

Managing Stress and Anxiety During the Pandemic



It's common to feel stressed or anxious during this time. The outbreak of COVID-19 can be stressful - from changes in family and work routines to worrying about your health. In times of uncertainty, it's important to care for yourself. Recognizing how you're feeling can help you care for yourself, manage your stress and cope with difficult situations. Even when you don't have full control of a situation, there are things you can do. Below are ways to stay informed, take action, maintain healthy social

connections and find resources for support.

1. **Find new ways to connect.** Connection is important, even during social distancing. Use FaceTime, Zoom, or other forms of videoconferencing programs to connect with family and friends on a regular basis. Even though we are physically distanced, we don't have to be emotionally isolated. If talking about COVID-19 is affecting your mental health, set boundaries with people about how much and when to talk to you about COVID-19. Balance this with other topics you would normally discuss. If you are living with other people, communicate expectations about how to live well together while staying at home.
2. **Follow healthy daily routines as much as possible.** Routines reduce stress. Your daily habits and routines can help you feel more in control of your own well-being. Even simple actions can make a difference like:
 - Make your bed and get dressed.
 - Connect with loved ones.
 - Move your body.
 - Make time for breaks.
 - Prioritize sleep.
3. **Take care of yourself through exercise and movement.** If you're staying home, you may be less physically active than usual. It's important to keep movement as part of your daily life, whether it's exercise or light movement like stretching and making sure you're not sitting down too long. Research suggests that when we exercise, our brain releases chemicals that help us better manage stress and anxiety. Some ideas of how to move more include:

- Walking
 - Stretching
 - Doing yoga
 - Doing cardiovascular exercise
 - Searching for free exercise videos on the web (for example, yoga, , Pilates, cardio, HIIT, etc.)
4. **Manage how you consume information.** Equip yourself with information from credible, reputable sources such as the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO). Be selective about how you consume news. It's generally a good idea to stay engaged and informed. Having some limits on your news consumption can help. Watching or listening to the same news constantly can increase stress. Reading can be an easier medium to control how much and what kind of information you're absorbing. It also is healthy to set limits on when and for how long you consume news and information, including through social media. Too much negative news can weigh on our mental health. Find a way to keep up to date, but try limiting news to once or twice daily.
 5. **Use digital resources for stress management.** There are a ton of applications that are designed to reduce stress. A few suggestions include the following:
 - [Stress Management Apps](#)
 - [Coloring App](#)
 - [Adult Coloring Books](#)
 - [Jigsaw Puzzle Apps](#)
 6. **Keep things in perspective.** It's time to be mindful, not panicked. A little anxiety is normal, but realize that you have been through tough times in your life and you will get through this as well. You will get through this difficult time.
 7. **Be kind to yourself and others.** Small acts of kindness go a long way. A kind word or deed will spread cheer to those you love. For example, make cards with your family to mail to a nearby nursing home.
 8. **Seek professional help.** If you have tried stress and anxiety reduction strategies and nothing seems to be working, consider professional counseling. Professional counselors are trained to provide coping techniques. There is absolutely no shame in seeking the services of a professional if you are not making progress on your own. The bottom line is that we may be in this new normal for the foreseeable future. It is important for us to find ways to stay sane in these uncertain times. These are but a few suggestions. Figure out what works for you. Above all, commit to securing and protecting your sanity at all costs so that you are healthy and whole when we get to the other side of this pandemic.