

Caring for Yourself While Caring for the Community

This is a time of transition and uncertainty for many of us and that can bring about many unsettling feelings. You may find yourself feeling stressed, anxious, depressed and maybe even angry at this time. When we are dealing with our own challenges and concerns, it may become difficult to focus on caring for others. Learning coping strategies for your feelings will make you, the people you care about, and your community stronger and more resilient.

Below is a list of suggestions that might help you find some relief during this time. If you have additional strategies that have worked for you, please let us know.

Take a Moment to Breathe. Often, when we are feeling strong emotions, we forget to breathe deeply and fully. Take a few moments and notice if you are breathing deeply or taking short, shallow breaths. Allow yourself time to breathe deeply. Simple breathing technique: Sit upright and place feet flat on the floor. Keep the arms relaxed. Inhale slowly and count to four, exhale slowly and count to four. Repeat the cycle as many times as needed.

Move Your Body. For many of us, sitting still for long periods makes our bodies feel stiff and our minds unfocused. Take time each day to move in a way that feels good to you. Maybe light stretching, an online yoga routine, an online workout, taking a walk (or run) in nature, dance to your favorite song(s) or even cleaning around the house. The idea is to move the body in any way that feels healthy for you.

Creating a New Routine. As we transition to being at home, figuring out a manageable routine for your day can help you reduce stress. Planning a sleep schedule may help ensure you are getting proper rest. Knowing when you will have your meals can help you make sure you getting the nutrition you need. It can help to write it down or print it out your schedule and place it near your work space. Your routine should include break time and time for your family if they are also home with you.

Journaling Your Thoughts. Challenging times bring about difficult emotions and it is easy for our thoughts to move into a negative loop. Sometimes, it helps to get those thoughts out of the mind and down on paper or onto a screen. Journaling is a way to express your thoughts in a healthy way. There are many options to keep a journal: pen and paper, online (freemake.com/blog/top-5-free-websites-to-keep-diary-online/) and apps (zapier.com/blog/best-journaling-apps/). **Since a journal contains personal thoughts, be sure to always use your personal device for journaling.*

Take Breaks from News and Social Media. There is non-stop information flowing about what is happening. Constantly watching the news, engaging in debates, reposting links and stories can make you feel even more stressed and anxious. Create a bit of balance between knowing what is happening and taking in so much information that it becomes unhealthy.

Leave Space For Fun. What do you consider fun while you are at home: crafts, creating vision boards, cooking a new recipe, watching movies, video games, reading? Leave space in your new routine to have fun while you're at home. Here are some suggestions from ODH: coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/home/covid-19-checklists/family-activities-to-try-during-closures-covid-19

Staying Connected While Apart. Human beings are social creatures. The time we are required to stay home may make us feel disconnected and isolated. We are all learning how to work remotely together

and be productive. However, it is also important to maintain a social connection to people from home. Here are some ways we can use Microsoft Teams: microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/blog/2020/03/10/staying-productive-while-working-remotely-with-microsoft-teams/. There are also some creative ways to stay connected like this: npr.org/2020/03/15/815973389/virtual-happy-hour-anyone-working-from-home-but-keeping-connected.

Acknowledge and Accept How You Feel. During this challenging time for our community, whatever you are feeling is valid. Acknowledge your own feelings and treat yourself with compassion. Accepting your own feelings and treating yourself with compassion may allow you to be more accepting of the challenges others may also be experiencing during this time.

The work we do is vital and it is necessary, especially in times that are challenging to community health. The only things we can control are our own efforts and actions. At times like these, it is even more imperative that we stay focused on caring for the most vulnerable in our community. In order to properly care for them, we need to be sure we are also properly caring for ourselves.

Please let us know if you find these suggestions useful or if you have additions to add to our list.