

COVID-19 Tips

The Gateway to Hope team can provide training and resources as your Faith Community manages the impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19). Here are some ways to help care for your mental health during difficult times.

General Tips

Take control and incorporate preventative measures:

Wash your hands frequently.

Avoid watching, reading or listening to news reports that cause you to feel anxious or distressed. A near-constant stream of news reports can cause anyone to feel anxious or distressed.

Be supportive of others. Assisting others in their time of need can benefit the person receiving support as well as the helper.

Get your emotional support system in place: Maintain familiar routines in daily life as much as possible; take care of your basic needs and employ helpful coping strategies.

Stay connected with others and maintain your social networks. Have the emails and phone numbers of close friends and family at your fingertips. Stay connected via email, social media, video conference and telephone.

Introduce guided relaxation. Twenty minutes of quiet reflection and deep breathing can reduce stress as well as increase your tolerance to it. Read more on self-care.

Recognize your needs. Understand the situations that make you feel drained mentally and physically. Once you know them, you can make efforts to avoid them when it is acceptable and to cope when you can't.

Eat well. Introduce more unprocessed foods into your daily meals.

Exercise daily. Make time to take a walk, play basketball or ride your bike. Daily exercise organically produces stress-relieving hormones in your body and improves your overall physical health.

Get enough sleep. Symptoms of some mental health conditions can be triggered by getting too little sleep.

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/checklist.html>

Tips for your Mental Health during COVID-19

Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.

Take care of your body. Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, and avoid alcohol and drugs.

Make time to unwind. Try to do some other activities you enjoy.

Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

Stress relief Tips during COVID-19

Eat healthy foods and drink water.

Get enough sleep and rest.

Relax your body often by doing what works for you- take deep breaths, stretch, meditate, engage in pleasurable hobbies, or something as simple as washing your face and hands.

Limit exposure to media.

Recognize and heed early warning signs of stress.

Connect with your community of support.

Source: <https://hopeandhealingcenter.org/blog/the-caregivers-dilemma-in-the-time-of-coronavirus-you-cant-run-away/>

Tips for Seniors and Caregivers on Isolation and Mental Health

Some symptoms may be exacerbated in the time of social distancing. Take good stock of your feelings. If you are finding yourself experiencing any of these symptoms much of the time, reach out for help. Even if you don't have many of these symptoms, take some time for self-care.

Here are a few things you can do:

Give yourself a break. Yes, even in isolation, is it possible to take a break! Take a walk, watch a movie, or meditate. Focus on the things you can do.

As humans, we generally need and live in community, a concept that is particularly troubling in the time of coronavirus and the need to stay apart in order to minimize transmission. We know presence is important, so how do we grieve with someone when we can't be present?

Call or write: We still have telephones, paper and pen. If you know that someone's friend or family member has died call or write. It's not the same as an in-person hug, but it still provides presence letting someone know that you care.

Send or make food: People who are grieving may not have a huge appetite, but they certainly don't feel like cooking. If you are bored, make a simple casserole or dessert. Alternatively, many restaurants are open for takeout, and they will appreciate your business.

Join a virtual support group. Online support groups give you an opportunity to promote positive relationships or seek social support that doesn't require you to leave the house. Gateway to Hope offers free online support group training for congregations.

Source: <https://hopeandhealingcenter.org/blog/solitary-death-in-the-time-of-coronavirus/>

Tips on maintaining confidentiality in your online support group

Avoid distractions and interruptions: Try and find a quiet private space to avoid from distractions.

Dress as you would if you were attending an in-person meeting.

Checking email, texts, or having other screens, windows or browsers open while engaged in live online support groups may decrease the benefit. Silence mobile devices.

Be aware of what is visible in the background of your webcam and that it does not inadvertently reveal information about yourself or others.

Source: <https://www.asam.org/Quality-Science/covid-19-coronavirus/support-group#Confidentiality>

Tips for College Students

Validate the Experience

Maintain structure as much as possible

Be mindful of exposure to the news

Make it easy to reach out for support

Stay Connected

Source: <https://www.mcleanhospital.org/news/tips-help-college-students-during-covid-19-pandemic>

Tips for Health Care Workers

Meet Basic Needs.

Be sure to eat, drink, and sleep regularly. Becoming Biologically deprived puts you at risk and may also compromise your ability to care for others.

Take Breaks.

Give yourself a break from tending to patients. Whenever possible, allow yourself to do something unrelated to work that you find comforting, fun or relaxing. Taking a walk, listening to music, reading a book or talking with a friend can help. Some people may feel guilty if they are not working full-time, or are taking time to enjoy themselves when so many others are suffering. Recognize that taking appropriate rest leads to proper care of your patients after.

Connect with Colleagues.

Talk to your colleagues and receive support from one another. Infectious outbreaks can isolate people in fear and anxiety. Tell your story and listen to others'.

Communicate Constructively.

Communicate with colleagues clearly and in an optimistic manner. Identify mistakes or deficiencies in a constructive manner and correct them. Complement each other- compliments can be powerful motivators and stress moderators. Share your frustrations and your solutions. Problem solving is a professional skill that often provides a feeling of accomplishment even for small problems.

Contact Family.

Contact your loved ones, if possible. They are an anchor of support outside the healthcare system. Sharing and staying connected may help them better support you.

Respect Differences.

Some people need to talk while others need to be alone. Recognize and respect these differences in yourself, your patients, and your colleagues.

Stay Updated.

Rely on trusted sources of information. Participate in meetings to stay informed of the situation, plans, and events.

Limit Media Exposure.

Graphic imagery and worrisome messages will increase your stress and may reduce your effectiveness and overall wellbeing.

Self Check-Ins.

Monitor yourself over time for any symptoms of depression or stress-disorder: prolonged sadness, difficulty sleeping, intrusive memories, hopelessness. Talk to a peer, supervisor, or seek professional help if needed.

Honor Your Service.

Remind yourself that despite obstacles or frustrations, you are fulfilling a noble calling- taking care of those most in need. Recognize your colleagues- either informally or formally- for their service.

Sources:

<https://www.ptsd.va.gov/covid/COVID19ManagingStressHCW032020.pdf>

https://www.cstsonline.org/assets/media/documents/CSTS_FS_Sustaining_Well_Being_Healthcare_Personnel_during.pdf

TIPS FOR STRESS

Stress during an infectious disease outbreak can include:

Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones

Changes in sleep or eating patterns

Difficulty sleeping or concentrating

Worsening of chronic health problems

Worsening of mental health conditions

Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html#stressful>