



# MANAGING YOUR MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH DURING COVID-19

The coronavirus (COVID-19) is presenting new and unique challenges to our court system. We are navigating uncharted waters with this virus, making it essential to find new ways to work and interact while also taking care of our mental health and well-being.

Many are teleworking full-time for the first time, isolated from co-workers, friends, and family. Our daily living routines are disrupted causing added anxiety, stress, and strain—physically, mentally, and financially. It is completely natural for this disruption and uncertainty to lead to anxiety and stress. For some, it may exacerbate or trigger clinical anxiety, depression, or other mental health conditions.

Now more than ever, we all must take care of our mental health and well-being. As we protect ourselves against potential exposure to the coronavirus, keep in mind that social distancing does not mean social isolation. This resource provides practical tips on taking care of our mental health and well-being.

## How do I maintain my health and wellness?

**Keep a regular schedule:** Create and maintain a routine and schedule. Set up a designated space for you and each family member to work and learn. Don't forget to include periodic breaks for recharging in your schedule. Although everyone's schedule will be different, here is a sample:

- 7:00 a.m.** Wake up, stretch, take care of kids/animals
- 7:30 a.m.** Breakfast and family time (technology free!)
- 8:30 a.m.** Work and check on updates with small breaks every 30 minutes or so
- 12:00 p.m.** Lunch break, get fresh air, stretch & exercise
- 1:00 p.m.** Work with breaks every 30 minutes, check in with co-workers
- 5:00 p.m.** Dinner and screen break! Call a friend, family, or loved one
- 7:00 p.m.** Self-care time



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**Stay connected:** Stay connected with family, friends, and support systems using technology like FaceTime, Skype, Google Hangout and other video-based options. Talk about your fears and concerns with people you trust. Chances are they are feeling the same way.

**Keep your immune system strong:** Make a commitment to staying strong by:

- Washing your hands with soap for 20 seconds (about two rounds of the “Happy Birthday” song)
- Getting enough sleep
- Eating well and staying hydrated
- Taking vitamins

**Prioritize personal hygiene and limit contact with others:** This is imperative to avoid spreading the virus. Here’s what should be done:

- Again, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds and use hand sanitizer regularly.
- Use a tissue to cover your sneeze or cough, or when unavailable, cough or sneeze into your elbow.
- Disinfect with anti-bacterial wipes areas and objects that are heavily trafficked or are touched regularly where you live and work.
- Avoid contact with those who are sick and avoid touching your face, eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.

**Exercise and stay active:** This is not only good for your physical health but also your mental health. Periodically, get up and move around your home. Walking, stretching, planks, or jumping jacks—whatever works best for you to reduce or alleviate stress and increase endorphins. While our favorite gyms and fitness centers are closed during this time, many are offering free live streams or app-based workouts for members and the general public, so check online to see what’s available.

**Get fresh air:** If circumstances allow, go outside for a brisk walk and fresh air, but avoid crowds and try to maintain the recommended 6-foot distance with others.

**Stay informed:** Knowledge is power, and it’s good to stay updated on the progress being made in combatting the virus. Stay informed on the latest updates from reliable sources like the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

**Limit media consumption:** Avoid continuous exposure to news, media, and social media that may trigger or elevate anxiety, stress, or panic. Stay informed by following few, authoritative resources but limit media consumption.

**Set boundaries on work schedule:** When working from home, be sure that you are working reasonable hours. It can be tempting to work more while you have your work at home. However, it can also be taxing on your health and well-being, so stick to a schedule with healthy boundaries.

**Distract and redirect:** Engage in activities that benefit your well-being, bring you joy, and distract you from existing challenges. This might include meditation and yoga, often offered free online. You may also enjoy journaling, reading, art projects, cooking with new recipes, breathing exercises, or listening to a calming podcast or music.

**Get creative to stay connected:** Share tips with co-workers and friends on what’s working well for you and encourage them to do the same. Come up with new ideas like planning a Google Hangout to exercise together – try one-minute planks, 10 jumping jacks, or whatever you decide, just keep it simple. Share photos of pets enjoying the new routine. Watch movies at the same time while texting or on Skype. The sky’s the limit on creative ways to stay connected.

## How do I manage my mental health condition during this challenging time?

The information included above applies to everyone whether you experience a mental health condition or not. Here are additional tips for those diagnosed with mental health conditions:

### Continue treatment and medication:

- Despite changes in routine, it is extremely important to follow your treatment plan.
- If your symptoms change or you need reassurance during this difficult time, call your treating provider's office to see if they are offering virtual visits. Telehealth visits are growing and an important way to connect with care.
- Be sure that medication refills are up to date. If you are concerned about running low, request that your treating health care provider approves a 60-or -90-day supply of medication.
- Consult with your health care provider or pharmacist if you are using over the counter medications—cold and flu medications may interact with antidepressants and/or anti-anxiety medications.

**Respond to symptoms of COVID-19:** If you are feeling symptoms that may be associated with the COVID-19 virus, call your primary care provider first to talk about the next steps in care. This virus continues to strain hospital resources, so it's best to get directions from your primary care provider on what to do rather than going to an emergency room.

**Recognize warning signs and triggers:** Continue to monitor new or worsening symptoms you may be experiencing with either your mental health or overall health and well-being. Do your best to keep your stress level low and engage in activities, like those listed above, that help you manage your stress levels during this disruptive time.

**Engage your support network:** Just as you would during other major life changes, stay connected with family and trusted friends, and let them know if you need extra support during this challenging time. That might include regular phone calls, check-ins, and related support. Be clear about what you need during this time.

## Resources

- The **Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance** website offers on-line support groups and a wellness toolbox which covers such areas as sleep, setting goals, exercise, and others. [dbsalliance.org](https://dbsalliance.org)
- The **Anxiety and Depression Association of America** website has a 4-part video series devoted to helpful tips and tools for managing coronavirus anxiety. [adaa.org](https://adaa.org)
- Are you feeling stressed? Anxious? Are you at wits' end because you are trying to telework and the kids are making noise in the next room? **The American Psychological Association** has an excellent podcast by psychologist Dr. Lynn Bufka. [apa.org/research/action/speaking-of-psychology/covid-19-mental-health](https://apa.org/research/action/speaking-of-psychology/covid-19-mental-health)
- Learn more about COVID-19, how to protect yourself, and what to do if you get sick from the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**. [cdc.gov](https://cdc.gov)
- Check out the **Headspace** website and app which offer guided mindfulness meditations to help you stress less and sleep better. [headspace.com](https://headspace.com)
- Try the Smartphone app **Breathe2Relax** which provides instructions and exercises in diaphragmatic breathing, a documented stress management skill.
- Contact your insurance carrier to inquire about your mental health benefits and what services they can provide in your area. During the COVID-19 crisis, most counselors are providing virtual support.