# TIPS FOR MANAGING YOUR CORONAVIRUS ANXIETY

## PREVENT

Take **precautionary measures**. Taking precautionary measures helps you relieve stress and feel a higher sense of control. Precautionary measures include:

- Wash your hands and use hand sanitizer (here)
- Avoid touching your face, mouth, eyes and nose
- Cover coughs and sneezes with your elbows and wash your hands if using tissues
- Clean and disinfect
- Stay home as much as possible and avoid crowds
- Keep social distance (approximately 6 feet)

## ASSESS YOUR RISK

Conduct a **risk assessment**:

- Have you been exposed to the virus?
- Are you feeling any flu-like symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath)?
- Are you close to a cluster area?
  
  If the answer is **NO**, reassure yourself that your risk is low.
  
  If the answer is **YES**, know that there are actions that you can take if you are feeling sick:
  
  - Stay home and call your doctor to get instructions
  - Find information in reputable websites

Remind yourself that most people who contract COVID-19 will only experience mild symptoms. Work is being done to help people who may be more vulnerable to the coronavirus, such as seniors and those with underlying health conditions.

## LIMIT THE MEDIA

Limit your exposure to **social media** coverage and sensationalist media. Instead, look for information in reputable sources. Too much media of any kind can undermine mental health, but receiving trustworthy information from reputable sources can help you feel that you are more in control. Consuming news in social media can particularly escalate your anxiety more than traditional media. Use social media in an active manner to connect with others but be wary about information.

Look for reputable sources like the [CDC information website](https://www.cdc.gov) and your local [department of health](https://www.health.ny.gov/).  

## MANAGE THE STRESS

There are several **ways to manage your stress**, try these strategies:

- **Relaxation**. Meditation (try [Headspace App](https://www.headspace.com)), practice mindfulness ([try Smiling Mind App](https://www.smilingmind.com)), deep breathing, body relaxation, exercise, take a bath or hot shower.
- **Cognitive strategies**. Use apps to promote mental health ([Intellicare](https://www.intellicare.com) or other APPS), engage in cognitive strategies, see below.
- **Behavioral activation**. It involves scheduling out your day with activities that provide a sense of mastery, see below.

If you feel **PANIC** or a sudden rush of anxiety, try these **nine tips** to calm yourself.

If you feel **ISOLATED**, engage in activities to combat boredom and frustration, like watching a show, reading, cooking, going for a walk, etc.

## SOCIAL SUPPORT

Look for support. Activating your social network, albeit remotely, is not just a key priority, but an inability to do so is not just associated with immediate anxiety, but longer-term distress. Maintaining social networks can foster a sense of normality and provide valuable outlets for sharing feelings and relieving stress. You can maintain these connections without increasing your risk of getting the virus by talking on the phone, texting or chatting with people on social media platforms.

**Provide support.** Call or contact the more vulnerable (seniors and people with health conditions), share useful information you find on government websites with your friends and family. It will help them deal with their own anxiety.

**Communicate with your children.** Discuss the news coverage of the coronavirus with honest and age-appropriate information. Remember that children will observe your behaviors and emotions for cues on how to manage their own feelings during this time. Limit their media exposure as well.

**Seek for additional help.** Individuals who feel overwhelming nervousness, lingering sadness, or other prolonged reactions should consult with a trained and experienced mental health professional. If you are staying home, you can contact NYC Well on their [website](https://www.nyc.gov/html/nycwell) or by [phone](https://www1.nyc.gov/site/nycwell/services/contact-us.page).
**PALMS**  
**SELF-ASSESSMENT OF EMOTIONAL SELF-CARE**

**PLAN YOUR DAY**
First, **plan** your day, keeping a routine and scheduling activities throughout your day can help you maintain a sense of control. Establishing a routine can facilitate a sense of normalcy even in abnormal times.  
- **Wake-Up Time**: Set your alarm and have a fixed time to get every day started.  
- **Shower and get dressed**, eat meals at the same time each day, and block off specific time periods for work and exercise.  
- **Wind-Down Time**: Important time to relax and get ready for bed. It can involve things like light reading, stretching, and meditating along with preparations for bed like putting on pajamas and brushing your teeth.  
- **Bedtime**: Pick a consistent time to actually turn out the lights and try to fall asleep.

**GET ACTIVATED**
Second, **Get activated**. Make sure to do activities you enjoy, like watching a show, reading, cooking, hobbies, to improve your mood. Scheduling out your day with activities that provide a sense of mastery. This includes getting stuff done like your work/school tasks, the laundry, crossing some house projects off your to-do list, and getting things organized. But it is equally important experiencing fun activities, such as, cooking, baking, coloring, reading, watching a movie or TV, knitting and crafting, which can combat boredom and have calming benefits.

**LIMIT THE MEDIA**
Third, **Limit** your exposure to social media coverage and sensationalist media. Instead, look for information in reputable sources. Too much media of any kind can undermine mental health, but receiving trustworthy information from reputable sources can help you feel that you are more in control. Consuming news in social media can particularly escalate your anxiety more than traditional media. Use social media in an active manner to connect with others but be wary about information. Look for reputable sources like the [CDC information website](https://www.cdc.gov) and your local [department of health](https://www.cdc.gov).

**MEDITATE OR RELAX**
Fourth, **Meditate** and manage your stress by practicing relaxation through things like meditation, mindfulness, **deep breathing**, **body relaxation**, exercise, take a bath or hot shower, a light reading, especially during the evening before going to bed. MSK offers free meditations online, and you can find them on our website, [MSKCC.org](https://www.mskcc.org). You can also try these Apps if you are new to meditation [Headspace](https://www.headspace.com), [Calm](https://www.calm.com).

**SOCIAL SUPPORT**
And finally, provide and look for **social support**, you can use social media, the phone and mobile apps. Social support plays a big role in helping you feel better. Reach out to friends and other loved ones by talking on the phone or getting together for video chats. Check in on people who are more vulnerable, like seniors or people with health conditions. By helping others, you can also help yourself feel better.

**SELF-ASSESSMENT**
Try to do this self-assessment in the evening before going to sleep:

| 1. Did I **plan** my day and keep my morning and evening routine, setting goals for the day? | YES | NO |
| 2. Was I **active** today doing at least 2 pleasurable activities (i.e. cooking, baking, coloring, reading, watching a movie or TV, knitting and crafting)? | YES | NO |
| 3. Did I **limit** my exposure to media, checking the news no more than twice today? | YES | NO |
| 4. Did I **meditate** or engage in relaxing activities today (i.e. **deep breathing**, **body relaxation**, exercise, bath or hot shower, light reading)? | YES | NO |
| 5. Did I seek or provided **social support** to family members or friends today? | YES | NO |
**Common Signs of Stress**

- **YOUR BEHAVIOR**
  - An increase or decrease in your energy and activity levels
  - An increase in your alcohol, tobacco use or use of illegal drugs
  - An increase in irritability, with outbursts of anger and frequent arguing
  - Having trouble relaxing or sleeping
  - Crying frequently
  - Worrying excessively
  - Wanting to be alone most of the time
  - Blaming other people for everything
  - Having difficulty communicating or listening
  - Having difficulty giving or accepting help
  - Inability to feel pleasure or have fun

- **YOUR BODY**
  - Having stomachaches or diarrhea
  - Having headaches and other pains
  - Losing your appetite or eating too much
  - Sweating or having chills
  - Getting tremors or muscle twitches
  - Being easily startled

- **YOUR EMOTIONS**
  - Being anxious or fearful
  - Feeling depressed
  - Feeling guilty
  - Feeling angry
  - Feeling heroic, euphoric, or invulnerable
  - Not caring about anything
  - Feeling overwhelmed by sadness

- **YOUR THINKING**
  - Having trouble remembering things
  - Feeling confused
  - Having trouble thinking clearly and concentrating
  - Having difficulty making decisions

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**Behavioral Strategies to Cope with Coronavirus**

Behavioral Activation is one of the most successful strategies/approaches to relieve depression and symptoms associated like lack of motivation and lack of pleasure.

Behavioral activation involves scheduling out your day with activities that provide a sense of mastery. This includes getting stuff done like your work/school tasks, the laundry, crossing some house projects off your to-do list and getting things organized. But it is equally important experiencing fun activities and distract yourself with relaxing activities, such as coloring, reading, watching a movie, knitting and crafting, which can combat boredom and have calming benefits.

With increasing physical isolation during COVID-19 pandemic, you can expect to feel bored and unmotivated, lack of structure and more time at home can be perceived as distressing. If you work and sleep for 16 hours you might have 8 hours of leisure. Try to think about things to do during those 8 hours and plan your day:

1. Exercise (1 hr)
2. Cook (1 hr)
3. Meditate or relax (1 hr)
4. Read or watch the news (1 hr)
5. Do something creative: coloring, writing, knitting, crafting, baking, etc. (1 hr)
6. Entertain yourself, watch a movie, read, listen to music (1-2 hrs)
7. Connect with others via phone or social media (1-2 hrs)
8. Do chores, laundry, home projects, cleaning, etc. (1-2 hrs)
9. Take care of yourself, mani-pedi, or grooming (1 hrs)
10. Play with kids and pets
### Meta Cognitive Model

This model describes how worry is often based on the idea that your thinking is out of control and dangerous but that you need to continue to worry or overthink in order to be responsible or solve problems. When we continue to focus on worry, we have a hard time shifting attention to other things. We also deplete memory resources because we are trying to remember the worry. As a result, you get hijacked by your thinking.

### Worry: Productive vs. Unproductive

**Productive** worry leads to a to do list today. For example, productive worry might be “Do I have enough food for the next couple of days” and that can lead to an action plan to order in food. Productive worry leads to productive problem-solving today.

**Unproductive** worry is the worry that I will get the virus and get sick and die. Although this is a possibility it is unproductive to keep repetitively focusing on it. Coping or managing this thinking involves acceptance of uncertainty and some lack of control.

### Emotional Screen

Some people have a perfectionist view of their emotions which Wells calls **PURE MIND**. This is a perfectionist belief about emotions and thoughts that our emotions and thoughts should always be clear and positive and rational. But as all of us know we are all a little bit crazy —our minds are more like a kaleidoscope then they are like a linear progression.

### Detached Mindfulness

Detached mindfulness exercises are also helpful to simply observe intrusive thoughts but not engage with them. An example is imagining your thoughts using metaphors such as thinking about intrusive thoughts as trains in the station that you don’t get on, or telemarketing calls which you hear but don’t engage in, or observing clouds across the sky, or watching a stream. These are ten techniques (more info [here](#)) that can help you achieve detached mindfulness:

1. Metacognitive Guidance
2. Free Association Task
3. Prescriptive Mind-Wandering
4. Suppression Counter-Suppression Experiment
5. Tiger Task
6. Clouds Image
7. Passenger Train Analogy
8. Recalcitrant Child Analogy
9. Verbal Loop
10. Attention Training Technique

### Postponing Worry

By assigning a specific time in the day called worry time individuals can practice postponing worry until that time. As you can imagine many people think they’re unable to postpone worry but in fact they can to some extent.

### Social Impact of Coronavirus

**Social Distance** is keeping a safe distance (approximately 6 feet) from others and avoiding gathering spaces, such as schools, churches, concert halls and public transportation.

**Isolation** is the separation of people who have been diagnosed with a contagious disease from people who are not sick.

**Quarantine** is the separation and restriction of movement of people who potentially have been exposed to a contagious disease to ascertain if they become unwell, which reduces the risk of infecting others.

**Impact** of social distance, isolation and/or quarantine includes:

- Fear and Anxiety
- Anger, Frustration or Irritability
- Depression and Boredom
- Stigmatization
## Stressors During Isolation/Quarantine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stressor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration of quarantine</strong>. At approximately 10 days, the psychological</td>
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<tr>
<td>impact can be observed.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fears of infection</strong>. Fears of being infected or infecting others</td>
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<tr>
<td>(especially among pregnant women and people with young children).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Frustration and boredom</strong>. Confinement, loss of usual routine and</td>
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<tr>
<td>reduced social and physical contact with others were frequently shown to</td>
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<tr>
<td>cause boredom, frustration and a sense of isolation from the rest of the</td>
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<tr>
<td>world. Boredom is particularly problematic because when people are</td>
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<tr>
<td>bored, they tend to think in negative terms.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Inadequate supplies</strong>. Having inadequate basic supplies (e.g., food,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water, clothes or accommodation) during quarantine can be a source of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frustration and can continue to be associated with anxiety and anger 4–6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>months after release.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Inadequate information</strong>. Poor information from public health</td>
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<tr>
<td>authorities is a stressor and particularly distressing, such as unclear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guidelines about actions to take, confusion about the purpose of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quarantine, poor coordination between multiple jurisdictions and levels</td>
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<tr>
<td>of government involved, and lack of clarity about different levels of risk.</td>
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## Stressors After Isolation/Quarantine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stressor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Finances</strong>. Financial loss can be a problem during quarantine due to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>people unable to work and the interruption of their professional activities with no advanced planning.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Stigma</strong>. Quarantined participants were significantly more likely to</td>
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<tr>
<td>report stigmatization and rejection from people in their local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neighborhoods, suggesting that there is stigma specifically surrounding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>people who had been quarantined.</td>
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## Tips to Manage Impact of Isolation/Quarantine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Look for as much information as possible.</strong> People who are quarantined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>often fear being infected or infecting others. They also often have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>catastrophic appraisals of many physical symptoms experienced during the</td>
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<tr>
<td>quarantine period. This fear is a common occurrence for people exposed</td>
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<tr>
<td>to a worrying infectious disease and might be exacerbated by, often,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inadequate information participants reported receiving from public</td>
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<tr>
<td>health officials, which left them uncertain of the nature of risks they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>faced and why they were quarantined. Ensuring that those under quarantine</td>
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<tr>
<td>or isolation have a good understanding of the disease in question, and</td>
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<tr>
<td>the reasons for quarantine should be a priority.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Have adequate supplies.</strong> Quarantined households should have enough</td>
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<tr>
<td>supplies for their basic needs and, most importantly, must be provided</td>
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<tr>
<td>as rapidly as possible. Coordination for provision of supplies should</td>
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<tr>
<td>ideally occur in advance, with conservation and reallocation plans</td>
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<tr>
<td>established to ensure resources do not run out.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Reduce the boredom and improve the communication.</strong> Boredom and</td>
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<tr>
<td>isolation will cause distress; people who are quarantined should be</td>
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<tr>
<td>advised about what they can do to stave off boredom and be provided with</td>
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<tr>
<td>practical advice on coping and stress management techniques.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating with one’s family and friends is essential. Particularly,</td>
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<tr>
<td>social media plays an important part in communication with those far</td>
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<tr>
<td>away, allowing people who are isolated to be in contact.</td>
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## Sleep: Impact of Coronavirus


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sleep problems</strong>. For people that had sleep problems before the</td>
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<tr>
<td>pandemic sleep problems can worsen. But also, the pandemic creates a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>host of new challenges even for people who previously had no sleeping</td>
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<tr>
<td>problems. Social distancing, school closures, quarantines, working-from-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>home: all bring profound changes to normal routines for people of all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ages and walks of life. It can be difficult to adjust to a new daily</td>
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<tr>
<td>schedule or lack of a schedule. Keeping track of the time, and even the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>day, can be difficult due to the lack of usual routines. Being stuck at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>home, especially if it has low levels of natural light, may reduce light-</td>
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<tr>
<td>based cues for wakefulness and sleep. Working from home or not working,</td>
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<tr>
<td>be tempting for oversleeping each morning. Oversleeping can make you</td>
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<tr>
<td>feel irritable and unfocused throughout the day. Problems and issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>related to fear of contagion, anxiety, depression, loss of income, mood</td>
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<tr>
<td>changes can also interrupt or make more difficult to sleep.</td>
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</table>
Tips to Improve Your Sleep

Guidelines during the COVID-19 Pandemic from the National Sleep Foundation:

Set Your Schedule and Routine. Establishing a routine can facilitate a sense of normalcy even in abnormal times. Sleep-specific aspects of your daily schedule should include:

- Wake-Up Time: Set your alarm and have a fixed time to get every day started.
- Wind-Down Time: Important time to relax and get ready for bed. It can involve things like light reading, stretching, and meditating along with preparations for bed like putting on pajamas and brushing your teeth.
- Bedtime: Pick a consistent time to actually turn out the lights and try to fall asleep.

It's also helpful to incorporate daily routines to provide time cues throughout the day, including: Showering and getting dressed, eating meals at the same time each day, and blocking off specific time periods for work and exercise.

Reserve Your Bed for Sleep. This means that working-from-home shouldn't be working-from-bed. It also means avoiding bringing a laptop into bed to watch a movie or series. On any given night, if you find that you're having a hard time sleeping, don't spend more than 20 minutes tossing and turning. Instead, get out of bed and do something relaxing in very low light, and then head back to bed to try to fall asleep.

See the Light. Exposure to light plays a crucial role in helping our bodies regulate sleep in a healthy way. If you can, spend some time in natural light, open your windows and blinds.

Be mindful of screen time. The blue light produced by electronic devices, such as mobile phones, tablets, and computers, has been found to interfere with the body's natural sleep-promoting processes. As much as possible, avoid using these devices for an hour before bed. You can also use device settings or special apps that reduce or filter blue light.

Be Careful with Naps. While a short power nap early in the afternoon can be useful to some people, it's best to avoid long naps or naps later in the day that can hinder nighttime sleep.

Stay Active. Regular daily activity has numerous important benefits, including for sleep.

Utilize Relaxation Techniques. Finding ways to relax can be a potent tool in improving your sleep. Deep breathing, stretching, yoga, mindfulness meditation, calming music, and quiet reading are just a few examples of relaxation techniques that you can build into your routines. If you're not sure where to get started, check out smartphone apps like Headspace and Calm that have programs designed for people new to meditation.

Watch What You Eat and Drink. Keeping a healthy diet can promote good sleep. In particular, be cautious with the intake of alcohol and caffeine, especially later in the day, as both can disrupt the quantity and quality of your sleep.

Contact Your Doctor if Necessary. If you have severe or worsening sleep or other health problems, it is advisable to be in touch with your doctor. Many doctors are increasing availability via email or telemedicine.

HOME: IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS


Tension at Home

Many individuals are hunkering down in their homes — in some cases, with family members or roommates. Days on end spent inside with people you don't usually spend lots of time with can create the perfect breeding ground for conflict to arise. To be with another person 24/7, especially if you are in a small space like an apartment can be very distressing. Especially if you value space and time to be alone.

Tips to Improve Interactions at Home

Establishing boundaries is crucial when living with others. Before conflicts can intensify, it's important to establish clear boundaries with family members and roommates to discuss how living together will look. Negotiating how common spaces like the kitchen and living room will be shared as well as how much time people want to spend socializing can be helpful in stopping future problems over space from occurring. Understanding what your own social limitations and boundaries are can also be helpful to figure out before telling your family members or roommates.

Have house meetings. Start with a house meeting to discuss "rules" or "guidelines" while you all are staying at home together. Having regular house meetings can also help to improve communication and diffuse conflict and tension.
Communicating problems when they arise can help diffuse situations early. Regardless of all the boundaries set beforehand, conflict is bound to arise at some point. But when it does, the best way to approach it is to be direct rather than stewing about it. Using "I" statements about how things are making you feel rather than telling someone they are wrong is a helpful way to bring up a concern or annoyance without making the other person defensive.

Mediate conflict between others when helpful, but make sure to protect your energy as well. While you may not have problems with any of the people you are living with, tension could still pop up other between roommates or family members. Becoming the go-between in a roommate or family conflict can be bad for the situation and your mental health, so instead encourage people so speak directly with one another. Decide when to mediate between people on a case-by-case basis, rather than immediately jumping to do so.

It’s ok to avoid conflict when necessary. Feel free to avoid that conflict by going for a short walk, using headphones to disengage from the household, or asking roommates to be mindful of how loud or stressful they are given the state of things.

Understand that this is a stressful time for everyone and expecting ‘only good vibes’ is not necessarily realistic. Though it’s important to limit the conflict and stress you have surrounding you during the pandemic, it’s important to remember that it’s ok to feel stressed or upset sometimes. Being open to adjusting your communication style and learning how other people operate is a great way to reduce your level of anxiety during this period of time.

Infuse humor, the best medicine. Infuse humor, stay connected with friends and other family members outside of your immediate space.

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**FAMILY: IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS**

**Staying home will magnify family dynamics.** Children (and adults) will more easily become dysregulated. This can be especially challenging when you’re living with a teen or young adult who is struggling with depression, anxiety, ADHD, or emotion regulation issues. Here are a few ideas that may help you and your family get through some long days of togetherness under one roof as you engage in physical distancing from much of the rest of the world.

**General tips for maintaining emotional well-being in the home**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tips for Family Harmony</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Think about what has worked before and trust your own expertise and resilience.</strong> None of us have ever dealt with a pandemic before, but you have dealt with your child’s or family member’s moods and periodic outbursts. You’ve already had long weekends, bad weather days, and periods of illness when you’ve spent lots of time together. What did you do to cope? What worked? What didn’t?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use your own past experience and rituals.</strong> You know your family and yourself best. What family, regional or cultural traditions did you find helpful at times of tremendous worry, stress or pain? Think of one or two difficult times when you were a young child, student, or younger adult, and spend a moment trying to remember what you and those around you did that was helpful. How can you recreate or adapt it for today?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Carve out quiet for yourself.</strong> Find regular time off for walks, showers, and chill time. Even ten minutes of sanctioned time for yourself can help your mood. If you’re on your own, give yourself permission to let your child have more screen time, or sleep later, if that buys you a little time for yourself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Make a schedule but be flexible.</strong> With school out or online only and group activities cancelled, it is tempting to let everyone sleep in and stay in pajamas. But this can produce escalating distress and restlessness as the day goes on. Enlist your kids in making a simple schedule for the day, which ideally includes some heads-down time working on schoolwork or other projects, some household projects, some attempts at fresh air, and some entertainment. Collaborate on the schedule with everyone at home, so that your family members, feel listened to, and can share their own ideas. That said, be flexible and know that in these trying times, we can’t always stick to the planned schedule. Cut yourself, your partner, and your kids slack, when things don’t go as planned.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Remember to listen.</strong> Do just that. We’re all facing cabin-fever as well as fear of the unknown, disappointment, and frustration. Take time to check in with your family without giving...</td>
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</table>
instructions—be curious about their experience, and empathic. In fact, your empathy and curiosity might de-escalate an argument!

**Don’t talk about the news all the time.** For everyone’s well-being, try to limit how much you talk about COVID-19, and limit your own exposure to the constant news barrage. You can be informed enough, by checking the news a few times a day, not constantly.

**Lighten up on our own agenda.** The pressure is off in some ways. You might just have to let some things go to avoid a power struggle. Try to get clear each day on what really matters. It might change each day, which is okay. This is a good time for flexibility and self-compassion. Consider making new goals, like to get through this period well enough, to grow psychologically in our distress tolerance and flexibility.

**Reframe this time together and add fun activities.** Try to notice and share some of the positive parts about being home together—we all feel better when we start noticing the good. Look for lighter entertainment—check out stand-up comedy specials or feel-good movies on Netflix, Hulu, or Amazon Prime Video. Find reasons to laugh together. Share videos, like these **happy bears** that will bring much needed smiles.

**Turn up the compassion.** This is such a hard, unprecedented situation! Every one of us will probably feel unhappy, lonely, stressed, or scared at some point (or even many points) during this time. Be kind to yourself and your family.

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**STRESS OF HCW: IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS**

**Sources:**
- [https://www.ptsd.va.gov/covid/COVID_healthcare_workers.asp](https://www.ptsd.va.gov/covid/COVID_healthcare_workers.asp)

### Health Care Workers Stress

As clinicians, researchers, navigators, health educators, outreach and research coordinators and managers, we all have the responsibility of caring for patients and vulnerable community members. Some of our clinicians have continue caring for patients, often putting themselves at a higher risk. In a study conducted in China with health care workers they reported high rates of depression (50%), anxiety (45%), insomnia (34%), and distress (72%). Only 42% were treating patients with COVID-19, but psychological symptoms were higher among them. Our health care workers colleagues might experience significant stressors such as:

### Stressors

**Need to employ strict biosecurity measures.** Health care workers who are called upon to assist or treat those with COVID-19 may experience stress related to: physical strain of protective equipment (dehydration, heat, exhaustion), physical isolation (restrictions on touching others, even after working hours), constant awareness and vigilance regarding infection control procedures, and procedures regarding procedures that must be followed (lack of spontaneity).

**Risk of disease transmission.** Infection control is a significant concern that can be exacerbated by: common flu and cold symptoms being mistaken for COVID-19, the extended symptom-free incubation period of COVID-19, higher mortality rate compared to influenza, and the tension between public health priorities and the wishes of patients and their families regarding quarantine.

**Multiple medical and personal demands.** Including: continued daily workload demands competing with COVID-19 preparation and treatment measures, a need to maintain high standards in the face of a low-frequency event within which official recommendations and policies change regularly, possible separation from and concern about family members, fears about infection and subsequent implications for self, patients, and family, and inner conflict about competing needs and demands.

**Stigma.** They might also be affected by both internal and external stigma related to the COVID-19 virus and its impact, such as: others’ fear of contact with those treating patients with COVID-19 and health care workers' self-stigma about voicing their needs and fears.

### Do

Providers should engage in these behaviors:
- self-monitoring and pacing
- regular check-ins with colleagues, family, and friends
- working in partnerships or in teams
- brief relaxation/stress management breaks
- regular peer consultation and supervision
- time-outs for basic bodily care and refreshment
- regularly seeking out accurate information and mentoring to assist in making decisions
- keeping anxieties conscribed to actual threats
- doing their best to maintain helpful self-talk and avoid overgeneralizing fears
- focusing their efforts on what is within their power
- acceptance of situations they cannot change
- fostering a spirit of fortitude, patience, tolerance, and hope

**DON'T**

At the same time, they should avoid:
- working too long by themselves without checking in with colleagues
- working "round the clock" with few breaks
- feeling that they are not doing enough
- excessive intake of sweets and caffeine
- engaging in self-talk and attitudinal obstacles to self-care, such as:
  - "It would be selfish to take time to rest."
  - "Others are working around the clock, so should I."
  - "The needs of survivors are more important than the needs of helpers."
  - "I can contribute the most by working all the time."
  - "Only I can do. . . ."

**HOW TO HELP**

Many HCW who are going through this traumatic event might experience serious traumatic stress. You can help by:
- Making time to be with the person and make it obvious that you are available. Sometimes, there can be a tendency to want to move someone on before they are ready, because the traumatic experience makes us feel uncomfortable. Try to avoid doing this. People who have had a traumatic experience can feel very reassured by human contact.
- Don't take their feelings to heart. Strong feelings and emotional outbursts are common – try not to take it personally. They have had a stressful experience and that their reactions are normal and will subside in time.
- Offer practical support. You could do the housework or the grocery shopping for them or pick up their children from school.
- You may need to let the person have time by themselves.
- Let them know you are there for them without judging. Don't reassure them too soon, let them take their time and space.

Sources: APA Help Center: [https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/](https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/)
[https://nycwell.cityofnewyork.us/en/](https://nycwell.cityofnewyork.us/en/)
[http://psychiatry.ucsf.edu/coronavirus/families](http://psychiatry.ucsf.edu/coronavirus/families)