



COVID-19 Coping Tips and Resources

Feeling worried or anxious? Increased anxiety is to be expected as we navigate COVID-19 and its potential consequences.

Uncertainty about health outcomes, finances, childcare, travel and scheduled events such as vacations, graduations and weddings are all contributors to your stress.

Becoming active in planning is one of the ways to contain your anxiety. Share your thoughts, concerns, questions and potential next steps with peers, colleagues, family and friends to get their thoughts. Together, you might find you're getting the best plans together even while social distancing. Be creative—you can take the initiative to think about and understand next steps to take. At a time of great uncertainty, it's important to slow down and take this one day, one hour or one minute at a time.

Have realistic expectations: Right now, the duration of this pandemic is unknown. There are many factors that will ultimately determine the path of this illness. Taking time to take a deep breath is important.

Working smarter—not harder—is important.

Check in with your peers to inquire how they're doing and if there's anything you can do to help. One way to developing a clearer understanding of your coping is to understand where your peers are in their mental wellness.

Ask yourself:

- What's my energy level?
 - Am I experiencing excessive fatigue?
 - Am I being irritable?
 - How is my focus?
 - How am I doing in the overall picture?

- What are the best next steps to improve my emotional well-being?
 - Make certain you're getting enough rest.
 - Eat healthy, nutritious meals.
 - Check in with friends and family members.
 - Engage with your children and parents. Even if you can't visit in person, call them, text them and/or visit them on Facebook.
 - Take care of your spiritual well-being; understand that this is going to be a marathon, not a sprint. Consider what type of energy is needed to get through this difficult time.

Be mindful. Throughout your day, take a moment to catch your breath.

Listen to your body. Where are your stress points?

Take a moment to clear your mind. Slow your breathing; taking several slow deep breaths will help center you.

Be aware of your body. If your stress is carried in your neck and shoulders, then stretch, roll your head to the left and to the right, and roll your shoulders, making circles with them.

Understand that you may need to do this several times throughout the day to build your energy and stamina. Pause to clear your mind when you enter your work area prior to entering a patient room or a procedure.

When it's monitored and practiced several times a day, this breathing exercise is a good way to build your energy, reduce your stress and help you stay focused on the task at hand.

Physical and emotional wellness. As your levels of stress and work demands both increase, it's important to maintain health habits.

If you take time to pack your lunch, you can maximize healthy eating by having several small-plate meals including fruit, nuts, cheese, yogurt and other energy snacks.

During this stressful time, it's important to limit alcohol and any other mind-altering substances. While these may relax you in the short term, the long-term effects won't be as effective as eating right and placing emphasis of positive stress-reducing activities.

Prioritize exercise, and get some sunlight! When you get home, interact with those in your household. Check in on children's school work and provide them with positive and supportive feedback. Schedule a family movie night. Be creative—there are many ways to connect with your loved ones and disconnect from the pressures of the workplace.

Keep moving. Many experts say that moving for a minimum of 30 minutes per day is key to maintaining both physical and emotional wellness.

Aerobic exercise is vital for stress reduction. Pick the option that works best for you:

- Walking, biking, running and hiking.
- Play a game of fetch with your pet.
- Stretching and yoga—excellent forms of movement.

It doesn't matter if your efforts are small or part of a larger, structured program. The key is finding something that you know you can and will do. If you make a commitment to be active, then you'll have taken a great step toward a healthy, active response to stress.

Social distancing doesn't mean social isolation. During this time of uncertainty, it's important to stay connected and reach out to family, friends and colleagues to maintain social contact.

We have so many ways to stay connected! Include connection with key family members and friends via Facetime, Zoom, Skype or Google Hangouts to reduce your isolation. It's important to create mindful, fun connections, because emotional support and healthy problem solving are vital to your health and well-being. Consider joining another family or friend for a meal by social media to reduce isolation for everyone.

Clear your head with mini breaks. Work with your team to build in mini breaks throughout your shift. Even a 10-minute time away from the unit can be helpful!

You might want to take a walk during the day or grab a healthy snack. Think about what's calming for you and improves vital energy and focus. This can work both in the home and in the workplace.

If you can, plan downtime at home. Think of potential distraction activities that work well for you, whether that's a good book, movie, podcast, games with your family or mindfulness techniques. They all help us refuel physically and emotionally.

Thinking outside the box. We need to think differently about what we're prioritizing and how we can best meet the increased demand for care, social distancing and other unique stressors.

It's time to think outside of the box, especially when things are chaotic and are beginning to feel out of control. It's OK—ask for support, evaluate your needs and adjust your coping skills in a way that will help you to move forward.

When your coping skills are overwhelmed, it's easy to feel trapped and anxious.

Think about how you've faced challenges from the past and who or what made a difference. While others might not be available to help physically, they can contribute to problem solving. Reach out for support! Family and friends can offer unique or novel approaches to the challenges you're experiencing.

Helpful Resources

[Headspace](#) meditation app is now available for free to all health care professionals.

Several webinars are listed below. These 5-10 minute self-care sessions can be beneficial as a friendly pick-me-up or to provide ways of reframing our thinking:

- 1) [Connecting Mind & Body for Healthy Living](#)

Physical things you do with your body can affect the way you feel mentally. Thoughts going through your mind can affect the way you feel physically. In this module, you'll learn ways to harness this mind-body connection to improve many aspects of your life.

2) [Laughter, Humor & Play To Reduce Stress & Solve Problems](#)

You don't have to be a professional comedian to use humor to lower stress levels. This training offers practical ways to incorporate humor and play into everyday situations.

3) [Learning to Relax](#)

This training will allow you to learn and experience several simple relaxation tools, such as progressive muscle relaxation, abdominal relaxation, breathing and visualization.