

Help for stress, anxiety, and isolation during COVID-19



Anxiety^{1, 7, 8}

- Know that your anxiety is completely normal. Remember a certain amount of anxiety is helpful and helps us do the right thing.
- Keep up on what is going on with COVID-19 and the stay at home order, but don't do it 24/7.
- Make sure your information is coming from reliable sources such as UNICEF, World Health Organization's sites, CDC...
- Do things that help you feel in control¹
 - Frequent hand washing
 - Wearing face covering when out in public
 - Staying home unless absolutely necessary to go out
 - Social distancing
 - Not touching your face
- Maintain a positive mindset. Everyone is working together to help slow the spread of COVID-19.
- Remember that this too shall pass. You are part of a bigger picture, your community. By following quarantine rules, you are helping your community and people who are more vulnerable to the disease.

Create Distractions /Keep your mind occupied^{1, 3, 4}

- Divide your stressors into two categories - things I can do something about and things I can do anything about. Focus on the things you can do something about.
- To help with the things you can't take control of, distract yourself and find ways to seek relief and find balance each day.
 - Keep up with your online schoolwork and homework because whenever schools do return to normal it will be important not to have the added stress of being behind.
 - For seniors keep up with updates on the universities you are considering through the school's website.
 - Watch a favorite movie
 - Read a good book
 - Being mindful of your goals and purpose is still important even if things are chaotic now.
 - Do not let your mind stagnate on fear, anger or worry.
 - Find other positive things to occupy your mind, read a book, watch a movie, play a game with your family, work on a hobby, keep physically fit...
 - Now is the time to do or learn something you have been wanting to, but haven't had the time. Make this new found time productive.

Feel your feelings^{1, 2, 10, 14, [The Anxiety Wellness Center](#)¹⁶}

- Missing out on things you had planned for the rest of the school year is incredibly disappointing. "These are large scale losses for you. You are really upset about some of them and rightly so. Missing out on your extracurricular activities, rituals and rites of passage can bring on feelings of anger and grief."³ "When it comes to having a painful feeling, the only way out is through. Go ahead and be sad, you'll

start to feel better faster.”¹ These things won’t make your feelings disappear, but they will fade over time. Doing nothing will make them worse.

- Modify your definition of a “good day” to meet the current reality of the situation.
- Find a way to process your feelings. This might be different for everyone.
 - Draw or paint
 - Journal
 - Listen to music
 - Meditate
 - Talk with a friend or trusted adult
 - Find a way to help others
 - Maintain a structure and social connections to help you through
- If you need help processing your feelings, talk to your parents about seeing a professional to help you talk through everything. Many professionals are seeing clients through online formats.
- Consider a self-care mood tracking journal.
- There are many apps that can help such as Headspace (assists with meditation and mindfulness) and Breathe2Relax.
- There are also many crises hotlines available
- The National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233; you can also text LOVEIS to 22522
- The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990

Be kind to yourself and others¹

- Remember that now more than ever we need to be thoughtful about what we share or say that may hurt others.

Don’t neglect your self-care^{3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 16}

- The evidence continues to grow that a major contributor to stress dysregulation arises from neglecting physical self-care.
- Physical activity is a sound stress reducer, as it burns off “fight or flight” stress hormones like cortisol.
- Bike, hike, walk, jog, run, skateboard, ride a rip stick or scooter; just keep moving.
- Ensure you are getting enough sleep and sleep on a regular schedule. Inadequate sleep and varied schedules impair your ability to cope with stress.
- Eat right, get fresh air, and stay hydrated.
- Watch out for stress eating as a way to cope with stress, boredom and isolation.³
- Find ways to relax and unwind⁴
- Find a hobby.
- Meditate
- Do Yoga
- Stretch
- Find at least one thing to be positive about or thankful for each day.
- Allow yourself to smile – Humor is a coping mechanism. It is healthy in moderation and not at the expense of others.

Be a Friend⁴

- Call, Zoom, FaceTime and check on friends and family to see how they are doing.

Stay connected with friends¹

- Use social media, Zoom, Google Duo, FaceTime... But don’t spend all of your free time on electronics. Work out a screen schedule.
- Play a game together online
- Watch a movie together
- Eat a meal online together
- Challenge each other to physical tasks (i.e. who can increase the number of sit ups, push-ups etc... by the time this is over).

- Participate in online challenges, that are appropriate, together

Plan family time⁴

- Play a game, read a book out loud, create an indoor scavenger hunt, get a ball and toss it around or kick it, or even play video games together.

Tips from the Anxiety and Depression Association of America^{5, 6, 8}

- Rethink “I am stuck inside” to “I can finally focus on my home and myself”
- Stay close to your normal routine by maintaining some semblance of structure from your pre-quarantine days
- Avoid obsessing over endless coronavirus coverage
- A chaotic home can lead to a chaotic mind, so try to keep your home organized, predictable and tidy
- Start a new quarantine ritual
- Use telehealth as an option to talk to a professional if your anxiety/depression becomes unmanageable
- Remind yourself that this is temporary

Tips from the OCD Foundation¹⁶

- Keep up to date from trusted sources. Five minutes a day should be enough. Avoid the temptation to learn “everything about it”.
- Focus on the facts these sources are telling you, not on the feelings of others or your own.
- Follow sanitary guidelines. Do not ignore the guidelines from trusted sources regardless of whether or not they go against what you are trying to do in treatment. Talk with your treatment provider.
- Distract yourself by helping others around you. Maybe a grandparent or older neighbor.
- Don’t let “social distancing” rob you of your support networks — come up with a strategy to stay connected to others even if you can’t see them in person.
 - Call, videoconference, or text your friends and family.
 - Get involved in online support networks (such as HealthUnlocked).
 - Reach out on social media.
- Join IOCDF.org for a weekly support group geared toward kids, teens, and families. Each Wednesday at 7pm ET on Facebook Live and YouTube, moderator Ethan Smith is joined by panelists Denise Egan Stack, LMHC, Aureen Wagner, PhD, and Lisa Coyne, PhD to provide expert advice for families.

Develop a self-care toolkit¹⁶

This can look different for everyone. A lot of successful self-care strategies involve a sensory component (touch, taste, sight, hearing, smell), so a good task might be coming up with at least one thing for each:

- For touch, a soft blanket or stuffed animal.
- For taste, a favorite snack or drink.
- For sight, a picture of loved ones or from a fun vacation.
- For hearing, make a playlist of your favorite songs.
- For smell, a scented candle or essential oil diffuser.
- Some things can engage more than one sense, like putting on a nice-smelling lotion (touch and smell) or coloring in a coloring book (touch and sight).

Charts to help with negative self-talk and that give alternative thinking

- https://www.ptsd.va.gov/covid/COVID_helpful_thinking.asp

Help Sheets from LA County Department of Mental Health

- <https://dmh.lacounty.gov/covid-19-information/>

- **“Coping with Stress During Infectious Disease Outbreaks”**, available in the following languages: [Arabic](#) / [Armenian](#) / [Simplified Chinese](#) / [Traditional Chinese](#) / [English](#) / [Farsi](#) / [Japanese](#) / [Khmer](#) / [Korean](#) / [Russian](#) / [Spanish](#) / [Tagalog](#) / [Vietnamese](#)
- **“The Mental Health and Emotional Aspects of COVID-19”**, available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)
- **“Overcoming the Isolation of Physical Distancing”**, available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)
- **“Managing Fear of Work, Shopping, and Public Spaces”**, available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)
- **“Develop Healthy Coping Mechanisms”**, available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)
- **“Your Wellbeing on Your Terms”** brochure, in [English](#) and [Spanish](#), which highlights available apps to support self-care and wellbeing

Resources Used

1. <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/how-teenagers-can-protect-their-mental-health-during-coronavirus-covid-19>
2. <https://www.elle.com/beauty/health-fitness/a32034593/how-to-take-care-mental-health-coronavirus-crisis/>
3. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/stressful-lives/202003/adolescent-stress-in-the-time-covid-19-coping-loss>
4. <https://today.tamu.edu/2020/03/24/how-to-deal-with-stress-anxiety-during-covid-19-pandemic/>
5. <https://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/coronavirus/covid-19-guide-how-to-manage-stress-and-anxiety/2331439/>
6. <https://adaa.org/learn-from-us/from-the-experts/blog-posts/consumer/covid-19-lockdown-guide-how-manage-anxiety-and>
7. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>
8. <https://depression.org.nz/covid-19/>
9. <https://www.sciencenewsforstudents.org/article/how-to-deal-as-covid-19-imposes-social-distancing>
10. https://www.ptsd.va.gov/covid/COVID_managing_stress.asp
11. https://www.ptsd.va.gov/covid/COVID_helpful_thinking.asp
12. <https://dmh.lacounty.gov/covid-19-information/>
13. <https://emergency.cdc.gov/coping/selfcare.asp>
14. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>
15. <https://iocdf.org/covid19/>
16. <https://iocdf.org/covid19/what-you-need-to-know-and-do/>

More Resources

- [Caring for your Mental Health Despite the Coronavirus](#) (McLean Hospital)
- [Confronting Loneliness in a Time of Social Distancing](#) (McLean Hospital)
- [Grief and COVID-19: Mourning our Bygone Lives](#) (American Psychological Association)
- [Coping With COVID-19: Managing Anxiety and OCD](#) (Dr. Aureen Wagner)
- [How Mindfulness Can Help During COVID-19](#) (Child Mind Institute)
- [Anxiety and Coping With the Coronavirus](#) (Child Mind Institute)
- [I have OCD. Here's how I'm dealing with coronavirus fears](#) (Vox)
- [COVID-19: Managing Anxiety and stress](#) (CDC)
- [The Anxiety Wellness Center](#)
- [Helping Children Cope](#)
- [Video: Coping with a Traumatic Event](#)
- [SAMHSA's Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery](#)[external icon](#)
- [Coping with Isolation and Quarantine \(SAMHSA\)](#)[external icon](#)
- [Psychological First Aid \(National Child Traumatic Stress Network\)](#)[external icon](#)
- [The Journal](#) (Learn how to feel better with The Journal)