

## SELF CARE TIPS TO GET THROUGH THESE UNCERTAIN TIMES:

The COVID-19 pandemic has likely brought many changes to how you live your life. You may worry about getting sick, how long the pandemic will last and what the future will bring. Information overload, rumors and misinformation can make your life feel out of control and make it unclear what to do. During the COVID-19 pandemic, you may experience stress, anxiety, fear, sadness and loneliness. And mental health disorders, including anxiety and depression, can worsen. Self-care strategies are good for your mental and physical health and can help you take charge of your life. Take care of your body and your mind and connect with others to benefit your mental health.

**Take Care of Your Body:** Try to eat healthy well-balanced meals. Choose a well-balanced diet. Avoid loading up on junk food and refined sugar. Limit caffeine as it can aggravate stress and anxiety. Participate in regular physical activity. Regular physical activity and exercise can help reduce anxiety and improve mood. Find an activity that includes movement such as a walk. Get outside in an area that makes it easy to maintain distance from people — such as a nature trail or your own backyard. Get plenty of sleep. Go to bed and get up at the same times each day. Stick close to your typical schedule, even if you're staying at home. Avoid alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. If you smoke tobacco or if you vape, you're already at higher risk of lung disease. Because COVID-19 affects the lungs, your risk increases even more. Using alcohol to try to cope can make matters worse and reduce your coping skills. Avoid taking drugs to cope, unless your doctor prescribed medications for you.

**Connect with others:** Share your concerns and how you are feeling with a friend or family member. Maintain healthy relationships, and build a strong support system. If you need to stay at home and distance yourself from others, avoid social isolation. Find time each day to make virtual connections by email, texts, phone, Face Time/similar apps or by sending a note to brighten the day. If you're working remotely from home, ask your co-workers how they're doing and share coping tips. Try virtual socializing and talking to those in your home. Do something for others. Find purpose in helping the people around you. For example, check on your friends, family members and neighbors, especially those who are elderly. If you know someone who can't get out, ask if there's something needed, such as groceries or a prescription picked up, for instance. Be sure to follow Center for Disease Control (CDC), World Health Organization (WHO) and your government recommendations on social distancing and group meetings.

**Take breaks:** Make time to unwind and remind yourself that strong feelings will fade. Try to do activities you usually enjoy. Relax and recharge. Set aside time for yourself. Even a few minutes of quiet time can be refreshing and help to quiet your mind and reduce anxiety. Many people benefit from practices such as deep breathing, tai chi, yoga or meditation. Soak in a bubble bath, listen to music, or read or listen to a book — whatever helps you relax. Select a technique that works for you and practice it regularly.

**Stay informed, however avoid too much exposure to news:** When you feel that you are missing information, you may become more stressed or nervous. Watch, listen to, or read the news for updates from reliable local and national officials. Be aware that there may be rumors during a crisis, especially on social media. Look for reliable sources such as the CDC and WHO to stay knowledgeable. It can be upsetting to hear about the crisis and see images repeatedly. Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories. Try to do enjoyable activities and return to normal life as much as possible and periodically check for updates. Limit screen time. Turn off electronic devices for some time each day, including 30 minutes before bedtime. Make a conscious effort to spend less time in front of a screen — television, tablet, computer and phone.

**Stay busy and focus on positive thoughts.** A distraction can get you away from the cycle of negative thoughts that feed anxiety and depression. Enjoy hobbies that you can do at home, identify a new project or clean out that closet you promised you'd get to. Doing something positive to manage anxiety is a healthy coping strategy. Choose to focus on the positive things. Consider starting each day by listing things you are thankful for. Maintain a sense of hope, work to accept changes as they occur, try to keep problems in perspective, and focus on things in your control.

**Seek help when needed:** If you are distressed, talk to clergy, a counselor, doctor, or contact a help or crisis line.

This page is a compilation of tips from the **CDC, SAMHSA, MAYO** staff and other providers.