



# Managing Stress in Times of Crisis

There are signs of **RESILIENCE** everywhere, as we cope with how much life has changed in such a short amount of time. Within a week Social Distancing went from a new term to the norm. Businesses, schools and colleges are figuring out how to function remotely. And strangers began helping one another as grocery stores went from plentiful to empty.



**There are actions all of us can take that are within our sphere of control to manage our worries and concerns adaptively.** With so many unanswered questions, our brains, bodies, and emotions may react in many ways.

When we don't feel in control, worry, anxiety, fear and unease are all very common. We may also notice that we aren't sleeping well, have headaches or stomachaches. We may not feel like ourselves. There is hope in knowing that by taking small steps to exercise control where we can, it will help us feel better. And then we can help our loved ones, too!

## Start with the Basics...

In order to function at our best, it is important to take care of ourselves physically. Although schedules and routines may be in flux, try your best:

- To Get Regular Sleep (7-9 hours/night)
- Eat Balanced and Nutritious Meals
- Keep Hydrated and Exercise

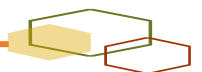
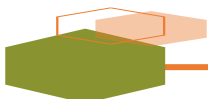
Sleep and healthy food and hydration will help to restore our bodies and mind and exercise can boost our endorphins ("feel good" hormones) and help to flush out stress hormones.

## Social Distancing vs. Social Isolation...

Based on the guidance from public health officials it makes good sense to practice social distancing. However, this does not equate to social isolation. This is an opportunity to harness technology to allow us to connect. Instead of texting, try calling or having a video chat with family, friends, and colleagues. Also consider setting up various group chats with family, friends and co-workers to increase communication and easily stay in touch.

## Monitor What You Consume...

With the news everchanging is it understandable why we may want to keep checking the latest headlines and monitoring feeds to keep on top of what is happening. Select one or two trusted sites that provide clear, concise information. You may think about [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov) or your local Public Health Department. It is important to give yourself news breaks whether that is turning off the television, computer or phone and engaging in alternate activities. It may even be a good idea to set reminders to check only once or twice a day to help you take mental and emotional space. Also, be mindful of your conversations and how often and with whom you talk about what is happening. Identify those in your social network who provide support versus those who tend to amplify anxiety.



## Look for Opportunities to Help...

In time of crisis, we may experience feelings of helplessness or powerlessness, however there are opportunities for us to help each other. Check on elderly neighbors and offer to pick up groceries if you are heading to the store. If you have a friend, family member or neighbor who is a first responder, healthcare or public health worker, send a note of thanks and/or a token of appreciation. Donate canned or boxed goods to a local shelter. These seemingly small acts of kindness go a long way both for the recipient and yourself.

## Practice Gratitude...

Of the approximately 80,000 thoughts we have each day, our minds are naturally geared towards the negative (i.e., what could go wrong). This is adaptive in that it allows us to plan and problem solve. However, when we are under stress, we can get stuck in these negative loops. Try setting a time each day – in the morning when you wake up or at night before bed – to write down or share with someone, what you are grateful for that day. A gratitude practice has been shown to improve mental well-being and enhance empathy.

## LAUGH...

In times of crisis it may feel like we must remain serious and that it is inappropriate to laugh or have fun. Laughter, however, truly can be the best medicine. Engage in activities that you enjoy and make you feel good. Connect with people you enjoy and make you feel good. Share a funny story, video or meme with those around you and your online social network.

Below you will find some additional resources (click on the images below) that may be helpful in caring for yourself, family and others in the coming days and weeks:

