in a circular motion with flat fingers and finger tips.
 - i. Move the surface tissue over the deeper.
 - ii. Sense for freedom of movement and sensitivity.
 - b. If there is pain, go as lightly as needed but stay there (even if you only hold it in place).
 - c. Sense for a release or easing of tension or discomfort.
 - d. Breathe in and focus; breathe out and release; respect the “edge of receptivity”.
- BACK OF SCALP: back of the head from the top of the spine to the top of the head
 - a. Press and rub in a circular motion with flat fingers and finger tips.
 - i. Move the surface tissue over the deeper.
 - ii. Sense for freedom of movement and sensitivity.
 - b. If there is pain, go as lightly as needed but stay there (even if you only hold it in place).
 - c. Sense for a release or easing of tension or discomfort.
 - d. Breathe in and focus; breathe out and release; respect the “edge of receptivity”.

8. HAIR PULL:

- Run your fingers through your hair to get a good grip on as much of it as possible in that area.
- Pull outward from the skull and move in circles. This will move your scalp along the skull.
- Move to a new area of the scalp and repeat until you have covered the entire scalp.
- Breathe in and focus; breathe out and release; respect the “edge of receptivity”.



[Watch instructional video here.](#)



Shoulder, Arm, Hand

1. Sit somewhere quiet or away from the fray

- Take in deep breath and slowly exhale.
- Repeat breathing for a minute or so (at least 10 breaths) to achieve calm.

2. SHOULDER AREA: With one hand feel the opposite shoulder, sensing for the bony ridges and soft tissue areas

- There is a soft area (supraspinous gully) between the collar bone (clavicle) and the shoulder blade (scapula).
 - a. Press into and rub forward/backward along the supraspinous gully from the shoulder to as far up the neck as you can reach.
 - b. Hold static any areas of discomfort and breathe into it and release tension on the outbreath.
 - c. Advanced move: if you can, while pressing into the supraspinous gully, lift the arm out to the side for an added release.
 - d. Breathe in and focus; breathe out and release; respect the “edge of receptivity”.
- If you can, reach back and down the shoulder blade (scapula).
 - a. Press into bony surface as far down the scapula as you can reach.
 - b. Hold static any areas of discomfort and breathe into it and release tension on the outbreath.
 - c. Advanced move: if you can, while pressing into the supraspinous gully, lift the arm out to the side for an added release.
 - d. Breathe in and focus; breathe out and release; respect the “edge of receptivity”.
- Grab the soft tissue at the top of the shoulder (deltoids) and squeeze from the top of the shoulder to the middle of the arm (feel for the contour of the muscle along the way).
 - a. Squeeze with a slight pulling motion as if pulling the muscle off the arm bone.
 - b. Breathe in and focus; breathe out and release; respect the “edge of receptivity”.



Shoulder, Arm, Hand (continued)

3. UPPER ARM:

- With the arm rotated palm up, grab the soft tissue in the front of the arm (biceps) and follow the contour from the shoulder to the inside of the elbow.
 - a. Squeeze with a slight pulling motion as if pulling the muscle off the arm bone.
 - b. Breathe in and focus; breathe out and release; respect the “edge of receptivity”.
- Grab the soft tissue on the back of the arm (triceps) and follow the contour from the shoulder to the backside of the elbow.
 - a. Squeeze with a slight pulling motion as if pulling the muscle off the arm bone.
 - b. Breathe in and focus; breathe out and release; respect the “edge of receptivity”.
- Advanced move: while squeezing either of these muscles, open and close the elbow.
 - a. Breathe in and focus; breathe out and release; respect the “edge of receptivity”.

4. FOREARM:

- At the top of the forearm just below the crook of the elbow is a very fleshy area comprised of several muscles (forearm and wrist extensors).
 - a. Squeeze the bundle of muscles from just above the elbow and continue down the forearm to the wrist.
 - b. Pull slightly and wiggle back and forth.
 - c. Advanced move: while squeezing, rotate the forearm (supination and pronation), and lift your hand up and down (flexion and extension) to create a deeper release.
 - d. Breathe in and focus; breathe out and release; respect the “edge of receptivity”.
- Not as easy to grasp, but often very appreciated is to squeeze the lesser fleshy area on the inside of the forearm (the flexor group).



Shoulder, Arm, Hand (continued)

5. HAND: GENERAL RELEASE

- THUMB - squeeze the fleshy area just over the thumb (thenar eminence).
- PALM - feel for the bones in your palms (metacarpals - there will be one for each finger and one for the thumb).
 - a. With the pincers of the other hand, squeeze and rub the superficial tissue over the deep, following the contour of each bone from the wrist to the base of each finger.
 - b. Rub up and down and circularly around each bone. (Depending how fleshy your hand is you might find it challenging to feel the bone itself. If so, imagine where it is and continue the step).
- FINGERS - There are three bones (phalanges) in each finger and two in the thumb. Starting at the base of each finger, moving along each of the three bones until reaching the tip of the finger.
 - a. Grasp the front and back of the finger and squeeze and move the surface tissue over the deep in a circular motion as well as an up and down and side to side motion.
 - b. Grasp the sides of each bone and repeat the circular motion as well as moving up and down and side to side.
 - c. Press into the top of each finger.

6. REFLEX POINTS:

- Reflexology recognizes specific points on the hands and feet as having a reflex relationship to other parts of the body. It is a complex system but several points are easy to access in the hands and can have a profound effect on stress.

Shoulder, Arm, Hand (continued)

- Hoku point or L14 in the oriental meridian system has been used to address headaches and other pains in the body.
 - a. On either hand, close the thumb and forefinger next to each other, creating a fleshy mound. In the center of the mound place with your thumb on top and your fingers underneath. Keeping this hold, open your thumb away from your finger. This may be quite sensitive, especially if you currently experience a headache.
 - b. Press into this spot, remembering to honor your “edge of receptivity”. Hold this spot with tolerable pressure for 2-3 minutes, breathing in while focusing on the spot and breathing out, releasing tension and discomfort.
- Diaphragm and solar plexus - Under stress, you might find yourself holding your breath or breathing shallowly, not using your diaphragm fully. Releasing these points can be helpful in overcoming the effects of stress.
 - a. Focus on the center of the palm, just below the fleshy area under your fingers. Imagine a line that spans the palm at this level.
 - b. Starting at the center, press into the palm, honoring your edge of receptivity.
 - i. Start with a static pressure that you hold for several breaths.
 - ii. Follow this with a circular pressure for a few breaths.
 - c. Moving from the center outward to the edge of your hand and repeat the i and ii above. Stay on any area that feels sensitive or needing of extra attention.
- Adrenals - The adrenal glands are part of the “flight or fight” response. Stress can activate this adrenal response. One key to overcoming stress is to ease this response.
 - a. Just next to the Hoku point and below the diaphragm near the fleshy area of the thumb is the point associated with the adrenal gland. This can be quite sensitive in those experiencing stress. Press around this area to locate the point in your hand.
 - b. Press with static pressure and then with circular motion through several breaths or until you feel the desired relief.



[Watch instructional video here.](#)