

Coping with Pandemic Stress:

- 1) Remind yourself that these are unusual times. Pandemics thankfully do not occur very often. Remind yourself that:
 - a. It isn't common for entire cities to be shut down.
 - b. It isn't normal to have to stay in the house most of the time.
 - c. It isn't typical to lose your job unexpectedly or suddenly have to work from home.
 - d. It isn't usual for parents to have to homeschool their children and work a job at the same time.
 - e. It's okay to feel overwhelmed, irritated, stressed, and other negative emotions.
 - f. This will not go on forever.

What are some other helpful reminders you can use to help calm and center yourself?

- 2) Limit your social media and news intake. Hours of this each day is not healthy for anyone.
What is a reasonable amount of time each day for you to spend on social media? How much news is good for you personally?

- 3) Make sure that you talk to your social support system regularly.
Name two friends or family members you can contact via phone or internet:

- 4) If you are able and it's medically appropriate, engage in light to moderate exercise. This is beneficial for the body but also helps brain chemistry to work better.
 - a. Take a walk.
 - b. Do a fitness video that you already own.
 - c. Look at YouTube- there are lots of options available.

List one type of light exercise you can try:

- 5) My favorite coping strategy for short-term, unchangeable stressors is *distraction*.
Distraction techniques are exactly what they sound like- you are diverting your attention away from the stressor and onto something engaging and pleasant.
 - a. If you are crafty or artistic, look around at what supplies you have. Even scraps of material or bits of paper can be made into tiny stuffed animals, embroidery pieces, or collages. Use your imagination.
 - b. Always wanted to learn another language? Now is the time! Download Duolingo or similar and start practicing.

- c. What subjects do you find interesting? Spend time going down internet rabbit holes researching them. Try to keep the topics light and entertaining. Now is probably not the time to research serial killers.
- d. Do you own an instrument? Time to dust it off and practice, or look at online tutorials.
- e. Binge watch shows you always wanted to get to but never had the time. Ask friends for recommendations.
- f. Read a book. Remember reading? That thing we used to do before the internet? 😊
There are lots of digital options available if you aren't a book hoarder like me.

What are two hobbies or activities you can use for distraction?

- 6) Figure out a relaxation exercise that you might like and listen to it daily, preferably before bedtime. My three personal favorites are guided imagery, diaphragmatic breathing, and autogenic training.
 - a. Download the Insight Timer app (available in phone app stores) or search YouTube until you find one that is relaxing.
 - b. Do not waste time on something that doesn't work for you or that you find annoying.

Name one relaxation exercise you can listen to before bedtime:

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