

# Self-Care During COVID-19

FOR TEENS



Over the past few weeks, a lot has changed. It is normal to have many different feelings during this confusing time. It can be hard to deal with having so many strong emotions at once, but there are steps you can take to make it easier. **This information packet has suggestions about different ways you can take care of yourself.** If you start to feel as though you might want or need help managing your physical or mental health, it is important to reach out to an adult you trust.

## Resources

[National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#)  
1-800-273-8255

National Child Abuse Hotline  
1-800-422-4453 [www.ChildHelp.org](http://www.ChildHelp.org)

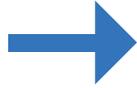
National Domestic Violence Hotline and Chat  
1-800-799-7233 [www.TheHotline.org](http://www.TheHotline.org)

## COMMON REACTIONS TO COVID-19

- excited to be out of school
- sad not to see teachers or friends
- disappointed about events being canceled
- worried about what will happen next
- bored at home
- frustrated, annoyed, or irritable
- concerned about relatives
- confused

## Focus on facts

Information is traveling quickly and comes from many different sources. Try to remember that not all sources are reliable, and not all information is accurate or helpful.



### Facts about COVID-19:

- COVID-19 is a sickness that is similar to the flu but **less common; most people who get it do not become very sick, especially children and teens.**
- COVID-19 can spread easily from person to person, **so schools are closed to prevent a lot of people from getting sick all at once. If fewer people get sick at once, hospitals are better able to manage and help those that are sick.**
- When the schools reopen, teachers will help students adjust. **Students around the world are out of school right now, so you are not alone, and you will not be behind other students.**
- **You can take simple steps to help keep yourself safe.** Washing your hands thoroughly and frequently, as well as adhering to recommended social-distancing guidelines can help prevent the spread of disease.

#### Resource

[Key Facts about Coronavirus \(CDC\)](#)



City at Night  
T'Challa Thomas

Student artwork courtesy of  
Detroit Public Schools Community District

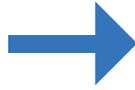
## Identify healthy & unhealthy coping

When we are struggling with difficult emotions and challenging situations, it is normal to reach for coping strategies that provide immediate relief. But, some things that make us feel better quickly are unsafe or make us feel worse later. Try to **recognize the ways you are coping and explore whether your strategies are truly helpful or not.**

### Resource

If you are ever concerned about your safety, please reach out to a trusted adult or call a helpline

[National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](https://www.suicideline.org/)  
1-800-273-8255



### Good questions to help evaluate a coping skill include:

- Does this calm me down if I am worried, or help me feel better if I am sad?
- Does this help me sleep better at night?
- Are there any negative side effects – either right away or later?
- Does this hurt anyone or put anyone in danger, including myself?
- Does this help connect me to friends or family members that I trust?
- Is this something that my teacher or doctor would want me to do?

If you think some of the ways you are coping are unhealthy or unhelpful, this guide will give you lots of ideas for other things to try instead.

## Healthy coping strategies



Cope with worried thoughts



Get active



Stay connected



Be kind to yourself



Stay in the present



Make a schedule



## Cope with worried thoughts

Our brains are designed to protect us from danger by increasing our attention to risk and threat. This “fight or flight” response makes us feel uneasy and tense. You can quiet this stress response by identifying specific worried thoughts and focusing on more helpful thoughts instead.

<b>Step 1</b>	<p><b>Identify your thoughts</b></p> <p>Ask yourself: What am I worried about? How would I express it in a complete sentence?</p> <p>You can also try using one of these prompts: I won't be able to... My family or friends will... I'm afraid that... I don't think I can cope with...</p>
<b>Step 2</b>	<p><b>Examine the facts</b></p> <p>Try to determine if your thought is fully true, partially true, or not really reasonable. Also, even if your thought is true, try to evaluate how helpful or productive it is.</p> <p>Ask yourself: How do I know this is true? What is the evidence? Is there any evidence that this thought is not true? Even if this is true, is thinking about this helpful to me right now?</p>
<b>Step 3</b>	<p><b>Try to come up with a believable, but less worried thought</b></p> <p>Ask yourself: What would I tell a friend who was having the same thought? If my worried thought came true, how would I cope?</p>

### Resources

A [short video](#) about coping with worried thoughts

[TRAILS cognitive coping materials](#): handouts, worksheets, and videos on challenging unhelpful thoughts

*See examples of common worried thoughts and more helpful thoughts, on the next page*



My Hair of Many Colors

Joy Little

Example worried thoughts about COVID-19	More helpful coping thought
<p>"I am going to get very sick."</p>	<p>"I am taking steps to stay healthy"            "Even if I do get sick, this virus does not usually make children and teens very sick."</p>
<p>"My family is not safe."</p>	<p>"My family is doing a lot to keep us safe right now."            "My family is following advice from very smart people who know what is best to keep us healthy."</p>
<p>"We are going to lose our housing because we won't have enough money to pay for it."</p>	<p>"All the people in charge of our community are working hard to make sure families have what they need."            "There are a lot of services working right now to help families pay bills, find food to eat, and keep their homes."            "It is unlikely, but if we did lose our house, my family would still be with me and would help keep me safe. It would be very hard, but we would get through it together."</p>
<p>"I won't be able to cope with being so scared or isolated from my friends or relatives."</p>	<p>"I have experienced difficulty in the past. I am strong and can get through even really hard situations."            "This situation might be scary or upsetting, but it's okay if I need help to get through it. Lots of people are asking for help right now, too."            "I can still communicate with my friends or relatives by phone, video calls, texts, emails, and even sending letters or packages."            "I'm not alone – people all over the world are going through exactly what I'm going through right now."</p>
<p>"I can't leave my house without getting sick. I am trapped."</p>	<p>"The best health information right now advises people that it is okay to leave their houses to get exercise, groceries, and other necessities."            "I can leave my house to go for a walk, go for a drive, ride my bike, sit on my front steps, and just get fresh air. Getting out is good for my mental and physical health."            "When I go out, I can take precautions and follow guidelines about how to be safe by staying over six feet apart from others, washing my hands regularly, not touching my face, and more."</p>



## Get active

Getting physical activity is one of the most effective ways to stay mentally healthy and to cope with worry, sadness, and isolation. During this uncertain time, physical activity

is especially important for all of us, but making it possible may require creativity right now. Brainstorm ways to stay active that work for you in your family setting. Some ideas might include:

- Doing a fitness challenge with a friend
- Going outside for a walk, jog, or bike ride
- Playing hopscotch, jumping rope
- Walking up and down staircases
- Trying a free virtual dance class
- 30 minutes of jumping jacks, push-ups or sit-ups
- Dancing to a favorite playlist

If you're not used to being physically active or if you have health conditions that make it difficult, this coping skill may feel hard. It's okay if you can do only a little bit. **Setting goals for physical activity can help and achieving even small goals can be empowering.** Also, try to notice if your feelings of worry, hopelessness, or despair feel a little bit better during or after physical activity.

### Use rewards to boost motivation!

Every day, **identify a reward that you won't let yourself have until after you've done something active for 20-30 minutes.** Good rewards can be almost anything you enjoy, but could include:

- A favorite snack
- A favorite show or movie
- Time spent on YouTube, Instagram, or another social media platform
- A nap
- A warm shower or relaxing bath
- Listening to a favorite song
- Calling a friend

### Resources

[TRAILS physical activity materials](#): worksheets, handouts, videos, and more!

[List of streaming exercise classes](#)



Blue Organic  
Desirae Carpenter



## Stay connected

Social support is so important for getting through difficult experiences – especially for teens! **Make time to connect with classmates, friends, or relatives every day, if possible.**

It's very important to follow guidelines about keeping physical distance from other people, but we can still find ways to connect.

### How can I stay connected to my friends when I'm not able to be around other people?

- **Go outside for a walk, jog, or bike ride,** or even just sit on your front steps and greet other people you see. Seeing other people will remind you that you are not alone, even as you follow distancing recommendations.
- **Schedule a regular phone call or video chat with friends or family.** Get creative, maybe you and your friends can have regular lunch dates, or can learn a new skill together over video! Regular connection can help you and your loved ones maintain hope. Note: it may be tempting to stick with text based communication, and this is important too, but there are so many benefits to hearing and seeing loved ones, so get out of your comfort zone and stay connected.
- **Write old fashioned letters.** Receiving a letter can bring so much joy; if you're feeling like much of your day is spent in front of a screen, unplug for a few minutes and write someone a postcard or letter instead.
- **Use social media wisely.** Social media can help us feel connected, but it can also be a source of upsetting news and misleading information. Use social media to build connections with people who help you feel good, while limiting time spent scrolling through content that makes you feel excluded, anxious, or excessively upset.
- **Try thinking about the global sense of community** that can be felt during this time. Everyone around the world is facing the same public health problems, and everyone is getting through it to the best of their ability. You are far from alone.

#### Resources

[Staying Connected While Practicing Social Distancing](#)

[5 Tips for Staying Connected While Social Distancing](#)



Seeing Red

Laila Filmore



## Be kind to yourself

Everyone is experiencing some form of loss right now. Cancelled plans and events, lost time with loved ones, loss of support from close friends or teachers, financial loss, or even loss of friends and family due to illness. It is important to be kind and patient with yourself during this difficult time. Self-compassion can help.

What many people are feeling is similar to the grief that comes when a loved one passes away.

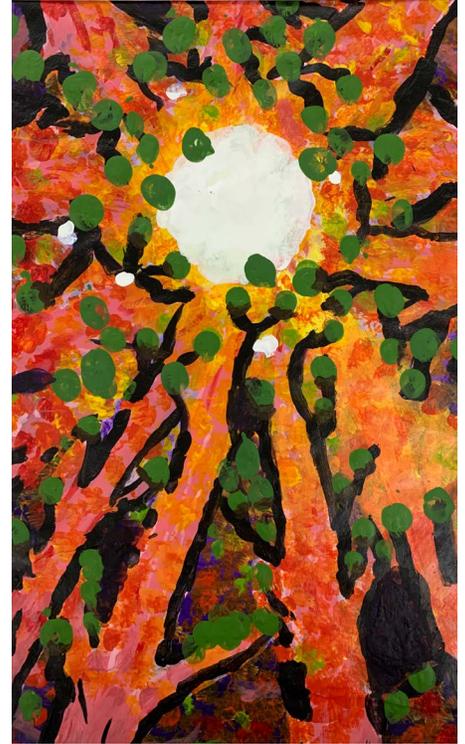
### How can I practice self-compassion?

- **Recognize and name the emotions you are experiencing.** Check in with yourself, just like you would for a friend. Give yourself permission to feel your feelings, whatever they may be.
- **Guilt is common** during a widespread crisis, but it's not helpful. Try to change your guilt into gratitude.
- **Practice self-kindness.** Treat yourself the way you would treat a friend! Kindness and compassion toward yourself is never selfish.
- **Remember we are all in this together.** Right now, millions of kids and teens are stuck at home and people around the world are having the same kinds of experiences, thoughts, and feelings as you.

#### Resources

To practice a guided loving-kindness meditation, try: [Self-Compassion Break](#)

Recordings: [Self-Compassion for Teens](#)



Abstract Trees  
Destiny Brickerson



## Stay in the present

Feelings of uncertainty can lead us to spiral in worry. When you find yourself overwhelmed by strong emotions, try to focus your attention on what's going on in and around you in the current moment. Ground yourself in the present by noticing where you are and what you are feeling, without judgement.

### How can I stay in the moment when I'm having so many thoughts about the future?

- **Notice and name your feelings**, and remind yourself that feelings pass, even if the situation remains the same. Look inside yourself to find strength to tolerate and even accept your feelings as they are.
- **When your feelings are overwhelming, practice riding the wave.** Our feelings come on, peak, and roll out again - like a wave. Instead of fighting your feelings when you are upset or trying to distract yourself from them, practice tolerating them and trusting they will eventually pass.
- Our brains are problem-solving machines, but **try to resist the urge to plan for the next week or month or unknown future.** Try only to take on one moment at a time.
- When all else fails, **simply focus on your 5 senses to ground you in the present.** Listen carefully for very subtle sounds, look for all the colors in the rainbow, notice how your feet or fingertips feel, pay attention to a subtle taste in your mouth or scent you can find.

#### Resources

Guided 5-senses meditation: [Engaging Your Senses](#)

An activity to help you practice staying in the moment: [Alien Eating](#)



## Make a schedule

We all do best when our days are structured and consistent. So much of that structure is lost without school and extra-curricular activities. Creating a daily schedule can help maintain consistency. It can also help you incorporate some of the coping strategies recommended in this guide. [This worksheet can help.](#)



Night Sky  
Jamell Harris