

Maintaining mental health and wellness during the COVID-19 outbreak



All of us are impacted by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and the feelings of fear and uncertainty around this developing situation. This guide will provide you with recommendations for self-care that can be used for yourself, your families, friends, and co-workers. Taking care of your mental health will help you to think clearly so you can help yourself and your family. Taking care of your mental health now will help your long-term healing.

We all feel stress, anxiety, grief and worry. Everyone reacts differently. Expect your feelings to change over time.

Here are basic recommendations for self-care:

- Take care of your body. Maintain routines related to meals, exercise and bedtime.
 - Try to eat healthy meals and maintain routines around meals.
 - Plan physical activities that can be done while at home.
 - Get plenty of sleep. Avoid alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs as they will disrupt sleep.
- Engage in relaxation techniques to reduce stress. Meditations are available readily online. Create a list of things you are grateful for which helps reduce stress.
- Practice patience and tolerance, which can be difficult during this time. This will model healthy habits for your friends and family.
- Connect with others safely. Plan activities with those in your home or virtually with others. You can even get creative and enjoy watching a movie or playing a game via Google Hangouts, FaceTime, Zoom, or other video conferencing tools. Share your concerns and how you are feeling with a friend or family member. Check-in with family or friends who are elderly or ill—this will promote wellbeing for both you and them.
- Take breaks and make time to unwind. Try to do activities you usually enjoy.
- If it is part of your routine, consider attending religious services online.
- Stay informed, but avoid too much exposure to the news. Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories. Be aware that there may be rumors during a crisis, especially on social media. Always check your sources and turn to reliable sources of information. The County of San Diego has information available at www.coronavirus-sd.com.

If you notice yourself experiencing signs of distress, please ensure you are practicing the self-care activities listed above.

Common signs of distress may include:

- Feelings of numbness, disbelief, anxiety, or fear,
- Changes in appetite, energy, and activity levels,
- Difficulty concentrating,
- Difficulty sleeping or nightmares and upsetting thoughts and images,
- Physical reactions, such as headaches, body pains, stomach problems, and skin rashes,
- Worsening of chronic health problems,
- Anger or short-temper,
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

Seek help when needed. If distress impacts activities of your daily life for several days or weeks, talk to your counselor, doctor, or faith leader, or contact the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) helpline at 1-800-985-5990. Visit the [County Behavioral Health Services website](http://www.sandiego.gov/behavioral-health), which includes resources for managing your mental health and coping during COVID-19.

San Diego Access and Crisis Line

Confidential and free of charge, the **San Diego Access and Crisis Line** (888-724-7240) offers immediate support and resources from an experienced counselor 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on all behavioral health topics. Language interpreter services enable assistance in 150 languages within seconds.