

A Message



FROM OUR COUNSELORS

HOW CAN I MANAGE MY STRESS DURING COVID-19?

Stress is a natural feeling of not being able to deal with the challenges around us. It is our body's natural response when it perceives threat. Stress can affect overall health. It can make us overwhelmed, making it hard to deal with everyday life.



During this pandemic, our bodies are experiencing stress in many ways. Learning healthy strategies to deal with stress is the first step to improving mental health. Below are some stress management techniques. Before you begin practicing these exercises, please take a moment to see how your body is feeling. On a scale from 1-10, (1 is "I have very little stress", and 10 is "I'm extremely stressed"), how would you rate your stress level BEFORE you begin the exercise? Once you have completed one or all the exercises, rate your stress level AFTER?



USING YOUR 5 SENSES

Sit in a comfortable position and close your eyes. Take a couple of deep breaths, in through your nose (count to 3) and out through your mouth (count to 3). Now open your eyes and take a look at your surroundings. Name out loud your answers to the following:

- 5-things you can see (what do you see around you right now, ex. chair, computer)
- 4-things you can touch (ex. your hair, the chair you are sitting on)
- 3- things you can hear (ex. birds outside, ticking of clock)
- 2- things you can smell (ex. your perfume/cologne, the room air freshener)
- 1-thing you can taste (ex. gum, piece of chocolate)
Take your time to savor this item.
- Take a deep breath to end.

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

Find a quiet place where you can sit or lie down comfortably. The idea of this technique is to intentionally tense each muscle, and then release the tension.

Let's start with your feet.

1. Tense the muscles in your toes by curling them into your foot. Notice how it feels when your foot is tense? Hold the tension for 5 seconds. Now, release the tension from your toes. Let them relax. Notice how your toes feel differently after you release the tension?

2. Bring your awareness to your lower legs...to your calf muscles. As you draw in a nice deep breath, point your toes up towards your knees and tighten these muscles. Hold for just a moment, and then let those muscles go limp as you exhale.

3. Bring your awareness to your stomach. Draw in a nice deep breath and then tighten these muscles. Imagine you are trying to touch your belly button to your spine. Now release your breath and let your muscles relax.

Notice the sensation of relief that comes from letting go?

Follow this pattern of tensing and releasing tension all throughout your body. After you finish with your feet, legs and stomach, move up through your arms, hands, neck, face and head.

Please take a few more minutes to rest. Relax. Listen to the sound of your breathing and enjoy the lovely, warm sensation of physical relaxation.

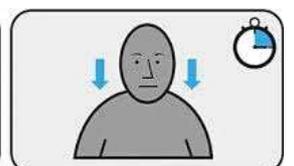
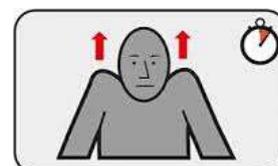
JOURNALING

Journaling is a simple tool with many benefits. No grammar skills are needed, it's all about trusting the flow of your writing. Journaling allows you to be yourself by helping you explore your thoughts and feelings. Find a quiet place where you can be comfortable and write.

- Don't censor yourself. Write imperfectly, privately, openly, and honestly. If you don't want anyone to see what you've written, you can shred or burn the pages (safely, of course) once you've finished.
- Do something that relaxes you and clears your mind before you write, for example, meditate or stretch first.
- Let it all go. Start writing and keep your pen moving until there's a natural pause and you feel finished with that train of thought.

An example of a journaling idea is "What has COVID-19 taught me to be grateful for?"

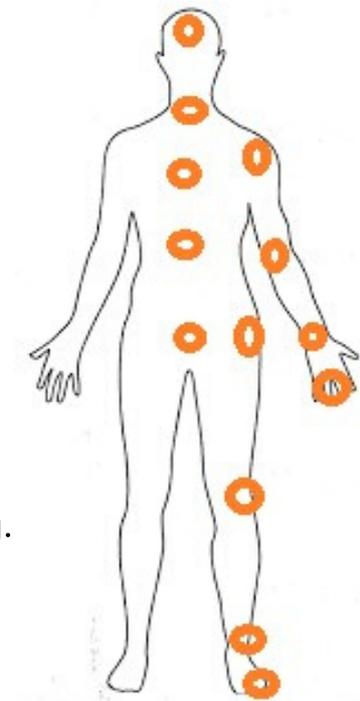
READY, SET, GO!



BODY SCAN

A body scan is a way to bring awareness to your body and release tension. Take a minute to notice any tight muscles in your body. Bring awareness to each area of your body. Take a deep breath and relax your body. Begin to let go of noises around you, shift your attention from the outside to inside yourself. Become aware of your thoughts, where is your mind wandering to?

- Pay attention to your breathing.
- Notice how your heart is beating.
- Expand your lungs by taking a deep breath in.
- With each out-breath, you may let go of the tension you are carrying.
- Continue to breathe in, breathe out, and becoming aware of how your body is feeling.
- How does your body feel once it is relaxed?



The CEC offers free counseling to victims of crime. Call for a phone screening to see if you qualify. We are available Mon-Fri from 9:00 AM - 5:30 PM. Counseling is available in Spanish.

If this is a life-threatening emergency, please call 911

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255/ Chat with LIFELINE
- MHMR Crisis Hotline 1-800-866-2465
- Disaster Distress Helpline 1-800-985-5990/Text TalkWithUs to 66746
- National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-7233

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