

FIRST SOURCE: Article in Newsletter from



"HOW TO PROTECT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE CORONA VIRUS OUTBREAK" By Lynne S. Gots, Ph.D. | Mar. 31, 2020 (NAMI)

The coronavirus outbreak, and the social-distancing measures now in place to prevent its spread, have turned all our lives upside down. But if you have a mental illness, the pervasive climate of anxiety, stress and isolation may be especially harmful to your well-being.

Here are several steps you can take to prevent this stressful time from derailing your mental health.

1) Maintain A Routine

If you're not used to working from home, you may find the transition challenging. Creating a new teleworking routine will help you get into the right mindset, feel more productive and keep the boundaries between work and home from blurring.

It may be tempting to work into the night, sleep in and log onto your computer from your bed. This is not a good idea! Instead, stick to a regular bedtime and waking schedule. Shower and dress in the morning, and keep normal working hours if you are not required to be on-call. You don't have to put on a suit, but wearing casual Friday work clothes instead of sweats will serve as a cue to start the work day.

Designate a work area. Even if you are quarantined in a tiny studio apartment, you can set up a home office on a snack tray in a corner. If you normally watch TV or scroll through social media while sitting on the couch, you may get distracted if you try to work from the same location.

2) Take Reasonable Precautions, But Don't Go Overboard

Use only reliable sources of information, such as the [CDC](#) or [Johns Hopkins University](#), to inform and make a plan for your health habits. As hard as it is, it's important not to give into compulsive behaviors.

This is especially important if you have OCD or health anxiety. Follow the rules you've made in advance, so you don't let anxiety dictate your behavior. For example, if 20 seconds of hand-washing is the accepted guideline, don't wash for 40 or 60 seconds "just to be safe."

3) Find Ways To "Get Going"

Now more than ever, you need to tend to your own health. Practicing sound mental hygiene can help boost your psychological immunity. If you are prone to depression, you might be finding it harder to get out of bed in the morning, motivate yourself to accomplish chores or get started on a work project. "[Behavioral activation](#)"—the technical term for "getting going"—is a research-proven antidote.

Exercise is an excellent stress-reliever and mood-booster. The gym may be closed, but you can go out for a brisk walk as long as you keep your distance from others. You can also practice yoga at home and even work out virtually with a personal trainer.

4) Try Not To Fixate On Sleep

The changes in your usual schedule, coupled with anxiety, can wreak havoc on your sleep. If you're resting, try not to stew about not sleeping — staring at the ceiling at 2 am will just create a cycle of worry and insomnia. If you find yourself lying in bed wide awake for more than 15 minutes, get up and change the mental channel by watching TV, reading a book or listening to music.

You could also listen to a guided meditation available on YouTube or one of the many meditation apps, such as [10% Happier](#), [Headspace](#) or the [UCLA Center for Mindfulness](#). Keep in mind, however, that you are not meditating to try to fall asleep. Having sleep as a goal will likely backfire and cause more anxiety. Instead, you can use meditation to notice what is going on in your mind and body and observe your thoughts rather than getting caught up in them.

5) Stick To Consistent Meal Times

Sticking to consistent meal times, rather than stress-snacking throughout the day, can also help you maintain your mental and physical equilibrium. Nourish yourself with healthy foods. However, it's also perfectly fine to build in some comfort foods, like freshly baked cookies. Now is not the time to start a restrictive diet.

6) Follow Your Regular Mental Health Treatment Plan

Make sure you have an adequate supply of medication and take it as prescribed. Continue with therapy appointments. Many practitioners are now offering teletherapy, either by phone or video, to comply with social distancing requirements. Check with your insurer to see what services they will cover.

7) Practice Mindfulness And Acceptance Techniques

Whether you use meditation, yoga or prayer, focusing your attention on the present moment, rather than ruminating about a catastrophic, uncertain future, can help you manage your distress. If you tend to compound your negative emotions with a cascade of negative thoughts ("I should be handling this better;" "This is unbearable"), mindfulness training can be useful in tempering your emotional reactions.

One good introductory resource, among many, is "Mindfulness: An Eight-Week Plan for Finding Peace in a Frantic World," by Mark Williams and Danny Penman. The [UCSD Center for Mindfulness](#) also has free, guided meditations and useful information about the practice.

8) Be Kind To Yourself

A vast body of [research](#) conducted by the psychologist Kristin Neff and colleagues has shown the value of self-compassion for coping with emotional challenges and adversity. To ease feelings of isolation, acknowledge your struggle with kindness, rather than self-judgment, and recognize that millions of people world-wide are sharing your experience right now.

This time is challenging for everyone. But you don't need to compound the difficulties by neglecting your mental health. If you follow these suggestions, you can face this crisis — you may even come out of it stronger in the end.

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SECOND SOURCE: CDC Website

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html> (Too much content to cut & paste)

Content includes:

- Healthy Ways to Cope with Stress
- Contact Numbers for Immediate Help in Crisis
- Helping Children Cope...

THIRD SOURCE: APA Website <https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/> (Again, so much content)

Content includes

- Psychologists' advice for newly remote workers
- Grief and COVID-19: Mourning our bygone lives
- Saying goodbye in the age of physical distancing

For Immediate Help, you may call

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

(800) 273-8255

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (Spanish)

(888) 628-9454

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (Options for Deaf and Hard of Hearing)

(800) 799-4889

Crisis Text Line

Text HELLO to 741741

National Domestic Violence Hotline

(800) 799-7233

Veterans Crisis Line

(800) 273-8255

National Sexual Assault Hotline

(800) 656-4673

Child Abuse Hotline

(800) 422-4453

CDC National HIV & AIDS Hotline

(800) 342-2437

Alcoholics Anonymous

(202) 966-9155

Narcotics Anonymous

(800) 543-4670

For longer-term help, please find a psychologist near you.