



## Self-Care in a Time of Stress

It's probably safe to say that most of us are feeling stress, uncertainty, anxiety and fear in these times of the Covid-a9 crisis, at least some of the time. Coping with stress through self-care makes us, the people we care about, and our communities stronger.

It's probably also safe to say that most of us already have a number of self-care strategies. This is a great time to remember what we know about taking care of ourselves, and to intentionally implement more of these strategies on a daily basis.

Below are some common ways people take care of themselves – and a daily Self-Care Planning Tool which you can use to prioritize self-care during these challenging times.

**Limit your exposure to news** (TV, internet, print and social media). For most of us, one news show a day is plenty to keep informed and not overwhelmed. Choose reputable scientific news sources and limit your viewing time.

### **Take care of your body.**

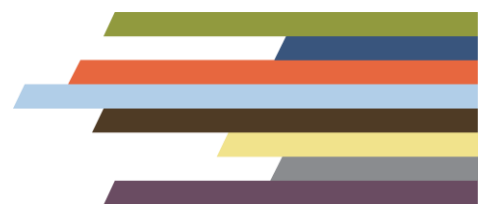
Get 7 hours of sleep a night – or more! Turn off screens at least 30 minutes before you go to sleep let your brain relax so you can fall asleep.

Eat healthy foods. Interestingly, the brain responds almost identically to stress and hunger! So, snacking may be a natural reaction to stress. Eat healthy snacks – raw vegies, nuts, fruit, cheese; salt, fat and sugar make us less content, not more content.

Exercise, especially outside, maintaining social distancing. Walk, run, bike, look at the flowers and birds, put on some lively music and dance! Even chasing the kids around the house is good exercise!

Find ways to relax – take deep breaths, stretch, take cat naps, sit outside with a good book, drink a cup of tea, etc.

**Feed your spirit.** Meditate, pray, laugh, practice yoga, light candles, read spiritual literature, scent your room with essential oils, watch videos of people helping other people. Find ways to feed your spirit on a daily basis.



**Connect with others.** Talk about your feelings. Connect with friends, colleagues, your best friend from elementary school, your elderly neighbor, and play games online with friends, etc. Talking on the phone may feel more satisfying than texting, emailing or online meetings. You can even write an old-fashioned handwritten letter! Hearing the voices of loved ones, even seeing their handwriting, can be very comforting. Write a thank-you note to local health professionals or the checks at your local market. Use your community mental health resources to get the support you need. Accept all the help you need.

**Play!** Reconnect with things you enjoy – knitting, reading, shooting baskets, things you love that you haven't had time for, get outside, pull some weeds, plant some seeds, work jigsaw puzzles, play cards or board games with your family, make art, bake bread, etc. Treat yourself to things that make you happy – flowers, breakfast for dinner, afternoon tea, funny YouTube videos, etc.

**Maintain a sense of hope and positivity.** Keep your internal language positive. Focus on progress, some new way of doing business that you thought impossible two months ago. Seek positive news. Take a philosophical attitude – what are the lessons of these times for you? Are there opportunities to learn, grow, help others or improve your situation? Hang out with positive people. Live in gratitude.

**Don't beat yourself up.** These are tough times; your feelings are real; you're doing the best you can. Let yourself work less; let the kids have more screen time; realize you don't have to be the most awesome teacher your kids ever had. Most parents who home-school their children spend between 2-4 hours a day on schoolwork. Then they have experiences – the best teacher – the rest of the day.

## **YOUR DAILY SELF-CARE TOOL**

Writing short, simple, achievable daily goals in four areas – physical, spiritual, family, and work/mental – can be a huge boost to self-care! For example:

- My Physical goal today is: take a run with my dog.
- My Spiritual goal today is: meditate on the birds in my back yard
- My Family goal today is: cook something healthy and delicious
- My Work/Mental goal today is: read one article in my "To Read" folder

Write your daily self-care goals, below. Accomplishing them makes you feel good!

<b>My Physical goal today is:</b>	<b>My Spiritual goal today is:</b>
<b>My Family goal today is:</b>	<b>My Work/Mental goal today is:</b>