

Wellness: 6 tips for taking care of yourself during this stressful time

Right now many of us are juggling working in a new environment, becoming a teacher for our kids, caring for our family full time and dealing with the anxiety that comes from living in the middle of a pandemic. We're all feeling pretty stressed. Self-care is crucial for managing these negative emotions and being resilient. Here are six tips to help you get through this:

1. Look after your physical and mental well-being

If possible, continue your current self-care practices since it is easier to stick to existing habits. However, many of us will have to alter or discover new ones. Here are some ideas if you are stuck at home for a few weeks:

- Take care of your body by eating healthy, well-balanced meals, exercising regularly, and getting plenty of sleep.
- Work up a sweat with at-home or individual exercise activities by following workout videos on YouTube, using Fitness Apps for HIIT or strength training, or by hitting the pavement for a walk or run outside.
- Practice relaxation strategies such as deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, or mindfulness meditation. If you're new to this, [here](#) are a few options to start.
- Make time for appropriate activities that bring you happiness and joy. These might include cooking, listening to music, taking a warm bath, crafting, reading, or watching TV or movies.

2. Maintain social connections

For introverts and extroverts alike, the activities that are most important for promoting our well-being are inherently social, which can make this period where we are encouraged to be physically distant from our loved ones particularly difficult. It is all the more important to maintain our social connections, using technology to help us stay psychologically close.

- Use the many different modes of communication at our fingertips - voice calls, text, social media. Video especially can make us feel closer.
- Since interactions will not come up as naturally during this period, be more intentional about scheduling time to speak with friends and family. They will be excited to hear from you.
- These conversations will be important opportunities to relieve stress by sharing your feelings with others. In addition, try to incorporate fun, play a game virtually or watch the same movie together.

3. Create structure and a schedule

Watching the news can make us feel a lack of control, which fuels stress. Control what you can and maintain as much normalcy as possible.

- Develop a schedule and try to stick to your new routine. You can start with activities that support good eating and sleep habits, and fill in with both fun and necessary activities. Scheduling in regular opportunities for self-care can help us stick to those plans.
- For those who are transitioning into remote work, maintaining a schedule can help ensure dedicated time for work while also protecting individual relaxation and family time.

- Particularly for families who have young children home from school, maintaining a schedule may seem daunting. Be kind to yourself as you work through new processes and routines. Much of the benefit of the schedule comes from thoughtfully making one, not perfectly following one.

4. **Be a smart media consumer**

It is important to find a balance regarding media consumption. With situations changing quickly in a crisis, it is useful to follow the news in order to keep up-to-date. On the other hand, repeatedly viewing (often negative) news stories can increase stress and anxiety. Consider taking breaks from viewing the news, or schedule specific times to check the news. It can also be helpful to limit your media consumption to a few, trusted sites, which can help keep you from hearing the same information repeatedly.

5. **Seek additional help if needed**

During times such as these, it is completely normal to experience elevated levels of stress along with other negative emotions such as sadness, anxiety, anger, and frustration. If these persist or worsen and begin to cause significant distress or dysfunction, seek additional help. More specific warning signs include:

- Persistent anxiety, worry, insomnia, or irritability.
- Withdrawing from appropriate social contact.
- Persistently checking for symptoms or seeking reassurance about one's health.
- Abusing alcohol or drugs.
- Experience of suicidal thoughts or actions.

Many therapists are transitioning to providing telemedicine so you get professional support without needing to meet in person. Find a therapist from a site like [Psychology Today](#). Those with preexisting mental health conditions should continue with treatment.

6. **Practice empathy**

We are in many ways overwhelmed with information and recommendations and it can be easy to fall into the trap of judging others for their choices. But many are having to weigh financial concerns with public health and personal safety, and making difficult decisions.

- Hanging on to judgment and anger at others can be counter productive. It can cause our personal stress levels to elevate and can break down the social bonds that are so important to weathering crises. Try to practice empathy by considering the perspectives of others. Understanding why someone has made a different decision from you can help you be more compassionate. Loving-Kindness Meditation can also support compassion and empathy. This type of meditation involves mentally sending kindness and goodwill to others. Read more [here](#).
- But also, don't let trying to practice self-care stress you out. Do the best you can and be kind to yourself and others.

About the author



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