

# Taking Care of Yourself

During a public health crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, simple behaviors like eating a balanced diet, exercising, and getting good sleep are crucial for maintaining your physical and mental well-being. But social distancing complicates things. How are you supposed to eat right when you're living on non-perishables? How can you work out when the gym is closed? How can you sleep when you're anxious about, well, everything?

## Self-Care Strategies: Physical

- ✓ **Take care of your body:** Make time to unwind and do some other activities you enjoy.
- ✓ **Get enough sleep:** Go to bed and get up at regular hours.
- ✓ **Eat well-balanced meals:** Plan your meals to occur at consistent times.
  - You can buy fruit to cut up and put in your freezer and certain vegetables (broccoli, Brussels sprouts, sweet potatoes) will keep for a long time outside the freezer.
  - Watch out for saturated fat, salt, and added sugars especially in items such as canned, dried, or frozen goods (less than: 5 grams added sugar, 200 milligrams, 1.5 grams of saturated fat per serving).
  - Beware of boredom and stress eating. This is a common reaction, and your best defense is to try to productively channel those feelings elsewhere.
  - Avoid mood altering substances, such as alcohol or drugs.
- ✓ **Get some exercise:** Being active each day will help to reduce stress. Always exercise within your health limits. If you have any questions, call your Healthcare Provider to discuss.
  - Many gyms and fitness instructors are offering virtual classes.
  - YouTube is also a resource for motivation.
- ✓ **Nurture yourself:** spend time each day doing something calming, such as deep breathing, meditation, progressive relaxation, or activities that you enjoy.

## Self-Care Strategies: Thoughts

- ✓ **Get your facts from a reliable, objective source:** There is a lot of misinformation out there. Don't rely on rumors or guesswork.
- ✓ **Take breaks:** Limit your time watching, reading, or listening to news stories including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.
- ✓ **Structure your time:** Choose activities that engage your mind and body and keep you focused on the here and now. Set short-term goals to stay on track.
- ✓ **Remind yourself of challenges you have managed in the past:** Think about the strengths and abilities you have that helped you survive and thrive.
- ✓ **Reduce demands:** Reduce demands that you put on yourself and others.
- ✓ **Halt your thoughts:** Give yourself a break from thinking about what has happened and what might happen next. Try to concentrate on what is positive in your life and the things that make you grateful.

## Self-Care Strategies: Emotional

- ✓ **Focus on things you have control over:** Give yourself permission to let go of the rest.
- ✓ **Reach out:** Spend time with loved ones and other people who care about you (phone or video chat).
- ✓ **Talk:** Acknowledge what has happened and what your feelings are about it.
- ✓ **Recognize uncertainty:** You may be feeling scared and confused about what is happening. Writing about your thoughts and feelings may help. Some people find comfort in creative activities such as music or painting.
- ✓ **Know that stress reactions don't follow an orderly process:** You may feel strong and capable one day and overwhelmed the next. Be patient with yourself and others as you work through this.
- ✓ **Be aware:** Irritability and anger can sometimes be a surface emotion that is covering up a deeper emotion, such as fear, hurt, or powerlessness.
- ✓ **Be careful:** Try not to take out your irritability and anger on others. This will make it harder for them to be supportive and can create negative feelings for you.

Additional Resources are available by clicking the following links:

<https://advice.shinetext.com/articles/how-to-practice-physical-mental-and-emotional-self-care/>

<https://www.verywellmind.com/self-care-strategies-overall-stress-reduction-3144729>

<https://thriveglobal.com/stories/self-care-ideas-for-physical-emotional-mental-health/>