

## Ways to Take Care of Yourself During the COVID-19 Pandemic

This is a time of stress and uncertainty for many individuals and families. Our daily routines, jobs, and ways of connecting with our community, family, and friends have been significantly disrupted. Changes to our way of life are happening suddenly, often leaving us little time to prepare and make adjustments. We may be worried about the health and wellbeing of our family, friends, the health care providers in our community, and ourselves. It may all seem too much to handle at times.

It is normal and OK to feel a range of feelings, including shock, worry, stress, anger, and sadness. But it is important to remember that there are concrete things you can do for yourself to help cope with these feelings. The following are some tips and strategies to try out for yourself. Know that some things may work better for you than others. There may be other things you discover work well for you, but aren't listed below. Please add these things to your own list, and share them with others.

### Be Patient With Yourself

This is an unprecedented time of change. We are all learning as we go. Be gentle with yourself as you adjust to changes to your work and home life. You do not need to be perfect during this imperfect time.

### Remember What is Within Your Control

When many of the changes around you feel beyond your control, reflect on the parts of your life over which you have personal agency, e.g., your diet, sleep patterns, how you choose to think about a situation, and maintaining good hand washing practices, etc. Exercise control where you can, and accept that there are things that you can't influence right now.

**Remember:** Getting involved with community efforts to gather badly needed personal protective equipment supplies for health care workers may be an important way that you can exercise control against the pandemic right now.

### Remember What Has Helped You in the Past

We have all survived times of challenge and stress. Reflect upon the things that helped you during these times. Maybe it was speaking to a particular friend or family member, maybe it was connecting with your faith or spirituality, maybe it was exercising, maybe it was taking a nap or watching a favorite TV series. Be



sure to ask family members or friends about things they've noticed have helped you to cope in the past. Be sure to write these things down so that you can easily remember them during moments when you're in need of extra coping.

For additional ideas about ways to manage stress, take a look at this graphic entitled *50 Ways to Take a Break*. [relaxingthewriter.blogspot.com/2013/09/50-ways-to-take-break.html](http://relaxingthewriter.blogspot.com/2013/09/50-ways-to-take-break.html)

### **Take Breaks From News/Media Coverage**

While it's important to stay informed in order to make decisions about keeping you and your family safe during this constantly changing situation, be sure to have moments throughout the day when you disconnect from the coverage. Try listening to music or sounds of nature, choose to have a conversation about another topic, or simply have a moment of quiet. Remember that when you do tune into media coverage that you are receiving information from trusted sources. Misinformation can often cause more anxiety.

Trusted sources of information include: the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the World Health Organization, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services.

Consider using a mobile app to engage in mindfulness or meditation as a means of finding a quiet space amidst distressing news coverage or information. Examples of some these apps are: Calm, Headspace, or Breathe.

### **Connect With Loved Ones in the Ways That You Can**

We are being called upon to maintain social distance in order to limit the spread of COVID-19. This means that at a time when many of us might be craving company and companionship, we don't have in-person access to family, friends, or members of our neighborhood or faith communities.

Remember that there are other ways to connect and seek support. Talking on the phone or using online video chat programs (examples include: Zoom, Facebook Messenger, Skype, G-Chat, WhatsApp, or Microsoft Teams) are all alternative ways to stay in touch with those we love. For some, this period of social isolation may create an unexpected increase in time spent at home with immediate family members. Where possible, try to take advantage of this increased time together, even if it wasn't something you had planned.

### **Pay Attention to Unhealthy or Unsafe Ways of Coping**

If you are someone who has struggled with unhealthy ways of coping in the past, such as drug or alcohol abuse, it is important to pay attention to your current coping, make use of your support system, and to seek extra help if needed.

The more you are able to take time to care for yourself, the better able you will be to support your loved ones and those in your community. While this is a time of great challenge, it is also affording us the opportunity to come together and to collaborate in ways we have not been asked to before. Remember that you have a part to play in managing this crisis, either in your family, your workplace, or your community. Please take care of yourself. Because you are important.

If you are concerned about your ability to care for your mental health at this time, consider reaching out to a mental health professional. If you are experiencing a mental health crisis, please call Mobile Crisis Management Crisis Line at 1-877-626-1772.