

# SELF-CARE

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# What is Self-Care?

- Self-care is important to maintaining a healthy relationship with yourself. It means doing things to take care of our minds, bodies, and souls by engaging in activities that promote well-being and reduce stress. Doing so enhances our ability to live fully, vibrantly, and effectively. The practice of self-care also reminds both you and others that your needs are valid and a priority.
- Self-care is not an indulgence. Self-care is a discipline. It requires tough-mindedness, a deep and personal understanding of your priorities, and a respect for both yourself and the people you choose to spend your life with.

# What is Self-Care?

- If we are being honest, self-care is actually kind of boring. Which is why self-care is a discipline. It takes discipline to do the things that are good for us instead of what feels good in the moment. It takes even more discipline to refuse to take responsibility for other people's emotional well-being. And it takes discipline to take full and complete responsibility for our own well-being.
- Self-care is also a discipline because it's not something you do once in awhile when the world gets crazy. It's what you do every day, every week, month in and month out. It's making the commitment to stay healthy and balanced as a regular practice.



# Ideally we want to practice self-care every day

○ Ideally, we all engage in daily self-care in which we do the things that make us feel taken care of mentally, physically, and emotionally. But this doesn't always happen, and we may need to stop and take the time to remind ourselves we are important too.

# ***Distraction as a strategy\****

- Activities are a great way for us to distract ourselves from our current emotions until we are better able to cope. When our level of distress is too high, we may not be able to effectively handle a situation and need ways to bring our emotional state down.
- Some suggestions may seem similar to self-care, but distraction activities serve a different purpose. They are used when acute symptoms occur and in times of distress.
- One person's self-care activity is another's distraction technique.

# EXAMPLES OF DISTRACTION ACTIVITIES/SELF-CARE

- Call a friend (and don't talk about what's causing you distress)
- Create something
- Use your five senses (sensory grounding activities)
- Do a puzzle
- Do something kind for someone else
- Focus on a single task
- Make food or bake

# EXAMPLES OF DISTRACTION ACTIVITIES/SELF-CARE

- Listen to music or a podcast
- Take a hot or cold shower
- Try something new (like learning a new language)
- Volunteer
- Read/Audiobook
- Watch TV or a movie



# Types of Self-Care

1. **Emotional self-care/** Our ability to regulate our emotions and cope with difficult feelings as they arise is vital to our happiness and overall quality of life.
2. **Physical self-care/** This type of self-care refers to any activities you deliberately engage in to enhance your physical well-being.
3. **Mental self-care/** Mental self-care encompasses anything you do specifically to stimulate your mind and cultivate a healthy psyche.
4. **Social self-care/** Humans are social beings, we need regular connection with others to thrive, so prioritizing social self-care or activities that nurture our relationships with others is critical.
5. **Spiritual self-care/** Spiritual self-care encompasses any activities you engage in to connect with and nurture your soul.
6. **Practical self-care/** Any actions you take to fulfill your core needs and reduce stress can be catalogued as practical self-care.
7. **Professional self-care/** These are the activities and actions that support feeling balanced and fulfilled in your career.



# *Changing our emotions*

○ Sometimes our feelings become too much and we need to distract ourselves until we are better able to cope. We can also strategically change how we are feeling when things become too overwhelming. This can be used as a tool during times of grief and/or anxiety as well.

# IS MY RESPONSE WARRANTED?

○ Check to see if the situation warrants the response you're having. Examine the facts. While our emotions are always valid, they are not always justified. Look to see if your emotional response matches the circumstances.

# AM I BEING EFFECTIVE?

- Examine whether what you're doing is helping or hurting the situation. If it's making things worse, do the opposite of whatever it is you feel like doing and commit to it. For example, if you are angry and want to yell, try avoiding the individual/circumstance where your anger is directed, allowing yourself to calm down before re-engaging.
- This may not always be able to happen because of the circumstances, in that case use tools like sensory grounding, breathing techniques, and/or "toolboxes" you have made.



# Resources

- <https://www.activeminds.org/about-mental-health/self-care/>
- <https://www.healthcoachinstitute.com/motivational/7-types-of-self-care/>

# Grief

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## Coronavirus grief: Coping with the loss of routine during the pandemic

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has changed people's lives in many ways. In addition to feeling grief over the loss of life caused by COVID-19, you're likely grieving the loss of your normal routine.



# Understanding grief caused by the coronavirus pandemic

- Stay-at-home restrictions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 have affected people's jobs, the way kids go to school and play, and the ability to gather in person with family and friends. These measures have also changed how people shop, worship, exercise, eat and seek entertainment.
- As a result, the pandemic has had a major psychological impact, causing people to lose a sense of safety, predictability, control, freedom and security.
- You might also find that changes brought on by the pandemic are affecting your sense of self. For instance, if your identity is closely tied to your job, losing your job could trigger an identity crisis.

# Signs and symptoms of grief

- Grief might cause you to feel numb or empty, angry, or unable to feel any emotions such as joy or sadness.
- You might also have physical symptoms, such as trouble sleeping or eating, excess fatigue, muscle weakness, or shakiness.
- You might have nightmares or socially withdraw.
- Keep in mind, however, that grief can also have some *positive effects*. For example, you might feel grateful for brave and caring people in your community. You might have an increased appreciation for your relationships and have a desire to help others who are experiencing similar losses.

# Coping with coronavirus grief

*As awful* as it might feel, grief serves an *important* purpose. Grief helps you recognize that you've experienced a loss and that you're going to need to adapt.



# Ways to deal with your grief

- **Pay attention to your feelings**. Name what you've lost due to the pandemic. It might help to write this down in a journal. Allow yourself to feel your emotions such as sadness or allow yourself to cry.
- **Think about your strengths and coping skills**. How can they help you move forward? Consider other tough transitions you've been through, such as a previous job change or divorce. What did you do that helped you recover?
- **Stay connected**. Don't let social distancing prevent you from getting the support you need. Use phone calls, text messages, video chats and social media to stay in touch with family and friends who are positive and supportive. Reach out to those in similar situations. Pets also can provide emotional support.
- **Create an adapted routine**. This can help preserve a sense of order and purpose, despite how much things may have changed. In addition to work or online learning, include activities that might help you cope, such as exercise, worship or hobbies. Keep a regular sleep schedule and try to maintain a healthy diet.
- **Limit your news diet**. Spending too much time reading or listening to news about the COVID-19 pandemic can cause you to focus heavily on what you've lost, as well as increase anxiety.
- **Remember the journey**. If you've lost your job, you don't have to let the way it ended define the whole experience. Consider some of your good memories and the big picture.

# Resource

- <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/in-depth/coping-with-coronavirus-grief/art-20486392>

# Anxiety

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# What is Anxiety?

**Anxiety is the mind and body's reaction to stressful, dangerous, or unfamiliar situations.** It's the sense of uneasiness, distress, or dread you feel before a significant event. A certain level of Anxiety helps us stay alert and aware, but for those suffering from an anxiety disorder, it feels far from normal - it can be completely debilitating.

○ The COVID-19 pandemic has brought shock, confusion, disbelief and an array of opinions on what people were up against. At first, Americans saw other countries struggling to keep up with the increasing numbers of ill people and the medical systems not having the resources to help enough people at the same time. While the U.S. hoped this would not be its story, COVID-19 has become an intense battle here, as well.

# People at higher risk for Anxiety during the pandemic

- **Those with a history of anxiety** — People who struggled with anxiety prior to this situation may feel especially overwhelmed during the pandemic.
- **Older or immunocompromised people** — Older adults, or those who have underlying medical issues or weakened immune systems, are aware of their personal increased risk should they contract COVID-19. This may cause them heightened anxiety or feelings of helplessness. Also, their loved ones may fear for them and feel helpless to protect them, and feel heightened anxiety.
- **Children** — Children may watch the news and hear the concern in a parent's or other adult's voice, and begin to feel the world is scary and out of control. They may not be able to explain their fears or anxious thoughts.

# Symptoms of Anxiety

- Anxiety affects a person's thoughts and actions, and presents physical symptoms. When in physical danger, anxiety is designed to help people focus on the threat so they know where the danger is coming from and how to fight or escape it.
- Anxiety quickly builds up energy so we can fight or run from danger, but it may cause uncomfortable physical symptoms, such as a racing heart, inability to concentrate, shakiness, sweating and difficulty swallowing. These symptoms may feel horrible, but they are not dangerous in the short term.
- In the current situation, anxiety can cause rumination, a sense of impending doom, helplessness and overfocusing on the news, which can provoke more anxiety. Some people may wish to hide and/or avoid learning about any dangers.
- Feeling tense, irritable and impatient can be a part of anxiety.
- Other actions related to anxiety include pacing, spacing out and feeling like a spinning wheel without getting tasks done.



# Ways to tame anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic

- **Gather information.** Knowledge of the enemy can reduce fear and anxiety. Gather accurate, factual information from trusted sources to better understand the situation, and help with problem-solving and a greater sense of control.
- **Establish a new routine.** Many daily routines have changed due to COVID-19. Routine and structure can be helpful and calming. Create a new normal with some practical and enjoyable tasks to become more resilient to chaos and change. Ideas include making a list of projects that you have wanted to accomplish, reading inspirational writings and journaling to record your thoughts, hopes, emotions and concerns.
- **Stay connected virtually.** Reaching out to loved ones and friends is important and can be done through phone calls, texting, emailing and video calls. Human connection can lower stress and anxiety levels, and build camaraderie. Practice self-care habits. These habits can help whether you are working from inside or outside the home.
- **Look for the good.** Acknowledge and accept that the good and bad are often adjacent in the same moment in life. A person can be sad about one thing but be aware that there's goodness and happiness in the same moment about another thing. Intentionally look for those good things. Whatever thoughts we feed grow, so it can help to purposefully think hopeful, realistic and problem-solving thoughts. Look at the beauty amid the difficulties in life.
- **Exercise.** Regular exercise and movement helps release built-up fight-or-flight energy. Also, exercise releases endorphins, which are feel-good chemicals in the brain. Any kind of physical movement can and will help.
- **Meditate.** Meditation, mindfulness and breathing exercises are good ways to release stress. Now is a good time to learn these approaches and incorporate them into daily habits.
- **Reflect.** COVID-19 enables people to reflect on what is truly important and express gratitude. When life returns to normal, do you want to go back to how things were before or will you reprioritize some things in your life?
- **Reach out.** Everyone is in this together, and that is a comfort. You are not alone. If you feel alone, don't be silent. Instead, reach out to a friend or health care professional. Many people are feeling the same way. If you communicate your hopes and fears, and listen to others, it divides the burden and increases the connection. This decreases the sense of isolation and anxiety.

# Resource

- <https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/9-ways-to-tame-anxiety-during-the-covid-19-pandemic>