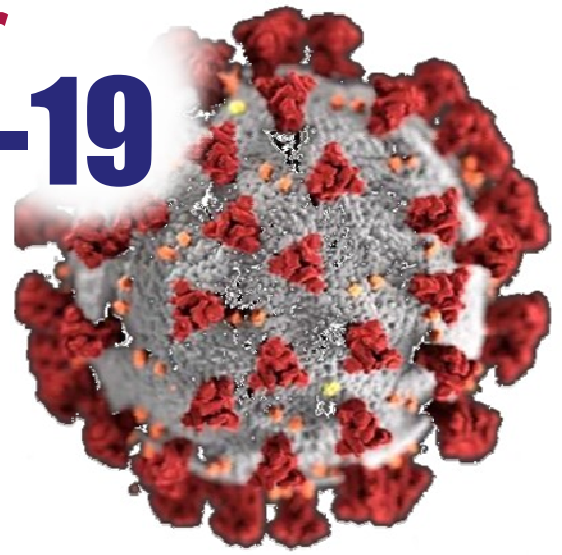


Stay Calm & Reduce Fear During the COVID-19 Pandemic



With coronavirus (COVID-19) now a global pandemic, anxiety and stress levels may be higher than normal for many people. If you already struggle with mental health problems, you may worry about the impact of COVID-19 on your condition. Here's what you need to know about COVID-19 and mental health, and how to keep yourself calm during the outbreak.

Why COVID-19 is tough on your mental health

There's so much uncertainty around what's going to happen with COVID-19 that people are understandably feeling anxious. Jobs may be at risk, elderly family members are vulnerable, and many of us are now forced to change our daily routines. What's more, we're constantly flooded with news, statistics, and fresh emergency guidelines, and it's mentally draining for everyone. So, how do we combat all this stress and stay calm?

1: Practice self-care

With so much beyond our control right now, focus on what you can control. Get more sleep, read a new book, have a warm bath, or take a walk somewhere quiet – whatever you do, now is the time to prioritize your well-being.

2: Limit social media use

Set limits on how often you use social media, especially if you're at home where it's tempting to check in more often. Don't let a constant stream of tweets, status updates, and conflicting opinions overwhelm you.

3: Read only reliable news sources

Stay informed by reading only reliable sources, such as government websites, the WHO, and the CDC. Other news

sources may be less accurate, and they may cause feelings of panic and concern.

4: Talk it out

Acknowledge any stress or anxiety you're feeling right now, and ask others how they're coping. Talk to family and friends, and make sure you check in with how your kids are feeling.

5: Reach out to coworkers

Now is the time for coworkers to come together. Focus on maintaining positive morale at work, and if you're working remotely, set regular meetings.

Handling self-isolation and quarantine

If you're showing flu-like symptoms, working remotely, or simply self-isolating, here are some specific tips to get you through the next few weeks and months.

1: Maintain your routine

It's important to maintain a sense of normalcy, where possible. If you're working remotely, check in with coworkers, and try to stick to a typical daily routine. You never know – you might even be more productive than usual!

2: Stay in touch where possible

Whether you use video chats, emails, or voice calls, check in with family, friends, and

colleagues regularly. Send each other gifs, have virtual movie nights, and keep your spirits up.

3: Ask for help

If you're feeling lonely, or you need help getting supplies during the isolation period, reach out to coworkers and your local community. You'd be surprised how many people are willing to help at a challenging time like this.

4: Look after your body

Don't neglect your body just because you're stuck at home. Try out meditation, yoga, or other at-home workouts, and eat nutritious meals – your body needs all the support it can get right now.

Conclusion and Using the EAP

Everyone reacts to stressful situations and changing circumstances differently, and it's natural to feel overwhelmed right now. Your employee assistance programs is a go-to source for help and support. Keep them in "top-of-mind" for when the going gets tough with any life concern.

Take care of yourself, your family, your friends, and your coworkers, and don't be afraid to ask for help if you need it. Remember, we're all in this together – stay connected to those around you, focus on what you can control, and don't allow yourself to burn out.

Key Resource: [Coronavirus.gov](https://www.coronavirus.gov)



Effective solutions
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Comprehensive
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We can help.

- Confidential counseling
- Onsite crisis response

- Staff training programs
- Consultation services



Taking Care of Yourself - *Common reactions and suggestions for coping*

News reports and discussions with family and friends about Coronavirus (COVID-19) may bring about some strong emotional or physical reactions. It is very common, in fact quite *normal*, for individuals to experience waves of emotions during stressful events or uncertain times. Some of these “symptoms” may include:

- Uncertainty/fear
- Anxious/overwhelmed
- Difficulty concentrating
- Emotional outbursts
- Hyper alert to environment
- Restlessness/agitation
- Appetite changes
- Sleep disturbances
- Headaches
- Nausea/stomach issues

These responses are very natural reactions to stressful times. Everyone is unique in their response because of personal history, beliefs, outlook, support system, health status and coping strategies.

Helpful suggestions for you to try:

- Talk about what you are hearing & how it impacts you to people you trust when you are ready.
- Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated. This may sound silly but we often forget to hydrate when we are stressed or feeling anxious. Dehydration can make those feelings worse.
- Eat well-balanced meals throughout the day.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Practice deep breathing exercises to calm yourself and try to relax. Check out apps like *Calm* or *Headspace*.
- Consider taking a break from watching the news or accessing social media sites to shield yourself from the constant barrage of information.
- Try to focus on what you can control like proper hand-hygiene, preparing emergency supplies, etc.
- It's natural to think about the “what if..., could of..., should of...” thoughts. However, these thoughts will not help you. Focus on positive outcomes and facts.
- To manage reoccurring, stressful thoughts, simply acknowledge the thought and try to imagine holding a remote control in your hand and changing the channel by shifting your focus on a joy-filled moment or peaceful place. You may also want to consider saying a repetitive, positive statement out loud.
- Incorporate self-care and joy into each day – read a book, play with your kids or pet, listen to your favorite music, or watch a funny movie.
- Try to maintain your daily routines and structure your time. You will likely find that maintaining your routine will help gain back a sense of control and order in your life.
- Engage in physical activity (exercise), alternated with relaxation. It will help to alleviate some of the anxious “energy” you may be feeling.
- Sometimes, when our thoughts become overwhelming, professional assistance from a counselor may be necessary. Consider calling WellSpan EAP for further assistance.

P.O. Box 1827 • York, PA 17405-1827 • (800) 673-2514 (phone) • (717) 851-4493 (fax) • www.wellspaneap.org

Helpful suggestions for family and friends:

- Listen carefully. When others talk about their experiences and feelings, their emotional load seems lighter to bear. One of the best ways you can help is to just listen. You don't have to come up with solutions or answers. It's okay if someone breaks down and cries.
- Spend time being "present"; presence is more important than words.
- Be understanding. Your perceptions and reactions to an incident may be very different from others based upon past experiences, beliefs, and coping skills. Recognize that everyone has their own unique response. Do not judge or impose your response or coping strategies on to others.
- Accept feelings. A wide range of emotions may be felt such as fear, anger, sadness and guilt. These emotions may be strong and change from moment to moment. If directed at you don't take them personally. Allow free expression without judgment or critique.
- Respect their need for balance in being together and personal time.
- If asked, be a buffer to extended family members and friends who may reach out to offer support. Having to retell the story over and over again about the traumatic event may be difficult and painful.
- Reassure them that they are safe. We often take this for granted. However, they may understandably feel very violated by what has happened and we should do everything we can to help support them.
- Be careful not to promote gossip or rumors. A lot of information is being shared, be sensitive and respectful to all parties. Don't make assumptions or "fill in the gaps" with information that may not be accurate. Direct questions to the appropriate parties.
- Respect differences. Everyone responds and copes differently to traumatic situations. Some will reach out, while others will be more private and introspective. Show respect by giving each person what they need. If you don't know, ask. Be careful not to impose your own coping strategies onto someone else.
- Respect privacy and confidentiality. If someone shares information, be courteous and do not repeat what is shared. The only time confidences should be broken is when someone is at risk of harming themselves or others. Provide a safe, secure area to ensure privacy.
- Ask to lend a helping hand. By nature, people will not ask for help or may not know what to ask for; take the lead and offer a helpful hand. Suggestions may be sharing their work load, taking a walk or going out to lunch. Even small things like cleaning, preparing meals, running errands and caring for family members can be a huge help.
- Be supportive and sensitive – Simple statements like "I care about you" and "I'm here for you" demonstrate care and concern. Remember, you may not know all the circumstances of the event, their past experiences or current situation. Multiple stressors may exist. Provide positive and encouraging words to give strength and hope.
- Reflect on the advice from author Henri Nouwen:
"The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not-knowing, not-curing, not healing and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is the friend who cares".

Coping Strategies for the COVID-19 Crisis: Hallmarks of Self-Care
Maintaining Good Mental Health-WellSpan Health

Maintaining Good Mental Health

Staying calm during the coronavirus pandemic

What can I do if I'm feeling stressed or anxious?

Plan ahead. Make sure you have adequate supplies at home and plans for childcare and working from home, if that is what you are doing.

Establish routines and schedules. Do you have kids who are home from school? Consider [drawing up and posting a daily schedule](#), with times for learning, play, exercise, chores and other items.

Practice mindfulness by focusing on things within your control, such as your daily routine, and things in your life that are positive, such as family or friends.

Exercise. Take walks and get fresh air. Build this into your daily schedule at regular intervals.

Incorporate joy into your schedule too! Play with your kids or a pet. Listen to music. Watch a funny movie.

Eat a [healthy diet](#).

Limit media exposure and stay informed with trusted sources.

Get [adequate sleep](#) and limit screen time before bed.

Remember it's normal to feel anxious during stressful times. **Be kind to yourself.** It's important to take care of yourself so you can help take care of others.

Coping Strategies for the COVID-19 Crisis: Hallmarks of Self-Care

*****To access all 5 videos, click on this link, then return to CloudCME by clicking on the back arrow to complete your post test & evaluation for credit***:**

<https://www.wellspan.org/coronavirus/maintaining-good-mental-health/>.