



Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities

Emotional Care + Physical Distancing

Today's COVID-19 crisis is a very stressful time for so many people, especially those who are at high risk, including front line healthcare and emergency response workers. In the face of fear of the unknown, it is normal to feel overwhelmed, stressed and anxious in response to such abnormal circumstances. Rest assured that you are not alone. There are hundreds of thousands of Georgians trying to cope with the same uncertainties, questions, anxieties, and challenges as you. As you continue to courageously hold things down on the frontlines, most days under tremendous pressure, remember that it is OK not to be OK. During this time when it is important for us all to practice social distancing as much as possible to protect our physical health, it is just as important to practice self-care strategies to protect your mental health.

The following self-care strategies can help to prevent or reduce stress and feelings of anxiety, depression, or loneliness.

HOW TO CARE FOR YOURSELF WHILE PRACTICING PHYSICAL DISTANCING

- EAT HEALTHFULLY** to keep your body in top working order.
- EXERCISE** Workout at home or take a solo jog around the neighborhood.
- PRACTICE RELAXATION THERAPY** Voluntarily tensing and relaxing muscle groups can help you relax voluntarily when feeling overwhelmed or anxious.
- LET LIGHT IN** Increased exposure to light can improve symptoms of depression. Open the shades and let more sunlight in.
- BE KIND TO YOURSELF !** Treat yourself with the same compassion you would a friend.
- STAY CONNECTED** Stay connected to loved ones with phone calls, text messages, video chats and social media.
- MONITOR MEDIA CONSUMPTION** Balance media consumption with other activities you enjoy.

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*Information provided in the Mental Health First Aid curriculum.
*Mental Health First Aid is managed, operated, and disseminated by the National Council for Behavioral Health.

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1. **Eat healthfully** to keep your body in top working order. ¹
2. **Exercise** reduces symptoms of depression and anxiety, whether we're working out at home or taking a solo jog around the neighborhood. ¹
3. **Create a routine.** This may help bring order and purpose to daily tasks. Be sure to include activities such as exercise, eating healthy, meditating and other healthy pastimes. ²
4. **Practice relaxation therapy.** Focusing on tensing and relaxing muscle groups can help you relax voluntarily when feeling overwhelmed, stressed or anxious. ¹
5. **Let light in.** For some people, increased exposure to light can improve symptoms of depression. If you can, open the shades and let more sunlight in. ¹
6. **Learn something new.** Find a topic or skill of interest such as painting, baking, building that can be taught by friends and family through video calls. ³
7. **Be kind to yourself.** Treat yourself with the same compassion you would a friend. ¹
8. **Stay connected.** Even if you can't get together face-to-face, you can stay connected to friends, family and neighbors with phone calls, text messages, video chats and social media. If you're feeling lonely, sad or anxious, reach out to your social support networks. Share what you are feeling and offer to listen to friends or family members about their feelings. We are all experiencing this scary and uncertain time together. ¹
9. **Get Online.** Social media sites can make it easy to reconnect with old friends or make new ones. Research has shown that having a lot of friends in your social network may make you feel more supported and could result in less stress. ⁴ You can also find a variety of fun, interactive mental wellness and stress relief apps online. Self-care is just a download and a click away!
10. **Monitor media consumption.** While you might want to stay up-to the minute with COVID-19 news, too much exposure can be overwhelming. Balance media consumption with other activities you enjoy, such as reading, cooking or listening to music. ¹
11. **Stay positive.** Discuss experiences and feelings with loved ones, keep a daily gratitude journal, and practice mindfulness and relaxation exercises. ⁵

Sources:

¹ Kapil, R. (2020, March 20). How to Care for Yourself While Practicing Physical Distancing. Retrieved from Mental Health First Aid: <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/2020/03/how-to-care-for-yourself-while-practicing-physical-distancing/>

² Keeping Your Distance to Stay Safe. <https://www.apa.org/practice/programs/dmhi/research-information/social-distancing> Accessed March 19, 2020.

³ Maintaining Relationships While Practicing Social Distancing. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/conscious-communication/202003/maintaining-relationships-while-practicing-social-distancing> Accessed March 19, 2020.

⁴ Facebook Friends with (Health) Benefits? Exploring Social Network Site Use and Perceptions of Social Support, Stress, and Well-Being. <https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/pdf/10.1089/cyber.2012.0521> Accessed March 19, 2020.

⁵ Taking Care of Your Behavioral Health. <https://store.samhsa.gov/system/files/sma14-4894.pdf> Accessed March 19, 2020.