

*"For safety's sake—do something."*

## Think Positive About Your Mental Health

During these unprecedented times, our old ways of coping may not always be sufficient. We need to put more effort into it, create new habits, and have positive coping skills. The stress that many people are feeling can really take a toll on our physical and mental health. The holidays, lost friends and loved ones, sickness, employment, and a host of other topics are causing quite an issue. During times of extreme stress, being aware of declining mental health is really important. Many people are able to see others decline much sooner and more clearly than they may see themselves. It is normal during stressful events to feel some sadness, fear, and anxiety. If these feelings are left unaddressed for too long, they can lead to more significant problems such as suicidal thoughts, violence, and addiction.

Seek help when needed. Don't let symptoms of depression or anxiety, drug and alcohol abuse, or other unhealthy behaviors get too far along before you reach out for assistance. Lately, professionals are seeing increased mental health disorders. The belief is it is in reaction to such heavy, ongoing stress that people are feeling. Take time to check in with yourself. How are you dealing with difficult emotions and dramatic world changes? If you notice signs of emotional trouble in yourself, reach out for help and seek professional assistance if needed.

### *Tips to recovering your energy and spirit, developing resilience, and maintaining healthy methods of coping.*

1. **Connect with others.** Being isolated can lead to depression, anxiety, and loss of social connections. Use zoom, skype, FaceTime, or calls to help stay connected to friends or loved ones. Talk to those close to you about your emotions. Get it off your chest.
2. **Focus on gratitude.** Feelings of gratitude have been shown to scientifically change our brain function and decrease depression. Make a list of 5-10 things you are grateful for each day. Pick small things and write them down. Do this every day for 30 days. Some days it may only be having clothes to wear or food to eat. Other days it may be gratitude for friends, your job. Whatever it may be, it will help elevate your mood.
3. **Mental health or drug / alcohol service benefits.** Use your company and healthcare plan offered to you. This is not a time to think you are too tough or that asking for help makes you weak. It is perfectly normal to need outside help during such trying times. We have mental health / drug and alcohol benefits for a reason, so if there ever was a time to use them, it is now! Drugs and alcohol only compound stress. You are not alone and solutions are out there for you.
4. **Be of service to others.** Seek out an organization or charity that needs help and volunteer your service. Oftentimes, simply breaking your thoughts can help. If you cannot afford to donate financially, ask what other types of help they need. Many organizations are shorthanded and may have other tasks that you can help with. It feels good to help others.
5. **Stick to a daily routine and schedule.** It is easy to procrastinate, put things off thinking you have more time or unstructured days, but deadlines are still deadlines. Get up at the same time every day and create "office hours". On Sunday night, look at your schedule for the week and identify deadlines, must-do, and prioritize your work.
6. **Relax.** Take time each day to let your mind rest and recover. In the world of safety, there has never been a more pressing time for people to feel safe. That includes you! When we do not feel safe, we go into fight or flight mode. Our mind and body get primed to protect ourselves and our loved ones. When we are in fight or flight, our thinking becomes narrow. We lose sight of the bigger picture, and have trouble finding solutions. We need to help our partners and clients build and create safe practices and environments.