

## **I'M WORKING FROM HOME AND FEEL DISCONNECTED FROM MY ROUTINES. WHAT CAN I DO?**

Structure can help us feel more stable. When your work routine changes, it may help to create other routines that mirror what you'd usually do. Try incorporating activities that are healthy for your body and mind, like a walk (if you can), exercise, meditation, journaling and eating breakfast.

Establishing daily habits and routines can help you feel more in control of your own well-being. Even simple actions can make a difference:

- Make your bed.
- Get dressed.
- Move your body.
- Make time for breaks. If possible, take regular short breaks during your day. During these breaks, go outside and engage in physical activity if you can.
- Practice good hygiene, especially hand washing.
- Prioritize sleep. Getting enough regular sleep is critical for your immune system. [Here are some recommendations](#) for getting good sleep.
- Eat nutritious food as much as possible, especially fruits and vegetables.
- Connect with loved ones.

Create structure around working from home:

- Dedicate a space to your work that has few distractions.
- Dress in work clothes as you usually would.
- Schedule times when you work and times when you take breaks.
- Prioritize self-care activities throughout the day, such as taking breaks to move your body and have lunch.
- When working from home, it can be easy to work longer than usual. Instead, create a clear boundary between your work time and your after-work time.

Not spending in-person time with colleagues can be challenging. This can be especially isolating for people with mental health challenges and people living alone. While nothing can fully replace seeing people in person, technology can be extremely helpful. When speaking with colleagues, consider using video, rather than just audio or emails/IM'ing. Talk with your work colleagues about subjects that are not just work-related or about COVID-19. Have virtual coffee breaks or virtual walks together. These breaks can mimic the casual interactions you'd usually have in person.

## **WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP MANAGE ADDITIONAL FEELINGS OF STRESS AND ANXIETY?**

It's common to feel stressed or anxious during this time. It may be especially hard for people who are already trying to manage feelings of anxiety or emotional distress. Recognizing how you're feeling can help you care for yourself, manage your stress and cope with difficult situations. Even when you don't have full control of a situation, there are still things you can do.

## **Manage how you consume information**

Equip yourself with information from credible, reputable sources such as the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

Be selective about how you consume news. It's generally a good idea to stay engaged and informed, but having some limits on your news consumption can help:

- Watching or listening to the same news constantly can increase stress. Reading can be an easier medium to control how much and what kind of information you're absorbing.
- Set limits on when and for how long you consume news and information, including through social media. It may help you to choose a couple of fifteen-minute blocks each day when you will check news/social media and limit your news consumption to that time.
- False information spreads very easily on social media and can have serious consequences for individual and public health. Always verify sources and make sure they are reputable, especially before sharing anything.

## **Take care of yourself through exercise and movement**

If you're staying home, you may be less physically active than usual. It's important to keep movement as part of your daily life, whether it's exercise or light movement like stretching and making sure you're not sitting down too long.

Exercise is a great way to care for your body. It is a powerful way to improve both your physical and mental health. Research suggests that when we exercise, our brain releases chemicals that help us better manage stress and anxiety.

There are many different ways to exercise. Many of them are free, don't require any equipment and can be done at home. Most people can find an exercise routine that fits their needs and abilities. If you don't typically exercise or have health concerns, you may want to talk with your primary care provider before starting a new activity.

Some ideas of how to move more:

- Walk
- Stretch
- Dance
- Do yoga
- Do cardiovascular exercise
  - Research suggests this helps with anxiety and sleep. If you have concerns about balance or joint health, ask your provider about low-impact cardio you can do at home
- Try free exercise videos on YouTube (yoga, dance exercises, Pilates, cardio, HIIT, etc.)

## **Practice relaxing in the present moment**

Mindfulness is a way of practicing awareness that can reduce your stress. It involves focusing your attention on the present moment and accepting it without judgment. It may also help

people manage some mental health symptoms. Many medical organizations support mindfulness as a research-based way to lower your stress and boost your physical and emotional health:

- Mayo Clinic: [Tips for Mindfulness & Coping with Anxiety](#)
- [Mass Memorial Center for Mindfulness](#)
- [Mindfulness Program at Johns Hopkins](#)

There are lots of online resources about mindfulness, meditation, breathing exercises and more. Some organizations, including yoga studios, offer free classes online as well. Grounding exercises can help you notice the sights, sounds, smells and sensations around you rather than being absorbed in your thoughts.

There are many types of meditation, but in general, they involve finding a quiet, comfortable place where you can observe your thoughts and focus on your breath. Meditation can help you feel calmer and more relaxed. According to the [National Institutes of Health](#), “Some research suggests that practicing meditation may reduce blood pressure, symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome, anxiety and depression, and insomnia.”

- Meditation apps:
  - [Headspace](#) (free and subscription content)
  - [Calm](#) (free and subscription)
  - [Simple Habit](#) (subscription)
  - [Intimind](#) (Spanish language, free and subscription)
  - [Liberate](#) (free content created by and for people in the Black and African diaspora)

Breathing exercises can help calm your body and your mind. These exercises often involve controlling and slowing your breath. They may be especially helpful in managing feelings of anxiety and panic.

- [Diaphragmatic breathing exercises](#)
- [Box Breathing](#)

### **Do meaningful things with your free time**

When you can, do things that you enjoy and that help you relax.

- Read a book/listen to an audiobook. Many public libraries’ websites offer free audiobooks.
- Learn a new skill.
- Create art—draw, build something, etc.
- Journal or write.
- Play puzzles or games.
- Take an online course—there are many free online courses available.
- Do tasks around your home. Organize, do crafts, garden, rearrange your living space.
- Cook something new with ingredients you have at home.

## **Stay connected with others and maintain your social networks**

Physical/social distancing can change how you usually interact with people you care about. Doing this is essential to lessening the impact of COVID-19. There are many ways you can build a feeling of connection, even if you can't see people in person or go places you usually would:

- Make sure you have the phone numbers and emails of close friends and family.
- Stay connected via phone, email, social media and video calls.
- Offer to help others if you can.
- Ask for help when you need it.
- Share how you're feeling with people you trust.
- Regularly call, text or email with family and friends who may have more limited social contact—elderly people, those with disabilities, those who live alone, those who are quarantined or at high risk because of chronic health conditions.
- If talking about COVID-19 is affecting your mental health, set boundaries with people about how much and when talk you about COVID-19. Balance this with other topics you'd usually discuss.
- If you are living with other people, communicate expectations about how to live well together while staying home.
- Do virtual activities together.
  - Plan virtual dinners and coffee breaks
  - Do at-home crafts and activities over a video call
  - Watch a virtual concert together
  - Read the same book or watch the same movie/TV show and talk about it
  - Play online multi-player video games
  - Join an online exercise class

## **Connect to a spiritual or religious community**

Connecting with a spiritual or religious community can be helpful to find strength and consolation in times of distress, loss, grief and bereavement.

## **Explore online support communities**

Being quarantined or isolated is difficult. While you may not have in-person access to support groups, mental health providers and other support systems, there are online resources that can help.

- The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) hosts [online communities discussion groups](#) where people exchange support and encouragement. [Create a free NAMI account](#) to join one.
- 7 Cups: [7cups.com](http://7cups.com) is a free online chat for emotional support and counseling. Also offers fee-for-service online therapy with a licensed mental health professional. Service/website also offered in Spanish.
- Emotions Anonymous: [emotionsanonymous.org](http://emotionsanonymous.org) is a nonprofessional group focusing on emotional well-being in in-person and online weekly meetings.
- Support Group Central: [supportgroupscentral.com](http://supportgroupscentral.com) offers virtual support groups for various mental health conditions. Free or low-cost. Website also offered in Spanish.

- SupportGroups.com: [supportgroups.com/online](https://supportgroups.com/online) provides a listing of online support groups.
- For Like Minds: [forlikeminds.com](https://forlikeminds.com) is an online mental health support network for people living with or supporting someone experiencing mental health conditions, substance use disorders or stressful life events.
- 18percent: [18percent.org](https://18percent.org) is a free, peer-to-peer online support community for people experiencing a range of mental health issues.
- Psych Central: [psychcentral.com](https://psychcentral.com) offers online mental health resources, quizzes, news, “Ask the Therapist” and online support communities.

### **Find support over the phone**

If you need someone to talk to for emotional support, consider a warmline. A warmline is a confidential, non-crisis telephone hotline staffed by volunteers. To find a warmline that serves your area, visit [warmline.org](https://warmline.org).

Call your healthcare provider if stress, anxiety, or depressive symptoms are getting in the way of your daily activities for several days or weeks in a row.

### **For help with urgent situations**

The Disaster Distress Helpline provides crisis counseling and support for anyone in the U.S. experiencing distress or other behavioral health concerns related to any natural or human-caused disaster, including public health emergencies. Call 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746.

The Crisis Text Line provides free, text-based support 24/7. Text MHA to 741741 to be connected to a trained crisis counselor.

*The information above has been adapted from NAMI's COVID-19 Resource and Information Guide. <https://www.nami.org/covid-19-guide>.*

*Other resources include: <https://mhanational.org/covid19> and <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>*