



CRITICAL SELF-CARE PRACTICES

Are you feeling frustrated, exhausted, and overwhelmed? You are not alone. Our team has thoughtfully put together the following self-care suggestions to help you cope during COVID-19.

Increase Your Sleep

According to the National Institute of Health (2019), getting enough sleep is as vital to survival as food and water. Lack of sleep inhibits the formation of new neural pathways and makes it harder to concentrate and react quickly.

To improve your sleep hygiene:

- Set room temperature to between 60-67°F
- Limit screen-time after dark to reduce cortisol production.
- Ease the transition of drifting off by clearing your mind and taking several deep belly-breaths
- Enlist a family member for a 5-minute foot massage or acupressure (or do it yourself!)
- Put socks on cold feet

Move Your Body

Exercise can provide protective factors during a time of increased stress. It boosts your mood, can reduce the risk of certain illnesses, and decreases stress. And if you were exercising but stopped think again. That reduction may not be in your best interests. According to Weinstein, Koehmstedt, & Kop (2017), a decrease in exercise can result in depressive symptoms and anxiety.

To get more movement in your day:

- Lift something moderately heavy, safely (like a coffee table book or a jug of water) for 10 reps
- Take the stairs or park in an adjacent lot to increase daily steps
- Take a free online Yoga class

Meditation

According to a comprehensive review of meditation programs for psychological stress and well-being (Goyal et al., 2014), mediation improved symptoms associated with anxiety, depression, and pain, reducing psychological distress. With a 5-minute break, you can even get in a quick meditation that starts with box-breathing. Here are some resources our staff finds helpful:

- Ten Percent Happier is offering free resources during COVID-19
- Headspace meditation app
- Insight Timer meditation app

References

Goyal et al. (2014). Meditation programs for psychological stress and well-being: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *JAMA internal medicine*, 174(3), 357-368.

National Institute of Health, National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (2019). *Brain Basics: Understanding Sleep*. Retrieved from <https://www.ninds.nih.gov/Disorders/Patient-Caregiver-Education/understanding-Sleep#4>

Weinstein, A. A., Koehmstedt, C., & Kop, W. J. (2017). Mental health consequences of exercise withdrawal: A systematic review. *General hospital psychiatry*, 49, 11-18.