

Support for the Whole Person during COVID-19

MENTAL

- Learn new skills or hobbies
- Read
- Understand personal business matters
- Discuss ideas
- Make plans for the future
- Evaluate choices and make decisions
- Teach others
- Work on puzzles
- Take an online class
- Research an interesting topic online

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL

- Express feelings to another
- Video chat or talk on the phone with loved ones
- Play with/cuddle your pets
- Teach your pet a new trick
- Limit time watching/reading the news
- Volunteer
- Speak words of affirmation to yourself
- Express anger
- Laugh/cry
- Read comics or watch a funny TV show
- Write “thinking of you” notes
- Send someone a letter (friend, neighbor, etc.) or become a “pen pal”
- Look for positive things happening

PHYSICAL

- Eat right, rest enough
- Go for a walk/run,
- Use home exercise equipment
- Follow CDC safety guidelines
- Make healthy snacks
- Time in nature/fresh air/gardening
- Dance
- Going for a drive to “nowhere”/change of scenery

- Regular health care (consider telehealth options when possible)
- Physical touch, when safe to do so
- Practice breathing exercises

SPIRITUAL

- Read inspirational writings
- Meditate/pray
- Spiritual community
- Rituals
- Awareness

PRACTICAL

- Re-work your budget
- Rearrange furniture
- Do laundry, dishes, etc.
- Mow your lawn
- Disinfect items regularly
- Organize
- “Spring clean” your house/car
- Shop online when possible
- Utilize delivery service/pickup
- Work on home projects
- Create a new routine

CREATIVE

- Writing/journaling
- Start a gratitude journal
- Decorating your house or workspace
- Flower arrangements
- Painting/drawing
- Singing
- Arts and Crafts
- Photography
- Listen/make music
- Listen to a podcast or audiobook
- Imagining
- Try a new recipe/bake

DEEP BREATHING EXERCISE

1. Begin in a comfortable position with a straight spine, such as sitting upright in a chair or lying down on your back.
2. Close your eyes or look down to assist in reflecting inward and focusing.
3. Start to simply notice your breath. Are you breathing in and out from your chest? Are you breathing rapidly or slowly?
4. Keeping your shoulders relaxed and still, begin to breathe with intention. Inhaling deeply and slowly through your nose, feeling your center expand as you fill your body with the breath. Gradually exhale out through your mouth, letting all of the stale air out.
5. Continue to focus on your breath, noticing how your center rises and falls with each breath you take. Repeat for five to 10 more cycles of breath.
6. As you breathe deeply, notice how you feel throughout your body. Are there areas that feel tenser than others? With each exhalation imagine that your body releases stress and tension.

Before ending your exercise, take a few moments to notice how you feel physically, mentally, and emotionally.

BELLY BREATHING

1. Sit or lie down as described above.
2. Place one hand on your chest and one hand on your stomach somewhere above your belly button.
3. Breathe in through your nose, noticing your stomach rise. Your chest should remain relatively still.
4. Purse your lips and exhale through your mouth. Try engaging your stomach muscles to push air out at the end of the breath.

For this type of breathing to become automatic, you'll need to practice it daily. Try doing the exercise three or four times a day for up to 10 minutes.

If you haven't been using your diaphragm to breathe, you may feel tired at first. It'll get easier with practice though.

EQUAL BREATHING

You can practice equal breathing from a sitting or lying-down position. Whichever position you choose, be sure to get comfortable.

1. Shut your eyes and pay attention to the way you normally breathe for several breaths.
2. Then, slowly count 1-2-3-4 as you inhale through your nose.
3. Exhale for the same four-second count.
4. As you inhale and exhale, be mindful of the feelings of fullness and emptiness in your lungs.

As you continue practicing equal breathing, your second count might vary. Be sure to keep your inhale and exhale the same.

LION'S BREATH

Lion's breath involves exhaling forcefully.

1. Get into a kneeling position, crossing your ankles and resting your bottom on your feet. If this position isn't comfortable, sit cross-legged.
2. Bring your hands to your knees, stretching out your arms and your fingers.
3. Take a breath in through your nose.
4. Breathe out through your mouth, allowing yourself to vocalize "ha."
5. During exhale, open your mouth as wide as you can and stick your tongue out, stretching it down toward your chin as far as it will go.
6. Focus on the middle of your forehead (third eye) or the end of your nose while exhaling.
7. Relax your face as you inhale again.
8. Repeat the practice up to six times, changing the cross of your ankles when you reach the halfway point.

4-7-8 BREATHING

(also called Relaxing Breathing)

1. Sit with a straight back and relax your shoulders.
2. Place your tongue tip against the tissue behind your upper front teeth and try and keep your tongue in place as you breathe.
3. Inhale through your nose to a count of four.
4. Hold your breath for seven seconds.
5. Exhale through your mouth for approximately eight seconds.

This is considered one cycle of breath. You may repeat this three or four more times.

The most important thing about this exercise is the 4-7-8 ratio. If you have trouble holding your breath for seven seconds, you can speed the practice up.

Once you learn this technique, you can use it to combat stress when you feel it coming on.

BODY SCAN MEDITATION

Body Scanning is a great technique that helps you become more aware of how you are feeling in any given moment.

Excess muscle tension exacerbates muscle pain, headaches, and fatigue, and scanning the body can help you prevent the build-up of pressure.

You can either do a quick body scan or a more extended scan. A quick scan can help you immediately release tension, and it only takes a few seconds.

1. Get into a comfortable position. You can sit or lie down.
2. Close your eyes for a deeper practice.
3. Starting with your feet and toes, tune into and pay attention to any sensations you feel, like pain or discomfort. You may also notice sensations like tingling, stinging, aching or throbbing.
4. Take a nice deep breath in through your nose, exhaling through the mouth, releasing the uncomfortable sensation. Allow that area of your body to release, loosen up, and soften.
5. Work your way up the body, paying attention to how you feel as you focus on the legs, the hips, the back, the stomach, the chest, the neck and shoulders, the arms and hands, and finally the face.
6. Move progressively up your body, focusing on each muscle group one at a time.

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

The exercise is designed to help the body progressively relax, just like the name sounds. This technique can help decrease muscle tension, fatigue, neck and back pain, or even muscle spasms.

This technique also reduces the physiological tension caused by thoughts that tend to provoke anxiety.

In this exercise, you should strive to tense and then relax all of those large muscles in the body. This should be done systematically either working your way down from the head or up from the feet and toes.

Deep muscle relaxation helps reduce physiological tension as well.

1. Get into a comfortable position, either sitting or lying down.
2. Strive to tense and then release each large muscle or muscle group for about five seconds or so, then relax the muscles.
3. Begin by taking a few deep breaths from the abdomen. Tense, hold, and relax each large muscle group, working your way up or down the body.
4. Try and notice the contrast between a tensed state and a relaxed state inhaling as you tense the muscle and exhaling as you relax and let go.
5. Once you have mastered this technique, you can then do a quick version in which whole muscle groups are tensed and relaxed simultaneously.

VISUALIZATION MEDITATIONS

Visualization is nothing more than forming pictures in your mind – it's using your imagination, much as you did as a child. The more you visualize, the easier it gets.

Close your eyes and imagine yourself somewhere that makes you happy, or try the “blank screen” exercise to help clear your mind.

Some ideas to get you started:

Exercise Number 1 – The Beach

Begin by closing your eyes and taking some long, slow deep breaths. Take at least 3-4 breaths. Now imagine yourself walking on the beach. Try and use all of your senses and see, feel, and hear things. Feel the sun on your skin, and listen for the sound of the waves. Imagine the brilliant blue water and how nice and white the sand is.

As you walk, you might even pick up some small shells or enjoy the feel of the ocean water on your feet. Taste the saltwater on your tongue and enjoy the experience. Stay here as long as you like, and immerse yourself in the experience.

Exercise Number 2 – The Blank Screen

The blank screen helps you empty your mind. Imagine you are staring at a white wall or blank screen. Whenever you notice a random thought, see yourself erasing the thought out of your mind.

When you allow your mind to go blank, you offer no resistance, so your vibration rises naturally. You can then work on any goal or activity you like.

Exercise Number 3 – Forest Trail

This is a great exercise to do for stress relief. Imagine yourself walking on a trail in the forest. Hear the sticks and twigs crackling under your feet as you walk and smell the mustiness of the environment.

As you walk, notice how good you feel. Feel the sun on your skin and smell the flowers and plants. You could even stop and sit on a log and see what else you notice. Take as much time as you need to rest and relax. For a bonus, see if you can picture yourself sitting in front of a beautiful, serene lake.

FREE MEDITATION APPS YOU CAN TRY

1. The Mindfulness App
2. Headspace
3. Calm
4. Stop, Breathe & Think
5. Insight Timer
6. 10% Happier
7. Breethe
8. Omvana
9. Simple Habit
10. Meditation and Relaxation Pro