Coping in Difficult Times

**Source:** Abstracted from OSF Silver Cloud, “Challenging Times” module. Find additional information at [https://osf.silvercloudhealth.com/](https://osf.silvercloudhealth.com/).

In an ongoing emergency situation, it is hard to predict how things will develop, and circumstances can change very quickly. Worrying about what might happen is understandable, but it is not very useful. In fact, it can make us feel more distressed.

The first step is to separate the things you can control from the things you have little or no control over.

**Things you can’t Control**
- Actions and reactions of other people
- How long the situation will last
- What might happen to things like your job in the future.

The key to managing worries about things you have no control over is to **focus on coping strategies.** This includes finding ways to manage the feelings that you are experiencing—stress, worry, anxiety. Suggestions:
  - Set “worry times”
  - Learn to accept negative emotions
  - Journal
  - Use grounding/relaxation exercises

**Things you can Control**

The key thing you can control in this situation is **your own response to it.** Your response includes the way you think about the situation and your own behavior in relation to it. Most situations are made up of a mixture of things you can and can’t control, so working through them will usually involve both **coping and taking action.** Suggestions:
  - Take actions to keep yourself safe—wash hands properly, wear masks, practice social distancing
  - Keep a structure/routine
  - Limit media usage
  - Stick to reliable sources of information
  - Reinvent your self care, even in relation to noticing what you are thinking about
  - Stay connected to others—learning to be creative in doing this depends on one’s circumstances—join an online group related to one's interests, move some real-world groups online, set up group video calls

**Announcements**

Newsletter topic: **Navigating the Pandemic Pause**

- Because of Shelter-in-Place and group size limitations, we do not know when we will meet again. The first possibility is in August; please check the web site for announcements.

Even if you receive the print version of the *Family Forum*, you will benefit from going online (namitri-countyillinois.org) and reading some or all the links to Internet sites. Links expand your understanding of the topic. Also, the pictures are sharper.

The NAMI Tri-County Illinois *Family Forum* is a quarterly publication. With common use of the Internet, members and friends can find meeting and activity information on our web site as well as on Facebook. We also send out regular email blasts regarding our activities. **Contact information:**

**Web:** namitri-countyillinois.org (click on Contact us at this site to be added to the email blast)

**Facebook:** Nami Tri-County IL

**NAMI Dues Structure:**

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| Open Door  | $5            | (available to those who could not join without a more modest fee)

Joining NAMI includes National, State, and Local organizations and all the publications and resources available from each.


**Educational Opportunities**

We were sorry that the Family to Family and Basics Classes had to be canceled because of the pandemic. Participants will hear from the teachers once the classes are again scheduled.

**NAMI Family to Family Class**

Please call to register for the next

NEW—8-week format

Parents, spouses, friends, or adult children of people with mental illnesses are invited to participate in the next 8-week class. There is no charge for this NAMI signature program. Participants will learn valuable information to help them understand and support an ill relative while maintaining their own well-being. Please call 309-360-6972 or 309 693-0541 for information or to register for this upcoming class.

**NAMI Peer to Peer Class**

This class is currently not offered in our area.

**NAMI Basics Education Program**

Please call to register for the next class

This six-session course is for parents and caregivers of children and adolescents with mental illness. Basics is taught by parents who have lived similar experiences with their own kids and have received training to teach the course. The class covers the biology of mental illness, treatment, school interventions, and the latest research as well as the trauma of brain disorders for the child and the family. In addition, it covers preparation for crisis situations and the importance of caring for yourself. **If you are interested in this class, please call 309 251-5830 or 309 693-0541. The class is free of charge, but registration is required.**

Also, check out www.NAMI.org "Basics" video on You Tube for further description of the course.

**~NAMI Basics is now also available online through NAMI Basics OnDemand~**

The OnDemand program is also guided by parents and family members with lived experience but is self-paced and available 24/7. OnDemand offers the flexibility of participating in the course on your schedule. Both formats provide identical information, strategies and the opportunity to connect with other parents and caregivers.

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**NAMI Members Speak Out…**

Mar 11, 2020—Tony Johnson spoke at St. Paul’s Baptist Church for its Stephen’s Ministry training.

Beth Lawrence has answered many phone calls during these months of physical isolation and canceled meetings.

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Tony Johnson, 3rd from left, with the Stephen’s Ministry training group.

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NAMI has published a 24-page booklet to help navigate the pandemic pause: it is COVID-19 Resource and Information Guide.

Download it at https://nami.org/covid-19-guide

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**Shopping on Amazon?**

Please choose NAMI Tri-County Illinois
Dear Members and Friends,

How our lives have changed! We are living through a pandemic, a first for anyone under 102. First, my sympathies to any of you who have lost relatives or friends or been threatened with the serious illness COVID 19 caused by the Corona Virus. And next, have you experienced a pandemic pause, a pandemic push, or both?

Since the day of the toilet paper run, our vocabularies have been augmented. We have heard a Major Disaster Declaration, FEMA’s (Federal Emergency Management Agency) National Corona Virus Response, instructions from the CDC (Center for Disease Control) and statistics from Johns Hopkins. We’ve heard daily briefings and needs of hand sanitizer, PPE (personal protective equipment) and ventilators, hospital capacity, surge capacity, flattening and bending the curve, reaching a plateau, isolating, quarantine, social distancing, testing, reagents, contact tracing and antibody testing. People we hadn’t known have become our media guests, Dr. Fauci, Governor Cuomo, Dr. Ezike and our Peoria Health Department Director Monica Hendrickson.

At first people over 60 were asked to stay at home, then came the Shelter in Place Order and All In for Illinois. Businesses and schools closed. So began the scramble for teachers to use new techniques, students to learn from home and changes and greater demands on all essential workers. Everyone who has continued to work in health care and community service in any capacity has done his/her job, served at risk and often worked to minimize that risk for others. That’s the pandemic push. On the other hand, is isolation. People who are alone feel more alone and have reported anxiety, depression, insomnia, frustration, fear, anger and disorientation. People who live together don’t always get along. This experience has led some to seek mental health assistance who never sought it before. In this newsletter we’re trying to highlight available services, not what isn’t available. The restrictions on face-to-face interactions have been a great stimulus to tele-medicine and tele-psyche services.

Difficult times also bring out good and very positive actions in many people who display kindness, compassion, persistence, patience and solidarity, display hearts in their windows, share stimulus checks and help one another. Early on a neighbor called to ask if I had any ¼-inch elastic to make masks. She made dozens and gave a few back to us.

Years ago, as our family grew, I learned to watch families with children a little older than ours. Sometimes I didn’t understand an issue they were working through until my family reached that stage. Recently, I slacked in that effort. I failed to observe how to live as an “older adult” and be expected to stay at home. When an adult child said, “Make me a shopping list and you stay at home,” I wasn’t prepared! Now, I’m experienced. The other practice I’ve learned I’m calling “whim squelching.” That’s when a thought jumps into my mind to go any place where I usually might go and I must remind myself that it’s closed or I simply should not go. I am surely looking for a reprieve from these and am happy to hear the words unpau sing, reimagining and reopening.

My greatest pandemic claim? My husband and I have become grandparents!

Looking forward to meeting with you again,

Beth Lawrence

Meet the Lawrence’s grandson!
(Picture provided at request of the editor)
UnityPoint Health

UnityPlace

UnityPlace Access Center
Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Services

UnityPlace is proud to announce the launch of its new Access Center where individuals and families can connect with the right care, in convenient and safe ways with a single call.

Call 1 (888) 311-0321 or visit Unityplace.org to begin your recovery journey.

UnityPlace Behavioral Health Services include:

- Mental Wellness and Psychiatric Services
  * Inpatient and outpatient care for children, adolescents, adults, and seniors.
- Substance Use Disorders Services
  * Adults—Withdrawal management, residential, inpatient, outpatient, and medication assisted options.
  * Adolescents—Outpatient therapy and early intervention services.

Formed in 2019 by joining the collective strengths of:

⇒ UnityPoint Health—Behavioral Health
⇒ Human Service Center
⇒ Tazwood Center for Wellness

UnityPlace is here for you.

Heart of Illinois 2-1-1
or
309 999-4029

2-1-1 is free, confidential and available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. It is a comprehensive information and referral line to connect callers to critical health and human care programs including housing.

OSF Behavioral Health and Silver Cloud

OSF’s Behavioral Health Navigation Link will help individuals:

- understand what kind of behavioral health care they need
- get connected to available community resources
- problem solve barriers to obtaining needed services
- understand their insurance coverage and benefits information
- Call 309-308-8150 to schedule an appointment.

Are you feeling overwhelmed with stress, anxiety, depression? OSF Silver Cloud is an online tool designed to provide easy and immediate access to a digital therapy program that can be used at home. It offers supportive content for depression, anxiety and stress. A professional counselor monitors the online communications and contacts the person using this app if they see any alerts. Learn more at osfhealthcare.org/silvercloud or call 833-713-7100

OSF SilverCloud is also offering the program, “Challenging Times,” for anyone having trouble managing their feelings around COVID-19.

Illinois Mental Health Collaborative
For Access and Choice

The Warm Line: Peer and Family Support by Telephone

It’s not a Hot line; it’s a Warm line: It gives mental health help before a crisis heats up!

The Illinois Mental Health Collaborative for Access and Choice is pleased to announce the opening of the Warm Line!

Sometimes what is needed most in difficult times is someone to talk to who listens and understands.

The Warm Line is a phone-based emotional support service for Illinois residents, staffed by Wellness Support Specialists, professionals who have experienced mental health and/or substance use recovery in their own lives. They are trained in recovery support, mentoring, and advocacy and are ready to listen and support you.

The Warm Line is not a crisis hotline, but is a source of support as you recover or help a family member to recover.

Call: 1 866 359-7953
TTY: 1 866 880-4459

Hours of Operation: Monday through Saturday, 8 am–8 pm except holidays.
From the main menu, select option #2 for Consumers and Families
Next, select option #5 for the Warm Line: Peer and Family Support by Phone

In Crisis

Police – all counties: 911
ERS—Peoria County: 309 671-8084
ERS—Woodford & Tazewell County: 309 347-1148
National Suicide Lifeline: 1-800 273-8255
NAMI Crisis Line: Text N-A-M-I to 741741

Available Resources

OSF Behavioral Health and Silver Cloud

OSF Silver Cloud is an online tool designed to provide easy and immediate access to a digital therapy program that can be used at home. It offers supportive content for depression, anxiety and stress. A professional counselor monitors the online communications and contacts the person using this app if they see any alerts. Learn more at osfhealthcare.org/silvercloud or call 833-713-7100

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Heart of Illinois 2-1-1
or
309 999-4029

2-1-1 is free, confidential and available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. It is a comprehensive information and referral line to connect callers to critical health and human care programs including housing.
Keeping Connected: NAMI Online Support Groups

NAMI in Illinois, which usually offers in-person support groups through local affiliates, quickly mobilized to offer virtual meetings. Teri Latter, Program Director for NAMI Illinois, remarked: “These are difficult times for anyone, so those who live with a mental health condition are really being challenged right now.”

Because of this, NAMI in Illinois is offering three types of peer groups, available across the state:

- **Family Support Group**: Wednesday, Saturday
- **Connection Recovery Group**: Monday, Thursday (for individuals with a mental health condition)
- **Parent Support Group**: Friday

Here’s the link to the landing page for registration; it’s the same landing page regardless of the type of group; once you’re on that page, select the group for which you want to register:

[https://namiillinois.org/online-support-group-registration-information/](https://namiillinois.org/online-support-group-registration-information/)

All sessions are led by two trained facilitators. Each group is capped at 15 participants to ensure everyone has access to the resources they need. Should the shelter-in-place orders extend, the virtual programming will as well.

Support for Frontline Personnel

NAMI Illinois

Frontline Wellness Support Group

In May, we began offering a support group for those currently on the frontline, be they healthcare workers, store employees, delivery drivers, or anyone else out there in the public in an essential business. Find information regarding dates and times and registration on [namiillinois.org](http://namiillinois.org).

The Center for Youth and Family Solutions

Are you a healthcare provider, first responder or human service professional on the frontlines of the COVID-19 crisis? Have you or any of your family been infected or impacted? The Center for Youth and Family Solutions is providing a free emotional support line for individuals who need support.

**Text SUPPORT to (309) 213-2935**

One of the agency’s trained staff will contact you by phone. Hours of operation are 8 am to 8 pm daily, including weekends.

Important Contact Information

| Local NAMI Information | 309 693-0541  
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| NAMI IL – State Headquarters | 1-800 346-4572  
| National NAMI Helpline | 1-800 950-6264  
| UnityPoint Access Center | 1 888 311-0321  
| Heartland Community Health | 309 680-7600  
| Hult Center for Healthy Living | 309 692-6650  
| OSF Behavioral Health | 309 308-8150  
| Children’s Home | 309 685-1047  
| National Suicide Hotline | 1-800 273-TALK  
| American Foundation for Suicide Prevention | 212 363-3500  
| Survivors of Suicide | 309 697-3342  
| Police – all counties | 911  
| Emergency Response Service:  
  Peoria County | 309 671-8084  
  Woodford & Tazewell County | 309 347-1148  
| VA Suicide Hotline | 1-800 273-8255  

Crisis Intervention Resources

Youth: CARES (Crisis and Referral Entry Services for Medicaid Card Coverage); 1-800 345-9049  
CARES is Statewide and will assess eligibility for SASS (Screening and Assessment Referral Services)

24-hour crisis lines:  
**Nat’l Suicide Lifeline**: 1-800 273-8255  
**Peoria County ERS**: 309 671-8084  
**Tazewell & Woodford Counties**: 309 347-1148

Dial 211-1 for a non-emergency number that connects people with essential community information and services: food, shelter, counseling, mental health, employment, elderly, children & families

**How to Reach the Community Crisis Center**

130 N. Richard Pryor Place, Peoria, Illinois

If the individual is at risk:  
Contact the police department and ask for a crisis intervention-trained officer for an initial response. The police will contact ERS when the situation is secure.

If individual safety is not a concern:  
Contact ERS at 309 671-8084 – TTY Line: 309 671-3566. You will be asked for some brief information to assist their response.

**Medical Detox**: 309 689-3080

COVID-19 Mental Health Resource Hub

We’ve teamed up with the nation’s leading mental health organizations, health care payors, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs so individuals and providers alike have access to free resources: [https://psychhub.com/covid-19/](https://psychhub.com/covid-19/)
Election of Officers for NAMI Tri-County Illinois

June 2020

Ballot will be sent to members by email

Slate of Officers

President: Beth Lawrence, 1-year term
Treasurer: Roger Mohn, 1-year term
Secretary: Mary Cooley, 1-year term
Directors: Karen Rose, 2-year term
New Directors: 1-year initial term:
   Kim Blundy
   David Gonzalez

Current members completing second of 2-year terms:
Pat Edwards, Kirsten Guiliano, Tony Johnson, John Mayfield

Report on the March Education Meeting: OSF Strive, Trauma Treatment in Peoria

Review by Beth Lawrence

Survivors of trauma have lived through difficult life-changing events: car crashes, sexual assault, domestic violence, military combat, violent crime and more. Experiencing a traumatic event can overwhelm our sense of security and trigger responses in our bodies and brains that affect the way we think, act and behave. A trauma recovery program cannot change the past, but can help an individual learn to cope with the distress it causes.

Tahari Allen, Outreach Coordinator, has been with OSF Strive since its early days and explained the services it offers through mental, physical, emotional and spiritual activities and how it’s expanded and focused in the two years it has been in operation. Originally targeting only Peoria’s 61605 zip code, it has been expanded to 02, 03, 04 and beyond. The youngest clients are 16 years old, and services may be rendered for up to 10 years past an event. Specially trained counselors and case managers provide up to 16 sessions in the areas of therapy, medication management, case management and legal advocacy. Services are free of charge, meeting qualifications. They are operating through the pandemic pause.

Project or Passion: A New Advocate

Interview by Beth Lawrence

In her junior year at a local high school, Maggie Wang was presented the challenge of identifying a global problem and coming up with a way to make an impact on that problem. Maggie’s choice was the stigma surrounding mental illness in the U.S. Research shows that the stigma associated with having a mental illness hinders an individual’s ability to seek proper treatment and successfully integrate within society. What was Maggie’s plan and approach? It was to work on eliminating stigma by creating an awareness-raising campaign that would talk about what mental illnesses are and reduce common misconceptions associated with them. She set out enthusiastically, gathered information, designed and honed her infographics and launched her campaign. Maggie reports that Out with the Stigma has gained 110 followers and she has interacted with quite a few people on Instagram. Her school project is completed but the end of the project doesn’t indicate the end of Maggie's interest in ending the stigma of mental health conditions. She’ll continue to post infographics.

Call her an advocate, and keep your eyes open.

Check out this website on Managing Triggers!
Great videos.

https://youniquefoundation.org/healing-resources/managing-triggers/

Additional Resources

- www.nami.org—National Alliance on Mental Illness
- nimh.nih.gov—National Institute on Mental Health
- mentalhealthtreatment.net—Mental Health Treatment articles
- www.afsp.org—American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
- samhsa.gov—substance abuse & mental health services administration
- psychcentral.com—getting help for a variety of mental illnesses
- Choicesinrecovery.com—guides for recovery strategies
- http://mentalhealthchannel.tv/
- mayo clinic.org—many medical issues including behavioral health
NAMI TRI-COUNTY ILLINOIS
CALENDAR OF EVENTS
June, July & August 2020

~ Illinois Central College Peoria Campus, 5407 N. University, Peoria ~
Education Meetings, Poplar Hall, Room 127
Support Groups, Poplar Hall: Family—Room 132 & Connections—Room 127

June & July
Due to Shelter-in-Place orders from the Illinois Governor during this Pandemic Pause, all public meetings for June and July have been cancelled. ICC has no rooms available for meetings through July. Please notice the many resources listed in this newsletter including support group meetings.

NAMI Tri-County Illinois leadership hopes you are living well during these unprecedented times and looks forward to again meeting in person. Our phone line is still available and information is posted regularly on our web and Facebook pages. Please take advantage of virtual support available to you.

Mood Challenge, a part of Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) has been meeting twice each month for many years under the leadership of Alan and Marilyn Dorsey; they have chosen to step down from this role. Until a leader is found, all future meetings are cancelled. If you are interested in assuming leadership of this organization, please contact Alan Dorsey at 309 246-8710.

August (Pending Meeting Orders from the Governor)
Tuesday, August 4, 7:00 p.m. Survivors of Suicide, The Chapel, Proctor Hospital. Hinrichs, 309 697-3342 or Sylvia Murphy 309 208-3027
Thursday, August 6, 7:00–8:30 p.m. Monthly Education Meeting, ICC Peoria Campus, Room 127, Poplar Hall. Speaker: Sandy Georgas;
Topic: Strength I gained from having a Mom with Schizophrenia
Tuesday, August 18, 7:00 p.m. Survivors of Suicide, The Chapel, Proctor Hospital. Hinrichs, 309 697-3342 or Sylvia Murphy 309 208-3027
Thursday, August 20, 7:00–8:30 p.m. Monthly Support Groups, ICC Peoria Campus, Poplar Hall

Family and friends of people with mental health conditions. Room 132. For further information call 309 693-0541.
Connections—individuals participating in recovery. Room 127. For further information call John 309 472-5907.
Tuesday, August 25, 6:30—8:00 p.m. Princeton, IL, NAMI Family Support Group, for Family and close friends of people with mental health conditions, Perry Memorial Hospital, 3rd floor, White Oak Classroom, 530 Park Ave. E, Princeton. For information call 309 693-0541.

Save the Date
October 8, 2020, Mental Illness Awareness Week Education Program: Ask the Professionals Panel. This is an open format where we have local experts such as a doctor, counselor, police officer with CIT training, judge from Mental Health Court, pharmacist, etc. introduce their specialty and answer questions from the audience.

IDHS/DMH Recovery & Empowerment Statewide Calls
Calls are held on the 4th Thursday of each month (except November and December) From 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.
Call-In Number: 1-844-867-6167; Access Code: 4360050

May 28: Realizing the Impact We Have on Our Lives—Learn how our beliefs shape our reality, how to avoid self sabotage and how to create a personal plan for success
June 25: Searching for Answers to Life’s Changes
July 23: Envisioning Wellness in Our Careers
August 27: Shifting our Outlook
September 24: Finding the Positives in Our Challenges
October 22: Seeking a Healthy Lifestyle

Survivors of Suicide - Peoria
Contact: Rev. Eimo Hinrichs or Mrs. Pat Hinrichs, 309 697-3342 or Sylvia Murphy, 309 208-3027
Meeting Place: Chapel at Proctor Hospital, 5409 North Knoxville Ave., Peoria, IL 61614
Meeting Day(s)/Meeting Time: 1st and 3rd Tuesday, 7:00 p.m. Facilitated by: Peer/Professional Charge: None

Brighter Days Ahead
513 NE Madison Peoria, Illinois 309 222-2012
“Brighter Days Ahead” offers a positive and uplifting environment for people 18 years of age or older who have experienced a mental illness. Its purpose is for members to have a safe place where they can socialize, receive support, and be part of fun, recovery-oriented activities while envisioning the brighter days ahead.

Hours of Operation (Pandemic hours)
Monday - Thursday from 8 a.m.–4 p.m. Friday & Saturday from 8 a.m.–7 p.m. Sunday from 12 noon–5 p.m.
If you have any additional questions, we would be happy to talk either by phone 309 222-2012 or at recoverycenter@fayettecompanies.org
Supporting Kids During the Coronavirus Crisis: Tips for nurturing and protecting children at home

By Rae Jacobson, Submitted by Kim Blundy

As schools close and workplaces go remote to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus, parents everywhere are struggling to keep children healthy and occupied. If you’re anxious about how to protect and nurture kids through this crisis — often juggling work obligations at the same time — you’re in good (virtual) company. I know, as I write this from home, with my 2-year-old hovering, that we have a lot to figure out.

Here are tips from the Child Mind Institute’s clinicians to help calm fears, manage stress and keep the peace.

Click here to see all resources related to the coronavirus crisis.

Keep routines in place

The experts all agree that setting and sticking to a regular schedule is key, even when you’re all at home all day. Kids should get up, eat and go to bed at their normal times. Consistency and structure are calming during times of stress. Kids, especially younger ones or those who are anxious, benefit from knowing what’s going to happen and when.

The schedule can mimic a school or day camp schedule, changing activities at predictable intervals, and alternating periods of study and play. It may help to print out a schedule and go over it as a family each morning. Setting a timer will help kids know when activities are about to begin or end.

Be creative about new activities—and exercise

Incorporate new activities into your routine, like doing a puzzle or having family game time in the evening. For example, my family is baking our way through a favorite dessert cookbook together with my daughter as sous chef. Build in activities that help everyone get some exercise (without contact with other kids or things touched by other kids, like playground equipment). Take a daily family walk or bike ride or do yoga — great ways to let kids burn off energy and make sure everyone is staying active.

Manage your own anxiety

It’s completely understandable to be anxious right now (how could we not be?) but how we manage that anxiety has a big impact on our kids. Keeping your worries in check will help your whole family navigate this uncertain situation more easily.

“Watch out for catastrophic thinking,” says Mark Reinecke, PhD, a clinical psychologist with the Child Mind Institute. For example, assuming every cough is a sign you’ve been infected or reading news stories that dwell on worst-case scenarios.

When you do catch yourself feeling anxious, try to avoid talking about your concerns within earshot of children. If you’re feeling overwhelmed, step away and take a break, perhaps go take a shower, go outside and take a few deep breaths.

Limit consumption of news

Staying informed is important, but it’s a good idea to limit consumption of news and social media that has the potential to feed your anxiety, and that of your kids. Turn the TV off and mute or unfollow friends or co-workers who are prone to sharing panic-inducing posts. Follow accounts that share content that take your mind off the crisis — nature, art, baking or crafts.

Stay in touch virtually

Keep your support network strong, even when you’re only able to call or text friends and family. Socializing plays an important role in regulating your mood and helping you stay grounded. And the same is true for your children.

Let kids use social media (within reason) and Skype or FaceTime to stay connected to peers even if they aren’t usually allowed to do so. Communication can help kids feel less alone and mitigate some of the stress that comes from being away from friends.

Technology can also help younger kids feel closer to relatives or friends they can’t see at the moment. My parents video chat with their granddaughter every night and read her a bedtime story.

Make plans

In the face of events that are scary and largely out of our control, it’s important to be proactive about what you can control. Making plans helps you visualize the near future. How can your kids have virtual play dates? What can your family do that would be fun outside? What are favorite foods you can cook during this time? Make lists that kids can add to. Seeing you problem solve in response to this crisis can be instructive and reassuring for kids.

Even better, assign kids tasks that will help them feel that they are part of the plan and making a valuable contribution to the family.

Keep it positive

Though adults are feeling apprehensive, to most children the words “School’s closed” are cause for celebration. “My kid was thrilled when he found out school would be closing,” says Rachel Busman, PsyD, a clinical psychologist at the Child Mind Institute. Parents, she says, should validate that feeling of excitement and use it as a springboard to help kids stay calm and happy.

Let kids know that you’re glad they’re excited, but make sure they understand that though it may feel like vacations they’ve had in the past, things will be different this time. For example, Dr. Busman suggests, “It’s so cool to have everyone home together. We’re going to have good time! Remember, though, we’ll still be doing work and sticking to a regular schedule.”

Keep kids in the loop—but keep it simple

“Talking to children in a clear, reasonable way about what’s going on is the best way to help them understand,” says Dr. Busman. “But remember kids don’t need to know every little thing.” Unless kids ask specifically, there’s no reason to volunteer information that might worry them.

For example, our two-year-old daughter Alice is used to seeing her grandparents regularly, but right now we’re keeping our distance to make sure everyone stays safe. When she asks about them we say: “We won’t see Grandma and Grandpa this week but we will see them soon!” We don’t say: “We’re staying away from Grandma and Grandpa because we could get them sick.”

Older kids can handle more detail, but be thoughtful about it.

Check in with little kids

Young children may be oblivious to the facts of the situation, but they may still feel unsettled by the changes in routine, or pick up on the fact that people around them are worried and upset. Children who are tantruming more than usual, being defiant or acting out may actually be feeling anxious. Pick a calm, undistracted time and gently ask how they’re feeling and make sure to respond to outbursts in a calm, consistent, comforting way.
Navigating the Pandemic Pause Alone

Sometimes the path of least resistance is the right path
Remember to be reasonable and kind to yourself. We all want to be our best parenting selves as much as we can, but sometimes that best self is the one that says, “Go for it,” when a kid asks for more time on the iPad. My daughter is watching Elmo’s World as I write this. That shrill red Muppet is the only reason I’m able to write at all.

“We should forgive ourselves the image of perfection that we normally aspire to as parents,” says Dr. Anderson. “Maybe your kids don’t have TV or screens on the weeknights during the school year, but now that school is cancelled or online, we can give ourselves license to relax these boundaries a bit. We can explain to our kids that this is a unique situation and re-institute boundaries once more when life returns to normal.”

Accept and ask for help
If you have a partner at home, agree that you’ll trade off when it comes to childcare, especially if one or both of you are working from home and have younger children. That way everyone gets a break and some breathing room.

Everyone who can pitch in, should. Give kids age appropriate jobs. For example, teens might be able to help mind younger siblings when both parents have to work. Most children can set the table, help keep communal spaces clean, do dishes or take out the trash. Even toddlers can learn to pick up their own toys. Working as a team will help your whole family stay busy and make sure no one person (Mom) is overwhelmed.

“Be creative and be flexible,” says Dr. Busman, “and try not to be hard on yourself. You have to find a balance that works for your family. The goal should be to stay sane and stay safe.”

Surviving Self-Isolation
OSF Silver Cloud, Abstracted from Challenging Times Module
Submitted by Kirsten Guiliano

During the current crisis, guidelines have been issued asking people to maintain a safe physical distance from others, when outside their household. However, people who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 and people who have been exposed or are already sick, may have to adhere to even stricter distancing guidelines. This could involve isolating themselves from others, even within their own home. Whether because of official guidance or because you already happen to live on your own, this type of complete isolation can be difficult to cope with. Below you will find suggestions for ways to make life more bearable within the current circumstances.

1. Remember that this too shall pass
This period of self-isolation is temporary. Think about why you are doing this and keep in mind the benefits of self-isolation to your wider community. By playing your part and remaining in temporary isolation, you are helping to slow the spread of the virus and protect those most vulnerable in society.

2. Keep a good routine
We are creatures of habit and sticking to certain routines is a way of breaking up time and preventing the days from blending into each other. Don’t be too rigid with yourself; but you can still try to get up at the usual time, get dressed as you normally would and stick to regular meal times.

3. Make the most of mealtimes
You probably have a lot more time to cook or enjoy your meals at the moment. Make the most of these times. Try to enjoy the challenge of cooking healthy meals and take the opportunity to try out new recipes.

4. Exercise
If you can, try to get out for a walk or a run, even if it is just around your garden. A bit of fresh air and exercise will make all the difference. If you have to remain indoors, focus on doing exercises, such as press ups or squats or yoga stretches. There are endless online tutorials for all types of exercise you can do without having to leave your house. Maximize your exposure to fresh air by taking moments to stand at an open window or on a balcony to breathe.

5. Create a safe space
As you will more than likely be spending a lot of time inside your house or apartment, it is worth making your environment as comfortable as possible. This is particularly important if you are living with other people and have to confine yourself to just one room. Try and make this into a calm and relaxing space for yourself, perhaps with lots of cushions, plants or photos of loved ones. If you can, try and assign different areas for different activities, one corner of a room could be for working and another could be for leisure, somewhere you can sit, relax, listen to music or read. If you are working from home this will help you switch off from work and have dedicated leisure time.

6. Connect with others
Earlier in the program we highlighted the importance of maintaining a social network. This becomes even more important if your physical contact with others has been completely limited. Ensure that you have the technology and tools you need to reach out to others by phone, email, video call or even letter writing.

7. Distract yourself
When your world and your environment has become smaller, it can be difficult to avoid boredom. You could try a new project that sparks your curiosity, such as an art or craft activity, or learn a new skill via online tutorials. You can also indulge in activities such as watching an entire box set, which you may have tried to limit in the past. Give yourself a break and do things you enjoy.

8. Watch your mental health
This is a really tough situation, it is understandable that you might be feeling low or missing loved ones. Try to notice the early warning signs that it all might be getting too much for you. If you find yourself getting depressed or anxious for extended periods, reach out for support from friends, family or access the resources of help available online or by phone.

Staying Hopeful
Maintaining a hopeful outlook in times of fear can be difficult. You might feel that the future is bleak, or that you have little to look forward to. You might even feel that changing your mindset and being hopeful means you are ignoring the reality of the situation. Thinking in a balanced, yet optimistic way allows you to hope for the best, but be prepared for the worst. Allowing yourself to be hopeful can help make your anxiety feel less intense. This in turn gives you the mental energy to focus on practical actions such as self-care.
Coping with the Coronavirus Pandemic for People with Anxiety Disorders

By John Sharp, MD, 3/26/20; Submitted by Kirsten Guiliano

Abstracted from https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/

These days, we all have to accept the anxiety inherent in living in the time of the coronavirus pandemic and COVID-19. If there was a way to dispel all anxious feelings, I’d tell you, but there isn’t. The one exception might be someone who could summon such a degree of denial that they carry on as if everything was normal. And that, as I’m sure you can see, would prove to be very, very unwise.

Anxiety helps us prepare to respond in a more adaptive and healthy way. Some people find it possible to tolerate some degree of discomfort and can manage their anxiety in a healthy manner. Often that’s because some people have done well under this kind of challenge already, albeit in very different contexts. Life has a way of requiring this. Yet other people—particularly people who have anxiety disorders—may understandably be having a great deal of trouble coping.

How can I cope with the coronavirus outbreak if I have a pre-existing anxiety disorder?

Anxiety disorders take many forms and affect many people. So, what happens now if you’re someone who has suffered way too much already with a pre-existing anxiety disorder? For example, perhaps you have been, or could be, diagnosed with panic disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), or obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). Hopefully, you may find that the tips below will help you cope more successfully.

Seek support from a mental health professional

Talking to a mental health professional can bolster your ability to address present concerns, and help you clarify where your feelings are coming from. When you’re feeling extra worried or overwhelmed, it could be that some of your feelings are from the present challenge and some are from past challenges.

Many psychotherapists and health plans are offering telehealth visits during this time. Ask your therapist or insurance plan if this is an option. If you search for therapists in your area, their websites may tell you whether they participate in telehealth. Additionally, some national telehealth apps offer therapy via video or audio chat.

Work toward separating out where your feelings are coming from

Doing this work can allow you to take a breath and divvy up the different emotional contributions that feed how you’re feeling. Try saying this, for example: “Of course, I’m more concerned than (my roommate/my friend/my family), because I’m practiced at feeling anxious or helpless.”

The next step is to recognize that the percentage of feelings that stem from the past do not have to govern how you necessarily feel in the present. Try saying this out loud: “Well that was then, this is now.” A simple statement like this can actually open the door to some significant relief.

Gently remind yourself of this crucial separation, cleaving the past from the present. And kindly and reassuringly remind yourself that you have the resources—both internal and external—to manage your feelings and reactions in the now.

Keep providing yourself with guidance

As often as you need to hear it, tell yourself the following: “I can manage. I can practice what I know to be helpful, and I know that in managing my feelings and reactions I can seek support from a few close friends. Further, I can seek the support of a mental health professional when needed. By combining these strategies, I will be able to settle my nerves in order to be able to make healthy choices.”

This kind of mantra bears repeating over and over. This is not “fake it till you make it.” This is believing in yourself and believing in a course of action that you can set in motion. Try to believe that, together with supportive others, this self-guidance and this plan will work for you. Know that in many instances, people who have known tremendous adversity and even trauma are able to demonstrate a strength forged from those circumstances.

Drawing on what you’ve learned can help you cope

We are wired for fight or flight. But as a colleague of mine noted, the present situation does not require either of these. If you’re a human who’s been challenged, or somewhat disabled, by anxiety in the past, I encourage you now to draw upon what you’ve learned in terms of how you can manage successfully.

Separating out feelings from the past, reminding yourself that you have the strength and ability in the present to prevail, seeing a path forward for yourself and setting yourself upon that path is the way forward. If along that way you should stumble and fall, picture yourself as able to pick yourself back up and carry on. Reassure yourself that the basic provisions for your safety and well-being are within your power to meet. Every day that you are able to do so counts as a very good day.

5-4-3-2-1 Grounding exercise

Ohio State University Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Health’s Stress Trauma and Resilience Program

Submitted by Beth Lawrence

GROUNDING is a technique that helps us reorient to the here and now, bringing us into the present. This is an easy-to-use sensory awareness technique if you’re feeling overwhelmed, intensely anxious or distanced from your environment.

Process:
1. Describe five (5) things you see that are familiar to you in the room.
2. Name four (4) things that you can feel (“My feet on the floor” or “The cool air on my face”).
3. Name three (3) things you can hear right now (people around you, or the traffic outside).
4. Name two (2) things you can smell right now (focus on smells you like).
5. Name one (1) good thing about yourself.

You should feel calmer and more at ease by the end of the exercise. Repeat the steps more than once if needed. Take a moment to take care of yourself. Try out this technique in different situations.
Managing Stress and Emotions When Working Remotely

Eight practical tips for a new-for-many mode of work.

By Liz Fosslien and Mollie West Duffy, 3/31/2020


As COVID-19 continues to spread around the globe, more and more of us are starting to make changes to the way we work. Google, Microsoft, Trader Joe’s, Gap, and United Airlines are among a growing number of U.S. companies that have already addressed their workers’ most immediate employment concerns stemming from the pandemic, including recommending or requiring employees to work from home, offering more paid sick leave, or maintaining wages in spite of reduced hours.

We’ve spent the past four years studying the science of emotions and their intersection with our lives at work. In our research, we’ve spoken to thousands of remote workers around the world, and from these conversations—and our own personal remote work experiences—we can attest that feeling isolated is common when working from home. Living with uncertainty in the face of a pandemic makes the current situation even more stressful. Here, we’ve pulled together our top tips for both tackling the challenges of remote work and managing stress and difficult emotions.

1. **Emotionally proofread your messages.** As we move away from face-to-face interactions with coworkers, it’s important to reread your messages for clarity and emotional tone before hitting send. Sending a direct message or email that says “Let’s talk” when you actually mean “These are good suggestions; let’s discuss how to work them into the draft” might bring up unnecessary anxiety for the recipient. If you’re worried about how your tone will come across, pick up the phone or offer to jump on a video chat. Your colleague (who is probably also working from home) might be glad for the opportunity to see your face.

2. **Be mindful of time zones.** To help people in all time zones feel included, strive to delay decision-making until you’ve heard from everyone who should be involved. This is especially good time to hone your documentation skills so everyone stays in the loop, and to see if your team could cover some meeting content over email, Slack, or another messaging platform instead. After switching to remote work, Humu, where Liz works, set up a 15-minute companywide meeting every day at 11:45 a.m. PT (which allows for team members on the East Coast and in Europe to join as well), during which the team can fill one another in on important announcements. Everything discussed during the meeting is also sent out afterward in a companywide email.

3. **Schedule time for serendipitous collaboration.** When we work remotely, we miss out on all the impromptu moments with our colleagues that lead to good ideas: chatting before and after meetings, catching up in the kitchen or hallway, and stopping by each other’s desks. When meeting via phone or videoconference, schedule time for informal conversation at the beginning and end of meetings.

4. **Make room for minibreaks.** Stepping away from your desk for even five minutes helps you relax—and stay focused. Danish students who were given a short break before taking a test got significantly higher scores than their peers who didn’t get any time to relax. Mollie has been using the app Time Out (for Macs), which reminds her to take periodic breaks to stretch, walk around, or change position at her desk.

5. **Set up an after-work ritual.** It’s easy to overwork when you don’t leave a physical office at a specific time each day, so it’s extra important to keep healthy boundaries. Your brain will benefit from a signal that tells it, “Work is over!” Some ideas: Meditate, listen to music, read a magazine, or lift weights. (Some studies show that weight training boosts your mood more than cardio.) Cal Newport, author of Deep Work, ends each day by transcribing any loose notes into a master task list, shutting down his computer, and then saying the phrase, “Schedule shutdown, complete.” “Here’s my rule,” he writes. “After I’ve uttered the magic phrase, if a work-related worry pops to mind, I always answer it with the following thought process: I said the termination phrase.”

6. **Put time on your calendar to exercise.** Commit to getting some physical activity by blocking off time to work out on your calendar. Need some working-out-from-home ideas? Try a seven-minute workout, or a variety of desk stretches that might (almost) replace going to the gym, or just put on your favorite song and dance it out. Even better, make it a virtual group activity: Jump on a video call with a friend, pick a YouTube fitness video, and get your sweat on together.

7. **Check in on each other.** This can be done by setting up virtual lunches, teatimes, or what social media management platform company Buffer terms pair calls. For pair calls, Buffer employees opt in to be randomly paired with someone else at the company once a week. Calls have no set agenda; coworkers get to know each other in pairs by talking about their families, hobbies, and favorite shows. If your organization uses Slack, one easy way to set this up is through Donut, a Slack bot that pairs people automatically.

8. **Be thoughtful when you do head out.** Not all of us have the ability to do our jobs from home. For the sake of those who still have to be physically present on the job (think doctors, cashiers, and pharmacists), be sure to wash your hands regularly and carefully when you go out, practice social distancing, and thank those who can’t stay home.

In these uncertain times, many companies are striving for business continuity and supporting employees as best they can in a variety of ways. Flexible, virtual work arrangements help employees continue to do their jobs, but these unprecedented circumstances require adjustments that for many come with significant challenges. It’s important now more than ever to support one another as we navigate the days ahead.

**ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

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We provide education, support groups, and advocacy for families, friends, and individuals with mental illness in Peoria, Tazewell, and Woodford Counties.

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