



PERSONAL STRESS MANAGEMENT TIPS FOR DEALING WITH THE CORONAVIRUS

Everyone has their own methods that they have developed for dealing with life's stressors. Aside from those, here are some universal stress-management tips to help maintain your emotional and mental wellness and resiliency in these challenging times.

- *Acknowledge your reactions*

The first step in managing the stress that goes along with a challenge like the one that we are facing with this pandemic is to acknowledge where you are personally at. Many of us are focused on getting through all of this, in the first responder and military realms this is referred to as being "operational". While this may get you functionally through these times it does not acknowledge where you are at on a personal level. Be honest with yourself on how you feel.
- *It shall pass*

The first thing to keep in mind with all of this is to realize that at some point it will pass. With each passing day information about how to manage and combat this virus continues to expand, bringing us another step closer to ending the pandemic.
- *Use your coping mechanisms*

Think back to when you had to endure other stressful times and use those methods to deal with this. Some of your previous coping mechanisms may not be available due to the limitations imposed due to this virus and the social distancing recommendations, but many may still be. Consider what worked for you before and see if they can be used now.
- *Have a plan*

First responders and military personnel excel at planning and then executing that plan. Take that mindset and bring it into your home and personal life. Having a sense of control of the things that you can will help you to mentally and emotionally get through this.

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- *Have structure*
If you find yourself quarantined keep a structure and schedule. A time to awake, shower, workout, and go to sleep should be put into place. Set daily goals, no matter how small, and work towards their completion. A sense of accomplishment will help your mindset.
- *Be flexible*
Despite creating a mitigation plan, sometimes it will not work out. New information may come to light about the virus, or other circumstances may appear, that will alter your plan. The ability to “roll with the punches” will greatly help.
- *Proactively seek to improve your situation*
Keep yourself informed about the status of the virus and the efforts to manage it. Also use this time to better your life in general. Go online and research areas in which you want to make improvements. Maximize this time to your benefit.
- *Communicate*
Talk to the people that you live with about the situation. Work together on solutions. Let them share their reactions to this challenge and share yours. In the chaos of events like this, this is often an aspect of relationships that suffers. This is a chance to get it back.
- *Keep up your social support networks*
Reach out to others outside of your home. Others are probably going through similar challenges as you. With social distancing being a key to managing this challenge, technology will be needed to help us make these connections. Many technologies are emerging to help in this area. An increase in resources such as online classes on how to do things normally done by others such as hair care, video conferencing for business and social interactions, and games being played remotely through virtual means have emerged.
- *Practice relaxation techniques*
Engage in methods to help you manage your stress reactions. Aside from those that you may have used before consider trying new methods. There is an assortment of techniques such as yoga, mindfulness, meditation, and others. Seek out and try various methods to see if any fit you.

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- *Seek peer-support/professional services as needed*
Just like in our personal life, professional work is requiring social distancing as well. For those dealing with issues such as depression this has the potential to heighten those feelings. Telehealth has been gained in popularity in recent years for military personnel seeking care from remote areas. This model has expanded to include things like peer support, crisis intervention, mental health sessions with clinicians, and group support sessions such as AA meetings for those in recovery. A number of electronic platforms exist that can help to secure the content of these sessions.
- *Follow recommended guidelines*
Although they may be inconvenient they are providing social structure and preventive measures. For example, many supermarkets save the first hour that they are open for "Senior shopping" to help minimize the exposure to this highly at-risk population. Although they can't account for all aspects, a consensus of "best practices" has been put together by world-experts. Unfortunately, when not followed, people are testing positive when they might otherwise have not such as spring break attendees in Florida recently being present in large groups and ignoring these recommendations – some are now showing up as testing positive for the virus.

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