

# SELF-CARE STRATEGIES IN STRESSFUL TIMES

This is a time of immense challenges: we have just witnessed another traumatic death of a person of color at the hands of police, on top of fears for our physical health and safety in the midst of a pandemic and sweeping changes in our daily routines and work lives. These events may trigger a variety of reactions. They might include intense emotions, like outrage, grief, profound sadness, anxiety, or fear. You might notice physical reactions like trouble sleeping, difficulty concentrating, restlessness, or exhaustion. The severity and duration of these reactions can be more easily managed when you practice good self-care. Here are some self-care reminders that may be helpful:

## Mental and emotional coping strategies

- › **Take a break from worries.** You may find that these events dominate your thoughts, making it difficult to focus on anything else. You may feel that you aren't doing or caring enough. Give yourself permission to emotionally separate to help you de-stress. Close your eyes and take a few breaths. Name three things you can see, touch, and hear in the moment.
- › **Focus on what you can control.** Create routines to help give you structure in what may feel like chaos. Schedule blocks of time to focus on one task, then move to the next. Concentrate on concrete, achievable tasks.
- › **Recognize the difficulties of the current situation, and know that you may not be functioning at your best right now.** Lower expectations of what you "should be doing." Be gentle with yourself. Your personal best will vary according to your mental, emotional, and physical health at each moment.
- › **Reflect on challenges you've encountered in your life and how you overcame them.** Self-statements such as "I can handle this" and "I've gotten through so much already" can help you continue to tap into your natural resilience.
- › **Reach out to people** you can trust with your feelings and fears. Learn more about the mental and emotional benefits of counseling. Add a licensed therapist to your support team.

- › **Connect with friends and family,** or do something that is uplifting to you. Engage in activities that allow you to unwind and emotionally recharge.
- › **Be kind to yourself.** Recognize what you've done to support others and yourself. Treat yourself like you would a friend or family member in challenging times.

## Physical coping strategies

- › **Getting enough sleep to feel rested** is a key ingredient of managing stress and anxiety. It impacts both mood and energy level. Establish a routine that helps you to wind down and get adequate sleep.
- › **Physical activity** is a good way to reduce feelings of tension. Practice something you enjoy outdoors, or find workout videos online. Talk with your doctor before starting any exercise routine.
- › Eat **well-balanced meals** at regular times of the day. Prep healthy meals ahead of time for lunch. When making healthy meals at home, make extra to put in the freezer and stock up on healthy snacks for when you are pressed for time.
- › **Do something calming and relaxing** whenever you can. Deep breathing, meditation and progressive relaxation can help you de-stress. Take a warm bath, or get outdoors in nature. Doing simple, repetitive tasks like folding laundry, washing dishes, or sweeping the floor can also help release tension.
- › **Avoid alcohol and drugs** as a means to cope. These are temporary fixes that can make it harder to manage the stress.

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