

Coronavirus Disease 2019

Stress and Coping

Outbreaks can be stressful

The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) may be stressful for people. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. **Coping with stress will make you, the people you care about, and your community stronger.**

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](#)

Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations

How you respond to the outbreak can depend on your background, the things that make you different from other people, and the community you live in.



People who may respond more strongly to the stress of a crisis include

- Older people and people with chronic diseases who are [at higher risk for severe illness](#) from COVID-19
- Children and teens
- People who are helping with the response to COVID-19, like doctors, other health care providers, and first responders
- People who have mental health conditions including problems with substance use

Take care of yourself and your community

Taking care of yourself, your friends, and your family can help you cope with stress. Helping others cope with their stress can also make your community stronger.



Ways to cope with stress

- **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.](#)
 - [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.



Need help? Know someone who does?

If you, or someone you care about, are feeling overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression, or anxiety, or feel like you want to harm yourself or others

- Call 911
- Visit the [Disaster Distress Helpline](#) , call 1-800-985-5990, or text TalkWithUs to 66746
- Visit the [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#)  or call 1-800-799-7233 and TTY 1-800-787-3224

Know the facts to help reduce stress


Sharing the facts about COVID-19. Understanding the risk to yourself and people you care about can make an outbreak less stressful.

When you share accurate information about COVID-19, you can help make people feel less stressed and make a connection with them.

Related: [Reducing Stigma and Stop the Spread of Rumors](#)

Take care of your mental health

Call your healthcare provider if stress gets in the way of your daily activities for several days in a row.

People with preexisting mental health conditions should continue with their treatment and be aware of new or worsening symptoms. Additional information can be found at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration ([SAMHSA](#)) [Disaster Preparedness](#)  page.

Related: [Taking Care of Your Emotional Health](#)

For parents

Children and teens react, in part, on what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with the COVID-19 calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children. Parents can be more reassuring to others around them, especially children, if they are better prepared.

Watch for behavior changes in your child

Not all children and teens respond to stress in the same way. Some common changes to watch for include

- Excessive crying or irritation in younger children
- Returning to behaviors they have outgrown (for example, toileting accidents or bedwetting)
- Excessive worry or sadness
- Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits
- Irritability and “acting out” behaviors in teens
- Poor school performance or avoiding school
- Difficulty with attention and concentration
- Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past
- Unexplained headaches or body pain
- Use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

Ways to support your child

- **Talk with your child or teen** about the COVID-19 outbreak.
- **Answer questions** and **share facts about COVID-19** in a way that your child or teen can understand.
- **Reassure your child or teen** that they are safe. Let them know it is ok if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.
- **Limit your family's exposure to news coverage** of the event, including social media. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.
- **Try to keep up with regular routines.** If schools are closed, create a schedule for learning activities and relaxing or fun activities.
- **Be a role model.** Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members.

Related: [Caring for Children](#) and [Helping Children Cope](#)

For people at higher risk for serious illness

People **at higher risk for severe illness**, such as older adults, and people with underlying health conditions are also at increased risk of stress due to COVID-19. Special considerations include:

- Older adults and people with disabilities are at increased risk for having mental health concerns, such as depression.
- Mental health problems can present as physical complaints (such as headaches or stomachaches) or cognitive problems (such as having trouble concentrating).
- Doctors may be more likely to miss mental health concerns among
 - People with disabilities due to a focus on treating underlying health conditions, compared to people without disabilities.
 - Older adults because **depression can be mistaken for a normal part of aging.**

Common reactions to COVID-19

- **Concern about protecting oneself** from the virus because they are at higher risk of serious illness.
- **Concern that regular medical care or community services may be disrupted** due to facility closures or reductions in services and public transport closure.
- **Feeling socially isolated**, especially if they live alone or are in a community setting that is not allowing visitors because of the outbreak.
- **Guilt** if loved ones help them with activities of daily living.
- **Increased levels of distress** if they:
 - Have mental health concerns before the outbreak, such as depression.
 - Live in lower-income households or have language barriers
 - Experience **stigma** because of age, race or ethnicity, disability, or perceived likelihood of spreading COVID-19.

Support your loved ones

Check in with your loved ones often. Virtual communication can help you and your loved ones feel less lonely and isolated. Consider connecting with loved ones by:

- Telephone
- Email
- Mailing letters or cards
- Text messages
- Video chat
- Social media



Help keep your loved ones safe.

- **Know what medications your loved one is taking.** Try to help them have a 4-week supply of prescription and over the counter medications, and see if you can help them have extra on hand.
- **Monitor other medical supplies** (oxygen, incontinence, dialysis, wound care) needed and create a back-up plan.
- **Stock up on non-perishable food** (canned foods, dried beans, pasta) to have on hand in your home to minimize trips to stores.
- If you care for a loved one living in a care facility, monitor the situation, and speak with facility administrators or staff over the phone. Ask about the health of the other residents frequently and know the protocol if there is an outbreak.

Take care of your own emotional health. Caring for a loved one can take an emotional toll, especially during an outbreak like COVID-19. There are ways to support yourself.

Stay home if you are sick. Do not visit family or friends who are at greater risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Use virtual communication to keep in touch to support your loved one and keep them safe.

What health care providers can do

- **Help connect people with family and loved ones** to help lower distress and feelings of social isolation.
- **Let older adults and people with disabilities know it is common for people to feel distressed during a crisis.** Remind them that asking for and accepting help is a sign of strength.
- **Have a procedure and referrals ready** for anyone who shows severe distress or expresses a desire to hurt him- or herself or someone else.
- See [SAMHSA's Helping Older Adults After Disasters: A Guide to Providing Support](#)  .

What communities can do

Community preparedness planning for COVID-19 should include older adults and people with disabilities, and the organizations that support them in their communities, to ensure their needs are taken into consideration.

- Many of these individuals live in the community, and many depend on services and supports provided in their homes or in the community to maintain their health and independence.
- **Long-term care facilities should be vigilant** to prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19. [See guidance for long-term care facilities and nursing homes.](#)

For people coming out of quarantine

It can be stressful to be separated from others if a healthcare provider thinks you may have been exposed to COVID-19, even if you do not get sick. Everyone feels differently after coming out of quarantine.

Emotional reactions to coming out of quarantine may include

- Mixed emotions, including relief after quarantine
- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones
- Stress from the experience of monitoring yourself or being monitored by others for signs and symptoms of COVID-19
- Sadness, anger, or frustration because friends or loved ones have unfounded fears of contracting the disease from contact with you, even though you have been determined not to be contagious
- Guilt about not being able to perform normal work or parenting duties during quarantine
- Other emotional or mental health changes

Children may also feel upset or have other strong emotions if they, or someone they know, has been released from quarantine.

For responders

Responding to COVID-19 can take an emotional toll on you, and you may experience secondary traumatic stress. Secondary traumatic stress is stress reactions and symptoms resulting from exposure to another individual's traumatic experiences, rather than from exposure directly to a traumatic event.

There are things you can do to reduce secondary traumatic stress reactions:

- Acknowledge that secondary traumatic stress can impact anyone helping families after a traumatic event.
- Learn the symptoms including physical (fatigue, illness) and mental (fear, withdrawal, guilt).
- Allow time for you and your family to recover from responding to the pandemic.
- Create a menu of personal self-care activities that you enjoy, such as spending time with friends and family, exercising, or reading a book.
- Take a break from media coverage of COVID-19.
- Ask for help if you feel overwhelmed or concerned that COVID-19 is affecting your ability to care for your family and patients as you did before the outbreak.

Learn more [tips for taking care of yourself](#) during emergency response.

Get more information about stress management for first responders from the [Disaster Technical Assistance Center](#) (SAMHSA).



Reducing Stigma







Stop the Spread of Rumors

Resources

For Everyone

- [Coping with a Disaster or Traumatic Event](#)

For Communities

- [Coping with Stress During an Infectious Disease Outbreak](#)  
- [Taking Care of Your Behavioral Health during an Infectious Disease Outbreak](#)  

For Families and Children

- [Helping Children Cope with Emergencies](#)
- [Coping After a Disaster](#)  – A Ready Wrigley activity book for children age 3-10

For First Responders

- [Emergency Responders: Tips for Taking Care of Yourself](#)
- [Disaster Technical Assistance Center](#)  (SAMHSA)

MENTAL HEALTH WELLNESS TIPS FOR STAY AT HOME ORDER

- ❖ **Stick to a routine.** Go to sleep and wake up at a reasonable time, write a schedule that is varied and includes time for work as well as self-care.
- ❖ **Dress for the social life you want, not the social life you have.** Get showered and dressed in comfortable clothes, wash your face, brush your teeth. Take the time to do a bath or a facial. Put on some bright colors. It is amazing how our dress can impact our mood.
- ❖ **Get out at least once a day, for at least thirty minutes.** If you are concerned of contact, try first thing in the morning, or later in the evening, and try less traveled streets and avenues. If you are high risk or living with those who are high risk, open the windows and blast the fan. It is amazing how much fresh air can do for spirits.
- ❖ **Find some time to move each day, again daily for at least thirty minutes.** If you don't feel comfortable going outside, there are many YouTube videos that offer free movement classes, and if all else fails, turn on the music and have a dance party!
- ❖ **Reach out to others, you guessed it, at least once daily for thirty minutes.** Try to do FaceTime, Skype, phone calls, texting—connect with other people to seek and provide support. Don't forget to do this for your children as well. Set up virtual playdates with friends daily via FaceTime, Facebook Messenger Kids, Zoom, etc.—your kids miss their friends, too!
- ❖ **Stay hydrated and eat well.** This one may seem obvious, but stress and eating often don't mix well, and we find ourselves over-indulging, forgetting to eat, and avoiding food. Drink plenty of water, eat some good and nutritious foods, and challenge yourself to learn how to cook something new!
- ❖ **Develop a self-care toolkit.** This can look different for everyone. A lot of successful self-care strategies involve a sensory component (seven senses: touch, taste, sight, hearing, smell, vestibular (movement) and proprioceptive (comforting pressure). An idea for each: a soft blanket or stuffed animal, a hot chocolate, photos of vacations, comforting music, lavender or eucalyptus oil, a small swing or rocking chair, a weighted blanket. A journal, an inspirational book, or a mandala coloring book is wonderful, bubbles to blow or blowing watercolor on paper through a straw are visually appealing as well as work on controlled breath. Mint gum, Listerine strips, ginger ale, frozen Starburst, ice packs, and cold are also good for anxiety regulation. For children, it is great to help them create a self-regulation comfort box (often a shoe-box or bin they can decorate) that they can use on the ready for first-aid when overwhelmed.
- ❖ **Give everyone the benefit of the doubt, and a wide berth.** A lot of cooped up time can bring out the worst in everyone. Each person will have moments when they will not be at their best. It is important to move with grace through blowups, to not show up to every argument you are invited to, and to not hold grudges and continue disagreements. Everyone is doing the best they can to make it through this.
- ❖ **Everyone find their own retreat space.** Space is at a premium, particularly with city living. It is important that people think through their own separate space for work and for

relaxation. For children, help them identify a place where they can go to retreat when stressed. You can make this place cozy by using blankets, pillows, cushions, scarves, beanbags, tents, and “forts”. It is good to know that even when we are on top of each other, we have our own special place to go to be alone.

- ❖ **Focus on safety and attachment.** We are going to be living for a bit with the unprecedented demand of meeting all work deadlines, homeschooling children, running a sterile household, and making a whole lot of entertainment in confinement. We can get wrapped up in meeting expectations in all domains, but we must remember that these are scary and unpredictable times for children. Focus on strengthening the connection through time spent following their lead, through physical touch, through play, through therapeutic books, and via verbal reassurances that you will be there for them in this time.
- ❖ **Lower expectations and practice radical self-acceptance.** We are doing too many things in this moment, under fear and stress. This does not make a formula for excellence. Instead, give yourself what psychologists call “radical self-acceptance”: accepting everything about yourself, your current situation, and your life without question, blame, or pushback. You cannot fail at this—there is no roadmap, no precedent for this, and we are all truly doing the best we can in an impossible situation.
- ❖ **Limit social media and COVID conversation,** especially around children. One can find tons of information on COVID-19 to consume, and it changes minute to minute. The information is often sensationalized, negatively skewed, and alarmist. Find a few trusted sources that you can check in with consistently, limit it to a few times a day, and set a time limit for yourself on how much you consume (again 30 minutes tops, 2-3 times daily). Keep news and alarming conversations out of earshot from children—they see and hear everything, and can become very frightened by what they hear.
- ❖ **Notice the good in the world, the helpers.** There is a lot of scary, negative, and overwhelming information to take in regarding this pandemic. There are also a ton of stories of people sacrificing, donating, and supporting one another in miraculous ways. It is important to counter-balance the heavy information with the hopeful information.
- ❖ **Help others.** Find ways, big and small, to give back to others. Support restaurants, offer to grocery shop, check in with elderly neighbors, write psychological wellness tips for others—helping others gives us a sense of agency when things seem out of control.
- ❖ **Find something you can control and control the heck out of it.** In moments of big uncertainty and overwhelm, control your little corner of the world. Organize your bookshelf, purge your closet, put together that furniture, group your toys. It helps to anchor and ground us when the bigger things are chaotic.
- ❖ **Find a long-term project to dive into.** Now is the time to learn how to play the keyboard, put together a huge jigsaw puzzle, start a 15 hour game of Risk, paint a picture, read the Harry Potter series, binge watch an 8-season show, crochet a blanket, solve a Rubix cube, or develop a new town in Animal Crossing. Find something that will keep you busy, distracted, and engaged to take breaks from what is going on in the outside world.

- ❖ **Engage in repetitive movements and left-right movements.** Research has shown that repetitive movement (knitting, coloring, painting, clay sculpting, jump roping etc.) especially left-right movement (running, drumming, skating, hopping) can be effective at self-soothing and maintaining self-regulation in moments of distress.
- ❖ **Find an expressive art and go for it.** Our emotional brain is very receptive to the creative arts, and it is a direct portal for release of feeling. Find something that is creative (sculpting, drawing, dancing, music, singing, playing) and give it your all. See how relieved you can feel. It is a very effective way of helping kids to emote and communicate as well!
- ❖ **Find lightness and humor in each day.** There is a lot to be worried about, and with good reason. Counterbalance this heaviness with something funny each day: cat videos on YouTube, a stand-up show on Netflix, a funny movie—we all need a little comedic relief in our day, every day.
- ❖ **Reach out for help—your team is there for you.** If you have a therapist or psychiatrist, they are available to you, even at a distance. Keep up your medications and your therapy sessions the best you can. If you are having difficulty coping, seek out help for the first time. There are mental health people on the ready to help you through this crisis. Your children’s teachers and related service providers will do anything within their power to help, especially for those parents tasked with the difficult task of being a whole treatment team to their child with special challenges. Seek support groups of fellow homeschoolers, parents, and neighbors to feel connected. There is help and support out there, any time of the day—although we are physically distant, we can always connect virtually.
- ❖ **“Chunk” your quarantine, take it moment by moment.** We have no road map for this. We don’t know what this will look like in 1 day, 1 week, or 1 month from now. Often, when I work with patients who have anxiety around overwhelming issues, I suggest that they engage in a strategy called “chunking”—focusing on whatever bite-sized piece of a challenge that feels manageable. Whether that be 5 minutes, a day, or a week at a time—find what feels doable for you and set a time stamp for how far ahead in the future you will let yourself worry. Take each chunk one at a time and move through stress in pieces.
- ❖ **Remind yourself daily that this is temporary.** It seems in the midst of this quarantine that it will never end. It is terrifying to think of the road stretching ahead of us. Please take time to remind yourself that although this is very scary and difficult and will go on for an undetermined amount of time, it is a season of life and it will pass. We will return to feeling free, safe, busy, and connected in the days ahead.
- ❖ **Find the lesson.** This whole crisis can seem sad, senseless, and at times, avoidable. When psychologists work with trauma, a key feature to helping someone work through said trauma is to help them find their agency, the potential positive outcomes they can affect, the meaning and construction that can come out of destruction. What can each of us learn here, in big and small ways, from this crisis? What needs to change in ourselves, our homes

Meditation Resources

Here are some meditation videos that could help ease stress, anxiety and other feelings to cope with the COVID-19 situation.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W19PdslW7iw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2pZOIzbp7Q>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6p_yaNFSYao

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZToicYcHIOU>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kpxXFxSNCF8>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sJH6_ZbgeWQ

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F527mr-GgIg>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MIr3RsUWrdo>


https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_iGWdUTifiQ

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7H0FKzeuVVs>



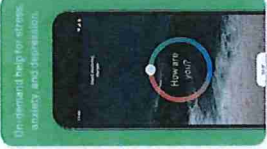


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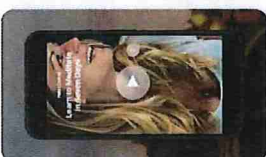
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4.8★ 53K reviews | 1M+ Downloads | Everyone

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About this app →

The most popular app in the World for Meditation, Sleep, Anxiety and Mindfulness

When you're isolated at home, feelings of anxiety, loneliness, or worry may become overwhelming. Experiencing these feelings is common during times of heightened stress.

Don't be afraid to reach out. We're here to help! The Department of Health and Welfare has opened an Idaho COVID-19 Hotline with an option for behavioral health.



IDAHO COVID-19 HOTLINE

888-330-3010

We offer anonymous and confidential assistance for all, no matter your situation. If you are experiencing any type of distress from feeling overwhelmed or isolated, a mental health challenge, substance use disorder, or if you are seeking resources during this difficult time, please reach out!

We have trained professionals ready and available to talk with you and assist you in accessing the mental health and substance use disorder services you need.

Resources for Idaho Residents

Idaho Care Line: call 2-1-1 or visit www.211.idaho.gov

Idaho Suicide Prevention Hotline: call 2-1-1 or 208-398-4357

Optum Idaho Member Crisis Line: call 855-202-0973



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