

Ways to take care of your mental health during the COVID-19 Pandemic

For Yourself:

- Reduce anxiety by reducing your risk! Practice good hygiene (e.g. Sneeze into a tissue and immediately throw the tissue away, wash hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, etc.)
- Set up a plan to work from home if possible. Setting up a plan can help reduce anxiety by taking charge of the things you can control.
- Pick a few trusted news outlets and create boundaries on checking for updates a couple of times a day.
- Monitor your anxiety levels. Monitoring your stress level will let you know when you need to seek additional help.
- Practice good self-care by exercising, eating healthy foods, and getting a good night's rest!
- Reach out to different types of support networks such as family, friends, colleagues, faith-based communities, and social organizations by phone, email, or social media such as to strengthen your overall feeling of connection. Isolation and loneliness feeds anxiety.
- Find meaningful tasks and roles within your support network to channel your anxiety, such as coordinating deliveries of groceries to those unable to leave home, curating kids' activity ideas for parents working from home, or video calling or calling those who might feel socially isolated. Supporting others is beneficial to the supporter as well.
- Find or create spaces that are not focused on COVID-19. Start a social media thread about other topics, ask friends to discuss other topics, or watch your favorite TV or movie.

For Parents:

- Talk about the situation openly. Most kids elementary-aged and up have heard about COVID-19 or Coronavirus. Avoiding the topic is more likely to feed anxiety.
- Don't give more information than is requested. Answer the question your child asks, but not necessarily more than that.
- Keep as many routines intact as possible. For kids who may be out of school and/or have extra-curricular activities cancelled, it is helpful to keep other routines, like mealtimes and bedtimes.
- Find fun ways to maintain contact with individuals your child is separated from, such as elderly grandparents or classmates at school.
- Encourage physical activity and time outside, where possible. Both staying active and having opportunities to be in nature are helpful with mitigating anxiety and building resilience.

For Caregivers of Older Individuals:

- Facilitate ways for the individual to maintain social connections. Consider coordinating a group of people to check in on a rotation so that the individual feels the support of a network.
- Encourage the individual to stay as active as possible, for both their physical and mental well-being.
- Help the individual find ways where they can help others, such as calling others to check in on them or entertaining grandchildren on FaceTime. Having a purpose and role can reduce anxiety.
- Consider practical ways you can relieve an individual's anxiety, such as volunteering to order their groceries online or offering to walk the individual's dog(s).
- In a time of high anxiety, it may be hard for the individual to select reliable sources to get information and updates on COVID-19. Help by identifying reputable media and write them down for the individual.
- Practice self-care and be compassionate to yourself.