

Finding Calm Amongst COVID

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It seems like just the other day we were sitting at work chatting with our colleagues and planning a fun night out with friends. Little did we know a pandemic was on the rise that would turn all of our worlds upside down. With extensive social distancing measures in place, closures of gyms, restaurants, and schools as well as the loss of jobs and loved ones— we are living in unprecedented times. If you are experiencing fear, anxiety, confusion, and wondering when things will get better, you are not alone! [A recent survey](#) conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation has shown that 45% of adults say the pandemic has negatively affected their mental health. As the virus continues to impede our day-to-day lives, this number will likely continue to increase. Now more than ever it is essential that we evaluate our mental health, not only for our benefit but also for those around us. Let's take a look at a few strategies that can boost our mental well-being all from the comfort and safety of our homes:

- **Be aware and conscious of your news and media intake.** The more time you spend reading news about the pandemic the more likely you are to feel anxious and concerned. That is especially true when you can access news media 24/7. Try doing a body check each time you access one of these platforms asking yourself “how is this article/post making me feel?” Or set a media curfew an hour before bed to decrease sleep disturbances.
- **Be as faithful as possible to a routine.** Keep consistent with meals, bedtime, bathing and getting dressed, work schedules, and exercise. Don't forget to make time for activities that you enjoy! Maintaining a sense of normalcy can be a way to alleviate uncertainty in one's daily life and make you feel more in control.
- **Be “other-oriented”** Research has shown that spending time, money, etc. on others rather than yourself boosts your overall well-being more than it would have had you spent it on yourself. So send a friend a gift card to your favorite local restaurant or take the time to mow the neighbors lawn. If you're looking for some more inspiration check out the #COVIDkindness hashtag on your favorite social media site and see what others around the world are doing.
- **Maintain social networks.** Using tools like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Facetime can help you to feel connected socially with colleagues, family, and friends, as well as maintain a sense of belonging. Set up a time with your co-

workers to meet up virtually for some “water-cooler” talk or plan with family members to have a virtual dinner. Check out these ‘how-to’ guides for operating [Zoom](#), [Microsoft Teams](#), and [Facetime](#), if you’re still not quite sure how to use them.

- **Begin each day by writing down 3-5 things that you’re grateful for.** This will help you take your mind off of all of the negativity and refocus on the positive things you have going for yourself. It allows you to savor and appreciate all that you have now.
- **Take care of your body.** Strive to get 7-8 hours of sleep each night and go to bed and wake up around the same time each day. Fuel your body with nutrient dense foods and avoid loading up on junk food and caffeine as it can aggravate stress levels. Lastly get moving! Regular physical activity and exercise can help reduce anxiety and improve your mood. So find an activity you enjoy doing and move that body of yours. If you’re in need of some ideas, check out these great [at-home exercise routines](#) for those at beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels!

Everyone reacts differently to difficult situations and despite your best efforts you may still find yourself in a depleted mental state. If signs and symptoms of poor mental health continue to last it may be time to ask for help. Below are some great resources available to you:

- Salt Lake County’s HR Benefits offer an [Employee Assistance Program](#) through Deer Oaks. They can provide you with 6 free short-term counseling visits via telephone or video. They also offer, *In My Hands*, a computerized cognitive behavioral therapy. They can be contacted at 888-993-7650 or eap@deeroaks.com.
- The [‘IConnectYou App’](#) allows you to engage with a counselor via phone, video, instant messaging, or SMS text, serving as both an access and delivery tool. Download the app for free in the app store and access it using the company passcode: 111458.
- The [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) offers a free 24/7 helpline which provides confidential treatment referral and information about mental disorders, prevention, and recovery in both English

and Spanish. They can be contacted at 1-800-662-HELP (4357) or via SMS text by sending 'talkwithus' to 66746.