



# Coping with... “UNPRECEDENTED TIMES”

The political, social, and economic climate of the past several years have stretched everyday folks past their capacity. Each day we are bombarded with new and challenging information about our country and the world. Humans were not designed to withstand the onslaught of information that we now have at our fingertips. If you are feeling the mental and emotional strain of living in these “unprecedented times”, you are not alone.

This handout is designed to bring to mind ideas and strategies for improved coping.

The strategies outlined here are designed to be used independently as well as to build upon one another to strengthen your coping practices.

We will get through this!

## What is Self-Care?

Self-care is a collection of activities or practices that:

- ☐ Reduce stress
- ☐ Maintain or enhance well-being
- ☐ Can be practiced regularly
- ☐ Unique to your own needs and stressors
- ☐ Create balance and harmony across domains of life

## Self-Care Domains

<b>Physical</b>	<p>Focused on taking care of the needs of your body. Includes movement, nutrition, hydration, touch, medications, etc.</p> <p>Application: Fueling yourself adequately to support your activities. Considering what physical environments you want to engage with/avoid.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Mental</b>	<p>Focused on taking care of the needs of your mind. Includes stimulation, rest, intellectual pursuits, etc.</p> <p>Application: Carefully considering exposure to news including vetting sources, limiting social media intake, and</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Emotional</b>	<p>Focused on regulating your emotional state. Includes practicing healthy coping strategies, self-attunement, self-regulation, etc.</p> <p>Application: Observing movement between various emotional states, choosing appropriate coping/regulation strategies. Recognizing capacity.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Spiritual</b>	<p>Focused on integrating spirituality into daily life. Includes religious practices, prayer, meditation, connection to higher power, tarot, astrology, etc.</p> <p>Application: Seeking counsel/support from those who share your spiritual values. Spending time in contemplation/meditation to find your center.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Relational</b>	<p>Focused on taking care of your social needs. Includes balancing social vs. alone time, open communication, connection, etc.</p> <p>Application: Spending time with like-minded people. Setting boundaries around when/if/how politics are discussed in social settings.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Professional</b>	<p>Focused on developing healthy work/life balance. Includes defining work/life boundaries, engaging in meaningful work, healthy pay, etc.</p> <p>Application: Checking for alignment with your company's values. Joining committees dedicated to your values/interests.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Assess your self-care needs and develop a self-care plan using this FREE online resource!

[University of Buffalo Self-Care Hub](#)

# A Note about Community Care

None of us can do it alone. Without the development and use of community resources, we can wind up feeling overwhelmed and isolated. Community care includes both giving and receiving support as needed. Whatever it is you're struggling with, it is easier to do with a village.

Benefits of community engagement: Pooling resources, playing to a variety of strengths vs. just your own, accountability, support, validation, and many more!

Feeling inspired? Joining a local chapter of a cause you care about can be a great way to build community!

## Boundaries

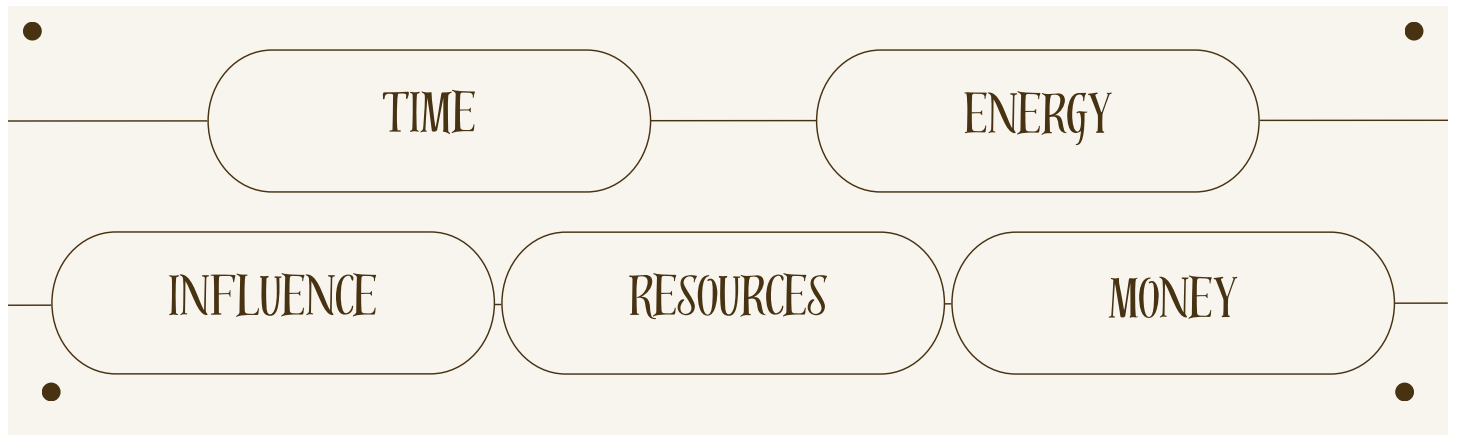
Boundaries are an essential tool in healthy coping. Like self-care, boundary setting is a tool for managing stress and increasing well-being. Similarly, boundary setting can occur across several domains, including: Physical, Sexual, Intellectual, Emotional, Time, and Material.

Let's break down the definition of boundaries and think about how they could be applied to better protect your wellness.

Need a primer on boundaries? Check out "Set Boundaries, Find Peace" by Nedra Glover Tawwab or follow her on IG [@nedratawwab](https://www.instagram.com/nedratawwab)

Boundaries ARE	Boundaries ARE NOT
Designed to inform YOUR behavior	Designed to dictate OTHERS behavior
Clearly communicated and consistently upheld	Unwritten rules, inconsistently wielded
Flexible and adjustable across situations	Set in stone
A tool for creating healthy relationships	Harmful to relationships
The root of good self-care!	Optional

Reminder: Setting boundaries in today's charged political climate means making informed choices around how you spend your...



## Tolerating Distress



Your body chemistry is your best tool in tolerating distress and psychological discomfort. Our bodies and minds are designed to work as a team to achieve regulation. As you notice your emotional state becoming distresses, turn your attention to your body for help regulating.

Helpful tools include:

**T: Temperature** - Change your body's temperature to reset your nervous system.

Ice/cold is fantastic for this!

**I: Intense exercise** - Release endorphins and burn off negative emotion by making your body work HARD

**P: Paced Breathing** - Increase or decrease the pace of your breathing to help up or down regulate. Take a pause between inhale/exhales. Pairs well with Progressive Muscle Relaxation!

**P: Progressive Muscle Relaxation** - Tense and release your muscles starting at the top of your head and moving down your entire body. Hold the tension as tight as you can, then let it go as completely as possible. Pairs well with Paced Breathing!



**Pro tip:**

The goal of tolerating distress is NOT to fix the situation. The goal is to be able to manage the situation without making it worse!

These tools are designed to be a bridge from distress to positive coping.

## Combating Helplessness

Helplessness is a very common reaction to the rapid rate of change currently experiencing in the United States. Helplessness can lead to symptoms of depression and ripple out into daily life and functioning. Helplessness convinces us that our actions don't matter. Helplessness thrives on the idea that the tasks are too big and we are too small. Helplessness leads to overwhelm which leads to paralysis.

To counteract feelings of helplessness we need to focus on taking right-sized actions balanced with right-sized rest. Start with small, manageable tasks targeting specific causes in your area. Think about where and with whom you have influence and find a way to get involved.

## How are you feeling... really?

Feeling	Try this...
Anxious	Notice it. Consider oscillating between movement and stillness. Take a walk, take some deep breaths, offer yourself validation and reassurance.
Sad	Honor it. Seek creature comforts - think cozy, comforting vibes. Give yourself permission to cry if needed. Experiment with self-soothing by gently rocking or practicing self-hug.
Angry	Express it. Use your body to express your anger. Throw a ball at the wall/floor, punch pillows, tear up paper, etc. Let that pent up energy out in a safe way.
Confused	Normalize it. Use a mantra or meditation to re-center yourself on the facts.
Ashamed	Speak it. Shame spreads in silence. Find a trusted person with whom you can process your feelings and experiences surrounding shame. Recognize that in taking accountability for wrongdoings, there is opportunity for growth.