COVID-19
Self-Care Packet

Tips on how to manage stress and practice self-care while navigating Coronavirus concerns

Texas A&M International University
Student Counseling and Disability Services for Students
STC 128 956-326-2230
With the current changes, everyone is feeling stress, anxiety, or a mix of different emotions. We have created this package to help you take a break from the stress and ask yourself, “**What can I do for myself right now to make myself feel a little better?**” and then do something to help yourself feel a little more in control.

We are not in control of the pandemic but we can control how we respond. This packet provides information, coping skills, and resources. Review it and find what works for you.
What is stress?
A normal physical response to events that make you feel threatened or upset your balance in some way.

**Symptoms:**
- Anxious or worrying thoughts
- Procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities
- Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)
- Seeing only the negative
- Inability to concentrate
- Moodiness
- Irritability or short temper
- Feeling overwhelmed/burnt out
- Sense of loneliness/isolation or general unhappiness
- Chest pain, rapid heartbeat

**Tips:**
- Avoid unnecessary stress
- Alter the situation
- Adapt to the stressor
- Accept the things you can not change
- Adopt a healthy lifestyle
- Getting a good night’s sleep; do not take daytime naps
- Make time for fun and relaxation
- Take time to connect with yourself and others
- Doing something by yourself once a day that you find relaxing
- Find support.

TAO modules:
- Calming Your Anxiety
- TAO mindfulness library
Psychological Tips for Managing Coronavirus Concerns

Recognizing Distress-A Self-Check List

• Increased anxiety, worry, fear, and feelings of being overwhelmed
• Depressive symptoms that persist and/or intensify
• Inability to focus or concentrate accompanied by decreased academic performance
• A feeling of hopelessness and/or a paralyzing fear about the future
• Sudden anger and disruptive behaviors or noticeable changes in personality
• Sleep difficulties
• Excessive crying
• Isolating or withdrawing from others, fear of going into public situations
• Unhealthy coping (e.g., increased alcohol or drug use, engaging in risky/impulsive behaviors)
Psychological Health Tips

- **Acknowledge reactions.** Allow yourself time to reflect on what you are feeling and how you may be reacting to any fears and uncertainties of the future.
- **Maintain your day-to-day normal activities and social outlets.** Resist withdrawing and isolating yourself from the support and caring that others can provide. Use technology, if needed, to connect with others.
- **Seek accurate information from “The Center for Disease Control & Prevention” and limit exposure to social media and news reports that provide no new information.**
- **Pay attention to positive news instead of only focusing on negative and fear-producing reports.**
- **Follow the protection and prevention tips given by medical professionals such as national medical authorities and your own medical doctor.**
- **Practice calming rituals:** Stay grounded in the present moment, which can help you maintain an internal sense of stability and balance when outside events feel threatening.
- **Seek support and use campus resources.** Reach out to friends and family. Learn about campus resources available. If you or someone you know has high distress that does not seem to be lessening, talk about it with others. Your campus community is here to help.

**Avoid Stigmatizing or Generalizing**

- Be aware of your behavior or attitude change towards others from another country.
- Avoid generalizing anyone who is sick as potentially having the Coronavirus.
- Examine any irrational or rigid thoughts that can exist when there is uncertainty.

Source: Adapted from Texas A&M University-San Antonio Student Counseling and Wellness Services
Dealing with your thoughts and assumptions

**Self-statements/Cognitive Coping:**
What can you say to yourself to help you feel better?
Examples include, “I’m safe now; he’s not here; It’s not my fault. I can get through this.”
You already survived your past.
Use your skills to identify the thoughts bothering you and see if you can identify an alternative true way to think about what is happening.

**Redirect Unhelpful Thoughts:**
Notice if you have a lot of self-critical or otherwise discouraging thoughts. Push these away and identify something positive you can do.

**What would your mentor say?**
Whom do you admire? What do you imagine they would say to encourage you?

**Reality Check:**
Is there something I need to do about this right now?
Is there something I could do about this right now?
Is there another way to think about this?
Radical Acceptance
Lifeline-is there someone else I can talk to about my options

**TAO modules:**
- Calming your Anxiety
- Let Go and Be Well
- TAO mindfulness library
Self Soothing Coping Skills

Self-soothing is a tool we can use to soothe and calm ourselves when we’re anxious or distressed.
Coping Skills: Breathing

Typically, an anxious person takes small, shallow breaths, using their shoulders rather than their diaphragm to move air in and out of their lungs. Shallow over-breathing, or hyperventilation, can prolong feelings of anxiety by making the physical symptoms of stress worse. Controlling your breathing can help to improve some of these symptoms.

**Controlled breathing can cause physiological changes that include:**
- lowered blood pressure and heart rate
- reduced levels of stress hormones in the blood
- reduced lactic acid build-up in muscle tissue
- balanced levels of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the blood
- improved immune system functioning
- increased physical energy
- increased feelings of calm and wellbeing.

Deep breathing exercise: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EYQsRBNYdPk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EYQsRBNYdPk)

Coping Skills: Exercise
Change your focus and get your body moving.

Scientists have found that regular participation in aerobic exercise has been shown to decrease overall levels of tension, elevate and stabilize mood, improve sleep, and improve self-esteem. Even five minutes of aerobic exercise can stimulate anti-anxiety effects.

Source: www.adaa.org
Coping Skills: Music

Use a relaxing or lively tune or music that inspires you. Consider dancing.

Classical music can be beneficial for your body as well: studies have shown that it helps slow your heart rate, ease stress, and lower blood pressure.

Source: www.psychcentral.com
Coping Skills: Relax your body

Progressive muscle relaxation. Download guided relaxation. Take a bath or shower. Do yoga.

Source: https://youtu.be/1nZEdqcGVzo
Coping Skills: Comfort Item

Hold onto or wrap yourself in something comforting – a blanket, jacket, scarf, stuffed animal – anything that helps you feel more comfortable.
Coping Skills: Imagery

Look at and direct your attention towards a picture or photograph of a beautiful and calming scene (i.e., beach, mountains).
Coping Skills: Visualization

Visualize a place you love, either that you have been at, or that you enjoy imagining yourself to be there. Describe it paying attention to using all five senses (e.g., the beach: what it looks like, how the sand feels, what it sounds like: wind and waves, salt water smell).

Source: https://youtu.be/KrxaWcw3i0Y
Coping Skills: Brief Vacation

Turn off phones or other devices. Unplug and relax momentarily to recharge yourself – emotionally and physically. Take a nap. Stretch. Go outside and breathe some fresh air.
Coping Skills: Be Kind to Yourself

Validate yourself: “This is hard, and I’m doing the best I can” or “This won’t last forever. I will get through this.”
Providing mobile and convenient mental health resources for individual assistance.
TAO Connect is a self-guided tool, consisting of educational and interactive modules, practice tools, journals and progress measures. It allows you to move through the courses at your own pace, when you’re feeling down and need encouragement, or visiting our mindfulness library when you need a moment to meditate.

https://thepath.taoconnect.org/local/login/index.php
With MY3, you define your network and your plan to stay safe. With MY3 you can be prepared to help yourself and reach out to others when you are having thoughts of suicide.

Remember: there is hope and a life to look forward to, even in your darkest moments. MY3 can help you get through your most difficult times.

Who are your 3? Is it your sister? Your therapist? Maybe even a neighbor down the street? Download MY3 to make sure that your 3 are there to help you when you need them most.

MY3 is available in the Apple App Store and Google Play, free of charge.
Is anxiety getting in the way of your life? MindShift uses scientifically proven strategies based on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) to help you learn to relax and be mindful, develop more effective ways of thinking, and use active steps to take charge of your anxiety.

Get the tools to tackle:

- Worry
- Panic
- Perfectionism
- Social Anxiety
- Phobias

Mindfulness for your everyday life

Explore guided exercises, videos, and more to help you get healthier and happier.

https://www.headspace.com/
Can’t Sleep: Download CBT-i Coach

**CBT-i Coach** is a mobile app for people who have experienced symptoms of insomnia and would like to improve their sleep habits. Features include: learning about sleep, developing positive routines, and improving their sleep environments. It provides a structured program that teaches strategies proven to improve sleep and help alleviate symptoms of insomnia.
Dusty’s Food Pantry is willing to provide a temporary supplemental supply of non-perishable goods to students who submit the required online form. Students that wish to use of the food pantry, will be required to submit one online form per semester. Dusty’s Food Pantry is committed to the confidentiality of each of our students that may be facing food insecurity. The following form is solely to keep accurate data collection of the demographics of our students as well as the performance of the food pantry. The information provided will be kept confidential and used only for statistics in our annual report.

Food Pantry Form

*ALL STUDENTS MUST SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT BEFORE ENTERING THE OFFICE* *(956) 326-2265*
Sources

- Adapted from Texas A&M University-San Antonio Student Counseling and Wellness Services
- www.adaa.org
- www.psychcentral.com
- www.tamiu.edu