

MANAGING REACTIONS TO CORONAVIRUS: SELF-CARE STRATEGIES

Learning about the spread of a new disease can be scary. It's important for you to prioritize your own self-care to help you cope with any unsettling emotions this situation can bring. Self-care means making the choice to act in healthy ways rather than just reacting to events. Here are some self-care reminders that you may find helpful.

Physical coping strategies

- › **Getting enough sleep to feel rested** is a key ingredient of self-care. It impacts both mood and energy level. Establish a routine and get to bed at a reasonable hour.
- › **Physical activity** is a good way to reduce feelings of stress and tension. It will also help you sleep better, if it's done at least several hours before bedtime. Talk to your doctor before starting any exercise routine.
- › Eat **well-balanced meals** at regular times of the day.
- › Nurture yourself by **doing something calming and relaxing**. Deep breathing, meditation and progressive relaxation can help you de-stress. But simply doing activities you enjoy can also help release tension.
- › **Avoid alcohol and drugs** as a means to cope, unless your doctor gives you a needed prescription.

Mental coping strategies

- › **Get the facts** about the problem from the World Health Organization (WHO) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), rather than relying on the social media and television to provide information.
- › **Give your thoughts a break** from focusing on the "what-ifs" that scare you. Concentrate on the here and now needs of your loved ones, activities you enjoy, and the practical things you need to get done.

- › **Structure your time.** Large blocks of unstructured time will tempt your thoughts to center endlessly around what troubles you most. This can make your interpretation of what's happening more upsetting than it actually is.
- › **Remind yourself of your abilities and strengths.** Self-statements such as "I can handle this uncertainty" get you back in touch with the fact that you're steering your own ship – you're not a bottle tossing and turning on life's seas.
- › **Set short-term goals.** What are some things that you want to get done in the next hour? The next day? The next week? Focus on short-term accomplishments to help you feel more in control.

Emotional coping strategies

- › **Reach out to people who care and give voice to** your feelings and fears. Talk out your thoughts and worries with loved ones.
- › **Spend time doing enjoyable activities.**
- › **Have realistic expectations for yourself.** There are many unknowns in this situation, for which you cannot have the answer. You can't control every outcome. Give yourself a break and realize you are doing the best you can.

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