

Coping Tools for Pandemic-related Stress

What can I do *right now* to feel less overwhelmed?

- Take 3 long, slow, deep breaths.
- Remind myself that “this too shall pass.”
- Come back into the present moment — Wherever you are, slowly and deliberately focus on and list 5 things you can see, 4 things you can hear, 3 things you can touch, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste.
- Help someone else - Write a text of support to a friend, colleague or family member.

What can I do to help myself cope in the weeks ahead?

This is a marathon, not a sprint. Covid-19 is likely to have an impact on us for weeks or months, not days. Therefore, we must take care of ourselves along the way. What are your Gatorade breaks?

- Exercise.
- Practice daily relaxation, prayer or meditation. Try the apps Headspace, Calm, Mindfulness or Insight Timer. These strategies directly reduce your body’s stress response and help you regain focus and calmness.
- Engage in deep breathing several times a day.
- Limit your exposure to the news. Read/watch fewer minutes per day of only highly reliable news sites.
- If possible, step outside, feel the sunshine on your skin and listen to the birds (their singing reminds us that life goes on).
- Develop a daily schedule or routine and adhere to that schedule.
- Take care of your body’s basic needs — Eat, drink water and sleep.
- Spend time with a supportive friend or family member by text, phone or video conference.
- Focus on the needs of others — Ask yourself what you can do to help someone who is less fortunate than you are. Service to others is a very effective coping strategy.

How can I help my child cope with the pandemic?

- Follow a daily routine or schedule. Children are reassured by daily schedules. Their schedules should include meals, learning or school activities, naps or rest/quiet time, fun activities (playing games or doing crafts), exercise and chores.
- Limit TV coverage of the crisis. The news can be overwhelming for adults and children. Watch children’s programming instead.
- If your children use social media, tell them to ask you about rumors or other information they hear about on social media. Rumors are plentiful in a crisis and may be frightening to children. Consider limiting or restricting time spent on social media.
- Engage in active listening. If your children are concerned about the virus or your family’s safety, listen to their concerns. Ask open-ended questions like, “Can you tell me more about your worries?” or “Can you help me understand what you think about all of this?” Provide children with honest, but hopeful, age-appropriate, reassuring answers to their questions.
- Be creative about activities that can help pass the time.
- Spend quality time with your child for at least 15-30 minutes each day. Your undivided attention and time will reassure your child and build a more positive relationship between you and your child.

How do I help my child cope with fears of getting the virus?

- Focus on what you CAN do to support your children's health. Teach them proper hand-washing techniques. Tell them that hand-washing and social distancing (staying at least 6 feet from other people) are two strategies they can use to help reduce the likelihood of infection.
- Reassure your children that their doctors, the hospital and their family are doing everything possible to keep them safe and healthy.

Learn more about how to help yourself or your child manage Covid-19 related anxiety or stress:

- [CDC Advice on Handling the Stress of a Pandemic](#)
- [Talking With Children: Tips for Caregivers, Parents and Teachers During Infectious Disease Outbreaks | SAMHSA Publications](#)
- [Public Health Resources | The National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#)
- [Talking to Children About COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\): A Parent Resource from School Psychologists](#)

Need counseling?

If you are feeling overwhelmed or you want support, the psychologists at UF Health want to help. ***Tell your health care provider about our psychology team within Pediatric Hematology/Oncology at UF Health.*** We are offering telemedicine appointments during this crisis and many (not all) insurers are offering to cover these services.