

SELF-CARE

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

Overview & Instructions (Part 1)

Head, Neck, Face (Part 2)

Shoulder, Arm, Hand (Part 3)

Lower Extremities (Part 4)

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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.](#)



Lower Extremities

1. HIP & LEG:

Added Thought: Massage is basically a conversation between toucher and touchee. Since in self-massage you are both, you will have this conversation with yourself. And what could be better? Your body will tell you exactly what it needs if you learn how to listen.

This is your body... the more aware you are, the more you can do for yourself. Learn to sense the messages your body gives you and discover ways to respond to it. The routines presented in these episodes are good ideas but they are only suggestions. Use the parts that feel right but be open to what your body is asking for. Stay longer where it seems right. Try variations as you discover them. Sense what you can and dare to create. Enjoy the process.

- Sit somewhere quiet or away from the fray. Set the tone with lighting, music, candles, etc.
 - a. Take in deep breath and slowly exhale.
 - b. Repeat breathing for a minute or so (about 10 breaths) to achieve a sense of centering, calm and ease.
 - c. Wear something comfortable to allow easy motion and access to your legs - loose fitting shorts, tights, etc.
 - d. REMINDER - feel for the “edge of receptivity” and give enough pressure to meet it. Sense for tightness, lack of pliability, sensitivity or pain and stay in an area giving it a little more attention.
- HIP AREA - while sitting with your legs extended in front of you
 - a. Using your hands, rock your leg back and forth from the top of the leg moving down as far as you can reach. Feel the hip movement, sensing for freedom and ease of motion.

Lower Extremities (continued)

- b. Reach to your tail bone (sacrum, the triangular bone at the base of your spine). With the tips of your fingers or your knuckles, press into the edges of it and move into the soft tissue on either side.
 - i. Rock your body back and forth over your fingers, releasing any tight areas.
 - ii. Linger where it needs, honoring the edge of receptivity.
- c. Move lower into the buttocks (the gluteal region). Press into area and feel for the bony ridges. The big one at the bottom of glutes will be your “sits” bone or the ischial tuberosity. Follow the contours of this bone -
 - i. Rock your body back and forth over your fingers, releasing any tight areas.
 - ii. Add rocking your leg back and forth while pressing in to further release any tightness.
- THIGH AREA - follow the bony edges into your leg. The next area of bone will be your thigh bone (femur).
 - a. With both hands reaching behind the leg, press into and knead the soft tissue, lean back to add to the pressure. Work from the top of the leg to the knee.
 - i. Sense for any tension, discomfort, tissue density or lack of flexibility in the soft tissue. Stay in any area that feels the need for more attention.
 - b. Feel for the bone beneath the soft tissue. Following this bony edge will help address the many muscles of this area.
 - i. Starting at the top of the leg, sense for the thigh bone beneath the soft tissue.
 - ii. Press hands into either side of the bone and then press alternating hands into the soft tissue as if sculpting around the underlying bone.
 - iii. Continue down to behind the knee.
 - c. Grasp the soft tissue on the inside (adductors) and the outside (abductors) of the thigh.
 - i. From the top of the leg, alternately squeeze (knead) the soft tissue - first inside, then the outside until reaching just below the knee.

Lower Extremities (continued)

- d. Grasp the tissue on the front of the leg (quadriceps).
 - i. Turn hands sideways so as to grip the front thigh muscles.
 1. From the top of the leg to the knee, squeeze and knead this tissue.
 2. Squeeze and lift the muscle off the bone from the top of the leg to the knee.
 - ii. Place the heels or backs of the knuckles of both hands on the front part of the thigh and lean into the tissue.
- KNEE AREA - with the knee softly extended, feel for the knee cap (patella). This bone should move slightly in all directions with relative ease within the soft tissue sack that surrounds it.
 - a. Grasp above and below the patella and move it up and down.
 - b. Gently press on either side of the patella and move back and forth.
 - c. Gently press on the cross corners of the patella and move angularly; then the other cross corners moving angularly.
 - d. Stroke and rub with friction around the edge of the entire patella.
 - e. If any edge, side or corner feels limited in motion or sensitive or painful:
 - i. Honoring the edge of receptivity, rub with a friction motion at the point of limitation or sensation.
 - ii. Doing so may generate heat in the area. This will soften the fascia and allow more motion on next effort and may reduce the associated sensation.
- LOWER LEG AREA - sense for the main bone of the lower leg (tibia) that runs along the front of the area.
 - a. Grasp the fleshy area in the back of the calf on either side of the tibia and squeeze the soft tissue of both sides alternately. Allow the finger tips to sink into the very fleshy area at the top part in the back. It should feel like two mounds with a gully in between.

Lower Extremities (continued)

- b. Starting at the knee, move down the leg in this manner until the ankle or as far as you can reach down your leg.
 - c. Stay at any area that seems to need more attention, honoring the edge of receptivity and using the breath to enhance a release.
- FOOT AREA - with one leg straight, bend the leg being worked on at the knee and place the foot over the opposite knee, allowing access to work the foot.
 - a. Grasp toes and ball of the foot and undulate the entire foot and ankle. Sense for free mobility. You may feel or hear a “crack” at the ankle or toes as the bones adjust to the motion.
 - b. Grasp the middle of the foot with one hand and the toes with the other and twist and wring the foot. Feel the soft tissue stretch and the bones move with relative ease. Notice any discomfort or movement limitations and stay on any area that needs more attention.
 - c. With finger tips, press into the ankle on both sides from the bones at the bottom of the leg (malleoli) to the heel.
 - d. Continue to the edges of the foot, pressing and squeezing on both side from the ankle to the toes.
 - e. Press along the sole of the foot from the heel to the toes and back again, lingering anywhere that needs more attention.

2. 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 feet and can have a profound effect on stress.

Lower Extremities (continued)

- a. Once you find the points on the foot shown in the picture below:
 - i. Start by applying static pressure that you hold for several breaths.
 - ii. Follow this with a circular pressure for a few breaths.
 - iii. Stay on any area that feels sensitive or in need of extra attention, honoring your edge of receptivity.
- b. 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.
 - i. Diaphragm - The diaphragm line spans the foot at the bottom of the ball of the foot (before it dips down into the arch of the foot).
 - ii. Solar plexus - in the center, just below the ball of the foot, where there is a bit of a dent. With thumb, push in and hold this reflex for 30 seconds.
- c. Adrenals - The adrenal glands are part of the “flight or fight” response. The key to avoiding adrenal fatigue and overcoming stress is to ease this response.
 - i. Adrenal reflex - below the ball of your big toe, located slightly towards the middle of the foot halfway between the ball of your big toe and the highest point of your arch.



Lower Extremities (continued)

- d. With the foot dangling freely over the knee, grasp the ankle and shake it so that the front end of the foot flops gently in the motion.
- ALTERNATIVE APPROACH: If you lack hand strength or stamina to work the various areas of your leg, this is where a tennis ball or other type of ball or tool can come in handy.
 - a. Place it beneath the leg and press leg into it. Work from the top of the leg on down.
 - b. Roll to the side and place the ball or roller under it and roll back and forth, up and down, allowing the object to sink into the leg.



[Watch instructional video here.](#)