

Managing Stress in Uncertain Times



Stress is an inevitable part of our lives, and we need a certain amount of it to function in our daily routines. How else would your body know to react when a car brakes suddenly in front of you? Or when you need to make that three-pointer shot to win the game in overtime?

But too much stress can negatively impact how we function. It affects our bodies in ways that we might not always be aware of. It's a tough time in our world right now. There is a lot of uncertainty, and things are chaotic and constantly changing. Paired up with the usual day-to-day stresses of life, this uncertainty and tension can increase our levels of anxiety.

The good news is that there are ways to manage this stress by practicing simple, quick and easy strategies. Whether you are a parent of a teen or a teen yourself, check out this list of tips made especially for you. The best part is that practicing these tips doesn't take long! Many people hear the term "stress management" or "self-care" and think that it requires a whole day off, a day at the spa, and eating a fancy dinner. The reality is not many people have the time or the money for that! The best way to manage stress is by finding two minutes in your day to practice healthy ways of coping. That's all it takes! If you can do it longer or multiple times in the day, great! If you can't, that's okay, too! We're all doing the best we can right now in some tough circumstances.

Self-Care Tips During Times of Stress

Follow local health guidelines.

Observe local and county guidelines, wash your hands frequently, practice social distancing, and wear masks where and when appropriate.



Practice good sleep hygiene.



Try to avoid excessive sleep, which can be a common way of escaping. Strive for a consistent sleep routine: going to bed and getting up at the same time every day; not using your bed for anything other than sleeping; and putting away phones and other electronics that flood the body with stimulation that keeps us awake. For more information, check out [this webpage](#).

Eat a healthy diet.

Teens notoriously skip breakfast and sometimes lunch or choose unhealthy snacks and tend to have large dinners too close to bedtime. Help them by encouraging them to make healthy choices and give them healthy snack and meal options. Teens, you literally need energy from what you put into your body to get through your day! More information for parents can be found [here](#).



Practice gratitude.



Gratitude is all about focusing on what we have, not what we don't have. Take one or two minutes out of your day to reflect on what you are thankful for, it could be something small (I had the best cup of coffee this morning!) or big (I scored the winning goal in the big game!).

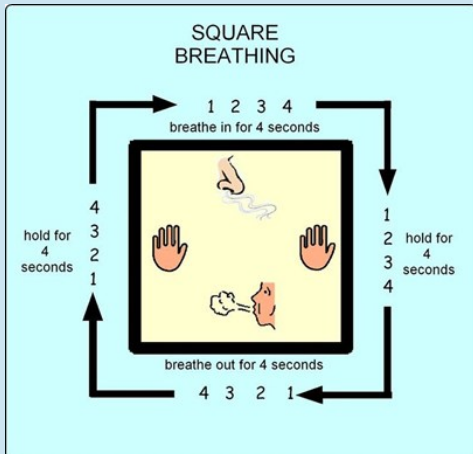


4 Strategies for Healthy Coping during Stressful Times

Deep breathing

Deep breathing is a simple exercise that you can do anytime, anywhere. Often, when we are stressed, our breath becomes shallow and quickens, which can even lead to hyperventilation in extreme cases. Taking slow, mindful breaths will physiologically signal your brain to calm and focus, which then communicates to your body to slow down. Deep breathing helps us to not only calm ourselves but gives our minds and bodies a chance to process feelings before we act upon them in a way that may get us in trouble.

Here is one of the easiest ways to practice deep breathing:



Progressive muscle relaxation

Do you ever notice that when you're stressed you get body aches, headaches or have difficulty falling asleep? Progressive muscle relaxation involves purposely tensing and releasing different muscle groups to relax the tension we hold in our bodies. Check out these helpful resources:

- [A 6-minute Mindful Progressive Muscle Relaxation YouTube video](#)
- [Progressive Muscle Relaxation Script](#)

Guided Meditation

Guided Meditation is a practice of meditation led by another person. The great part is you can meditate for as long as you want! It incorporates deep breathing, visualization and tuning into your body while practicing acceptance. In other words, just noticing and not judging the moment or where you are at the moment.

Helpful (and free) apps that have guided meditation and other helpful activities:



[Calm](#)



[Headspace](#)



[MyLife](#)



[Insight Timer](#)

Grounding

Grounding techniques are “simple active strategies to help with orienting and focusing on the present and/or to distract or self-soothe when feeling distressed (Berryman & Champagne, 2006). They incorporate different activities involving the senses.

