

STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING STRESS & ANXIETY AROUND COVID-19

Created by the Mental Health Clinic at Maxwell Air Force Base

- 1. LIMIT EXPOSURE TO SOCIAL MEDIA AND NEWS SOURCES.** Constant reading/watching/listening about COVID-19-related stories can exacerbate anxiety and stress.
- 2. LEARN FACTS ABOUT COVID-19 FROM RELIABLE SOURCES.** Use subject matter experts and the Center for Disease Control website as your primary sources for information. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/share-facts-h.pdf>
- 3. FOCUS ON WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL.** It might be helpful to use a sheet of paper and draw a line down the middle. In one column list “Things I Can’t Control” and in the other column “Things I CAN Control.” For example, you might list in the first column “I can’t control how the virus spreads around me” and in the second column “I can control how often I wash my hands, how often and where I venture out, etc. . . .” This can provide concrete and productive activities into which you can focus your time and energy.
- 4. EXERCISE.** Exercising regularly can help to reduce stress and enhance your physical health and conditioning. Since most Fitness Centers will be shut down and should be avoided, exercise outdoors and look at online resources and plans for exercise regimens that can be done from home. Running and walking are also excellent ways to reduce stress and get in better shape while avoiding risk of exposure.
- 5. FOCUS ON CARING FOR OTHERS.** Nurture the relationships in your home by spending time as a family (<https://focusproject.org/family-skills> has some great family activities to consider). Call friends and family members. Write an email, send a text message, or write handwritten letters to people. Caring for the wellbeing of others helps to take the focus away from our own preoccupations and anxieties, nurtures social connection, and enhances our mental health.
- 6. TAKE CARE OF BUSINESS YOU’VE BEEN PUTTING OFF.** File your taxes. Create/update your home budget. Finish that homework assignment. Organize important paperwork. Update your resumé. This is a great time to address things you’ve been procrastinating or too busy to do.
- 7. READ/LISTEN TO BOOKS OR PODCASTS.** If you don’t want to pay for an Audible subscription, Libby and Overdrive are free apps that allow you to borrow e-books and digital audiobooks from your public library.
- 8. TAKE ONLINE CLASSES.** Here are 450 Ivy League courses you can take online right now for free. <https://www.freecodecamp.org/news/ivy-league-free-online-courses-a0d7ae675869/>
- 9. DISTRACTION.** If you’re finding that it’s hard to reduce or shake off anxiety about COVID-19, engage in activities that can distract your mind for extended periods of time. Clean your home. Start a woodworking project. Play a board game with your kids. Play a musical instrument. Watch a movie or TV show.
- 10. RELAX.** Take a hot bath or shower. Do yoga (www.doyogawithme.com or YouTube “Yoga With Adriene” are great places to start). Download and use smartphone apps that can guide you through relaxation techniques.
- 11. JOURNAL.** Research has demonstrated journaling our thoughts and feelings, especially about things that trouble us, can help to reduce our stress and anxiety, along with helping us work through problems and increase self-awareness. Using pen and paper (as opposed to typing) has been shown to achieve better results.
- 12.** See <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html> for additional guidance and strategies.