

# **Millennials and Covid-19**

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Coping During Covid-19 Resources

Covers many areas of support:

<https://www.hhs.gov/coronavirus/mental-health-and-coping/index.html#tips>

Excellent coping suggestions:

<https://psychiatry.ucsf.edu/coronavirus/coping>

National Institute of Mental Health has a variety of resources dealing with common emotions during quarantine:

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/education-awareness/shareable-resources-on-coping-with-covid-19.shtml>

Coping with Working from Home

<https://www.cnbc.com/2020/05/21/americans-are-burned-out-working-from-home-heres-how-to-cope.html>

<https://www.usatoday.com/in-depth/news/health/2020/04/15/coronavirus-masks-how-safely-go-outside-during-stay-home-order/2970072001/>

<https://www.verywellmind.com/the-stress-of-working-from-home-4141174>

<https://time.com/5606411/millennials-deaths-of-despair/>

# Apps to Support Your Mental Health

## Wellness Apps

- [WellTrack](#), for mood tracking, and management of anxiety and depression. Enter your Furman ID for full access.
- [Liberate](#), for mindfulness practice; developed by and for people of color.
- [Mindshift](#), for managing anxiety.
- [Headspace](#), for mindfulness and relaxation.
- [Calm](#), for meditation and relaxation.
- [Breathe2Relax](#), for breathing exercises to calm the stress response.
- [ReliefLink](#), for help with coping during crisis. Includes safety plan creation and location of nearby hospitals.

## Healthy ways to cope with stress

- Know [what to do if you are sick](#) and are concerned about COVID-19. Contact a health professional before you start any self-treatment for COVID-19.
- Know **where and how to get treatment** and other support services and resources, including counseling or therapy (in person or through telehealth services).
- **Take care of your emotional health.** [Taking care of your emotional health](#) will help you think clearly and react to the urgent needs to protect yourself and your family.
- **Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories**, including those on social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.
- **Take care of your body.**
  - Take deep breaths, stretch, or [meditateexternal icon](#).
  - [Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals](#).
  - [Exercise regularly](#).
  - [Get plenty of sleep](#).
  - Avoid excessive [alcohol and drug use](#).
- **Make time to unwind.** Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- **Connect with others.** Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.

- **Connect with your community- or faith-based organizations.** While social distancing measures are in place, consider connecting online, through social media, or by phone or mail.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

## Tips for everyone

### Stay physically safe from the virus

In this case, the biggest safety behaviors (physical distancing and hand washing) which decrease transmission of the COVID-19 virus, are also an integral part of anxiety management. Stay home when you can. When outside the home, wash your hands thoroughly and frequently.

To help us make the thorough hand-washing a new habit, try this: *“Wash as if you just chopped up a jalapeno pepper (without gloves) and you now have to put in your contact lenses.”* Don't forget the sides of each and every finger, the back of hands, palms, the creases and nail beds, and the back of nails. Wash for at least 20 seconds - as long as it takes you to silently hum the Alphabet Song, Happy Birthday, or recite the [Loving Kindness Prayer](#). If you are a speedy hummer, say it twice.

### Limit media to reduce anxiety

By now you have heard this recommendation many times and there is research behind it: Watching or scrolling through the media makes us even more anxious. An excess of news and visual images about a traumatic event can create symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and poor health years later, according to research by UC Irvine's Roxy Silver, PhD, and others.

Try to limit COVID-19 media exposure to no more than twice a day (e.g., checking for updates in the morning and before dinner) and try to avoid reading about COVID-19 before bedtime. Take a vow to not forward (and thus propagate) alarming headlines to friends and family.

The media often creates an exaggerated impression of global panic. The reality emerging from research data in Seattle, an epicenter of the outbreak in the U.S., is that most people are dealing with this very well and rising up to help others.

### Get and provide warm, comforting, social support by video, phone, or text

This is critical! Taking time to share your feelings and to listen and support others will go a long way. Talking with others who have our best interests at heart makes us feel safe. Use phone, video, text, or email. Fortunately these new highways of social contact are unlimited resources. More than just providing social support about the current crisis, it is a

good idea to use these connections to talk about the things you normally would - host your book club online, for example - which can create feelings of connectedness. (See [7 Free Apps to Help You Stay Connected During Coronavirus](#)). Host a dinner using FaceTime or Zoom so you can talk while you eat (and talk about some positive things, not just this crisis). [Loving and caring for our pets](#) can be phenomenal stress reduction for us too!

**“Social Distancing” is actually a misnomer, it is actually physical distancing** while we work hard to stay socially connected. Let’s switch to that phrase!

## Find ways of expressing kindness, patience, and compassion

Be extra kind to yourself. This is a hard time for everyone. Humans across the world are sharing this experience with you. We are all in this together and we may all emerge with a renewed appreciation for our interconnectedness. Helping others in need is both critical to get through this well, and also creates more purpose to our days and well-being.

Here are general tips and ways to help others right now:

- [Compassion in Action: 15 Easy Ways to Spread Kindness](#)
- [11 Simple Ways to Care for Each Other During the COVID-19 Coronavirus Pandemic](#)

If you are physically well, there is another important way you can help: The American Red Cross faces a severe blood shortage due to an unprecedented number of blood drive cancellations during this coronavirus outbreak. Eligible and healthy donors are strongly urged to [make an appointment to donate](#) and help ensure that lifesaving blood products are available for patients.

## Create new routines and keep practicing health behaviors

Routine and ritual are restorative to us. Our brain wants predictable activity so we can relax our vigilant nervous system. Go to bed early and go outside each day to be active. ([More information about sleep and activity](#) is available below.) Remember that our activities, thoughts, and mood are closely linked. If you want to change your mood, change your activities and/or your thoughts.

## Eat well

Good nutrition helps our mood. Stress makes us seek comfort foods, and in turn high carbs and sugars impact our mood. Many population-based studies show that a [Mediterranean diet](#) has been linked to better mental health and stress resilience, whereas a junk food western diet is linked to depression and anxiety. Try to fill your home with fresh produce, frozen vegetables, and whole foods when possible.

If you or a family member is struggling with an eating disorder, please see the [toolkit of resources](#) provided by the UCSF Eating Disorders Program.

## Work well enough from home

Working from home may be new to you and can have its own challenges, especially in a small home with children. Don't expect to have the same type of productivity as usual. We are all distracted and needing to cope with a different daily life now, while helping others.

Reduce your goals for typical work that is not urgent, if possible. Here are some recommendations on how to stay focused and productive during work hours:

- **Confine your workspace to a specific clear area** in your home so your job doesn't intrude on your personal needs. Use this same space regularly to work. This will focus your mind and increase your productivity.
- **Control sound.** Use noise cancelling headphones or earbuds, or use music or fans to create white noise.
- **End the workday with clear boundaries.** Put away electronic devices and work tools at the end of your workday and set clear hours in the day for work.
- **Have a morning or evening check-in with a colleague or supervisor** to reduce social isolation and provide structure to your day. Use video communications when you can. Seeing faces provides more social connection and information than just talking.
- [More tips on being productive while working at home from Forbes](#)
- [Resources and tips for UCSF employees](#)

## Dealing with isolation and quarantine

The psychological stress of sheltering in place when living alone or being in quarantine once infected can be severe. Here are some resources:

- [Psychological effects of social distancing](#)
- [Psychological effect of quarantine and tips](#)

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## Cognitive and somatic coping

### Our thoughts shape our physiological stress responses

Acute, short-term stress is not necessarily bad, and, in fact, [can be good](#). We can approach stressors with a positive mental view that we can cope well, that we have the resources. We can also view the physical stress response as one that helps us perform better, such as increasing oxygen to the brain. These are both types of “**cognitive reappraisal**.” UCSF professor Wendy Mendes, PhD, has shown that teaching students a positive way to view acute stress led to better performance on tests.

Be realistic and fact-based. Since the COVID-19 pandemic will likely go on for months, we need to make sure we are creating breaks and coping well with the stressful events that arise each day. It's easy to think about the worst outcomes, which are catastrophic, but that creates unnecessary stress arousal and suffering. It can be helpful to think of worst case, and then best case scenarios, and settle on something in between, [according to University of Pennsylvania psychologist Martin E.P. Seligman, PhD](#).

Creating short-term stress in the body, that we recover quickly from, can even be good. It creates a calming effect afterward, stimulating the counter-regulatory stress response. Exercise is one example. A protocol of physical acute stress developed by Dutch extreme athlete Wim Hof has become very popular in many countries. Preliminary studies suggest it is helpful for improving our immune response, and Elissa Epel, PhD, and Wendy Mendes,

PhD, are currently studying how it improves autonomic and emotional stress responses and mental health at UCSF. It consists of a carefully guided protocol of hyperventilation and breath retention and cold exposure. Wim Hof is offering the online course free now. If you want to try it, it is important to read his [safety tips](#). One can download the [Wim Hof Method app](#) to guide you through the breathing.

The acute effects of deep breathing and cognitive reappraisal are important to use throughout the day. See the breathing techniques described below.

The UCSF Department of Psychiatry has created [videos of strategies](#) you can use immediately to reduce acute stress in the middle of your day. These are often considered trauma-informed strategies. Here are four different strategies for you to try:

- [Cognitive restructuring to reduce anxiety](#)
- [Brief positive meditation](#)
- [Physical and mental grounding \(engaging sense of touch\)](#)

## Reducing stress arousal through breath practices

Practices that manage stress reactions in the moment are critical, particularly for front line providers. Taking time out during the day, frequently, to self regulate, can be very helpful. [Find a breathing technique](#) that works for calming you.

The most basic thing to know is that taking a longer exhale than inhale can help calm your body. Easy techniques include slow diaphragmatic belly breathing (vs. chest breathing), a 2:1 ratio for the exhale (i.e., inhale to the count of 4, exhale to the count of 8); 4-7-8 count breathing, and a common yogic alternate nostril breathing (pranayama). UCSF clinical professor Daphne Miller, MD, [has used these techniques](#) to help her and her patients in the hospital or even through Zoom.

## Maintaining good sleep



Sleep is a pillar of health. Getting enough sleep keeps your immune system strong. It is also crucial for helping you mentally cope during this uncertain time. That said, it is completely natural to experience more disturbed sleep during this pandemic - including difficulties falling asleep, staying asleep, or waking earlier than you are used to in the morning. You may also find yourself feeling more fatigued than usual. Below are some tips to help your sleep in this challenging time.

### Create a “COVID-19 free” wind down

Before going to bed, it is important to unplug and ready yourself for a restful night. The first thing to do is to say goodbye to all COVID-19-related news. We suggest:

- 1-2 hours prior to bed, unplug from email, news, and anything else that creates a busy mind and begin focusing on creating a calm, relaxing environment. Say goodbye to COVID news; trust that it will be there in the morning.
- Turn down the lights and do things that are relaxing. Relaxing activities vary by person, but often include reading, listening to music, or a [meditation audio](#).
- Avoid alcohol close to bedtime and discontinue caffeine after noon.

### Keep a regular sleep schedule

Maintain a regular wake up time. If possible, also try to get some direct sunlight in the morning. Together, these will help regulate your circadian rhythm.

### Don't toss and turn in bed

If you are unable to fall asleep or wake up and can't fall back to sleep, don't toss and turn in bed for longer than 15-20 minutes. Get out of bed and do something relaxing until you feel sleepy and then go back to bed.

## Make your bedroom a shrine to sleep

Be sure to keep your bedroom dark, quiet, and cool.

## Mind your day to protect your night

What you do during the day can have a big effect on your night. Working from home affords convenience, but also may lead to more sedentary behavior and napping. Napping can eat away at your sleep drive, making it harder to fall asleep at night. Inactivity can similarly lead to lighter sleep and less feelings of restoration in the morning after a night of slumber.

## Good sleep habits for children

- English version: [Good Sleep Habits](#)
  - Versión en español: [Buenos Hábitos de Sueño](#)
  - Versão em português: [Bons Hábitos de Sono](#)
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## Online stress reduction resources

Different people like different types of stress reduction practices. On this website, we have pointed you to social support (at a distance!), exercise, and sleeping well - all of which build your stress resilience. It also helps tremendously to adopt a daily mind-body practice, like yoga, qi gong, or meditation. Even if it's only for five or 10 minutes a day, that practice makes a difference. Set a time of day you block out for this on your calendar; if possible, right after waking is a great time for practice. We have highlighted [free apps](#), but there are an abundance of longer practices on the web to do at home for deeper restoration. Here are a variety of practices to reduce mental and somatic stress that can be done online. Explore these and see what you love! This is a great time to join a live group online. We will update this section regularly, including live events.

## Meditation

### AM live events (times are PDT)

- 7:00 a.m.: [Sunrise meditation](#) with Mark Coleman of Marin's Spirit Rock Meditation Center (through May 1, [registration required](#))
- 7:30 a.m.: [Morning meditation](#) with Will Kabat-Zinn
- 10:00 a.m.: [Lovingkindness meditation practice](#) with Sharon Salzberg and others from the Insight Meditation Society
- 10:00 a.m.: Free [online meditation classes for kids](#) from Mindful Schools on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays

- Various times: UC San Diego offers several [live 20-minute sessions](#) each day on coping, mindfulness, compassion, and anxiety.

### PM live events (times are PDT)

- 12:30–1:00 p.m.: UCSF's Amy Hepner has [weekly meditation sessions](#) on Wednesday via Zoom. (Meeting ID: 514 447 417, or call in at the phone number: (669) 900-6833).
- 7:15-9:15 p.m.: Monday night [meditation group](#) from Spirit Rock Meditation center in Marin with Jack Kornfield and other excellent teachers
- Various times: The East Meditation Center offers [meditation self-care groups](#) online (some specific to POC, LGBT, those with disability, and others).
- [Contagious Compassion Sessions](#): Led by UCSF Psychiatry Residency Training Program alum [Ravi Chandra, MD](#), these online sessions introduce some specific mindfulness, compassion, and self-compassion skills for this time of crisis.

### Online

- Health Journeys has [free meditations](#), includes guided meditations in Spanish.
- The [Wheel of Awareness](#) is a more visual meditation by Dan Siegel, MD.
- The [UC Berkeley Greater Good Science Center](#) offers practices some live mini webinars.
- [The Healing Mind](#) led by UCSF's Martin Rossman, MD, provides [stress and fear-reducing guided imagery meditations](#) to help with COVID-19 stress and anxiety.
- [Online Insight Meditation Sessions](#): For further live, free online meditation classes please see this frequently updated database with classes led by highly experienced teachers at all times of the day.

## Mind-body movement for restoration and relaxation

- [Qi Gong to Enhance the Immune System](#), by Roger Jahnke, OMD, contains free short practices that are beginner friendly. More programs are available at the [Healer Within Community](#).
- [Restorative yoga poses](#) (helps to use large pillows here)
- [Deep guided relaxation \(Yoga Nidra\)](#) can help with anxiety and sleep, and are available on YouTube for free practices. Free recordings of iRest for enhancing resilience, sleep, and relieving anxiety are also available on [Insight Timer](#). These can be done sitting or lying down, and have been shown to help veterans with anxiety conditions.
- Have you been sitting a lot during the day? Most of us have! This can exacerbate any chronic conditions or posture issues we have. Here are some helpful home exercises provided by physical therapist and yoga instructor Harvey Deutch at [Redhawk Physical Therapy](#) for pain relief:
  - [Thoracic spine and shoulder stretch](#)
  - [Hip flexor and abdominal wall stretch](#)
  - [Seated stretch for neck pain](#)