Stress, anxiety, fear, and grief are all higher than normal during this global pandemic, and everyone is suffering from the same circumstances. In other natural disasters, they may be isolated to a specific location, and, while many people may feel impacted by what occurred, you can generally say that those in the geographic location of the disaster were impacted the most. In this case, people around the world are being impacted by this. Collective suffering is high, which also means collective need for kindness and gentleness with each other is high.

Social scientists have studied how we influence each other and found that people adopt behaviors that are endorsed by others, especially those who are nearest to them. So the old saying misery loves company is true. However, this also runs true for joy, respect, and kindness. Some days it can seem like the world is cold and unforgiving; however, through small intentional micro-moments of love, kindness, and joy, it can feel better. Here are some ways to intentionally and positively influence those around you.

1. As you find yourself feeling grateful or hopeful, find an intentional way to share that with others.
2. If you notice that someone is feeling down, reach out to that person and share kindness and compassion.
3. If you find yourself in the middle of a tense conversation, address it with kindness. You can say, “This conversation feels very tense, I believe because <insert the reason>. Is that a correct observation? What can we do to alleviate that?”
4. Connect with your friends, coworkers and family to share ideas on ways to help find happiness during this difficult time. Sharing your ideas with each other allows you to connect and help each other with new things to try out. Some ideas may include journaling, coloring, crafting, cleaning, reading, etc.

When you’re interacting with other people, you can influence the culture of that experience by choosing calm, gentle, and kind language. Be intentional about lifting others up, which in turn, will lift you up as well.
Did you know that having purposeful work can boost your immune system? When you hear talk about boosting immunity you may think of the fancy tea in the special foods section of the grocery store, or you brace yourself to hear about the next “superfood” that you’ll have to eat whether you like it or not.

Here are some other ways, beyond tea or fads, science has helped us understand how your body responds physically with enhanced immunity.

» **PURPOSEFUL WORK AND LIVING:** Eudaimonic happiness (being a part of something bigger than yourself) compared to hedonic happiness (seeking instant pleasure) has been correlated with better immune function.

» **HUMAN CONNECTION:** Caring for others and connecting with others also leads us to eudaimonic happiness. Once again the results in your cells is similar, leading to better immune function. It is important in this time of physical distancing to stay socially connected.

» **FRUITS AND VEGETABLES:** Did you know that fruits and vegetables have their own immune systems? That’s right! Plants have to fight off pests and diseases too. Your immune function originates in your gut where you digest your food. There is a strong correlation between a diet that prioritizes fruits and vegetables and your immune system. So you don’t have to opt for pricey specialty or fad foods; you can simply get what you need in the produce section of your store.

» **SLEEP:** Studies show that sleep is an important part of a healthy immune system. When you sleep, your body releases germ fighting proteins called cytokines. A healthy amount of sleep is generally 7-8 hours, but can vary per person. Quality sleep is uninterrupted sleep, which can be difficult to obtain. You may want to try eye covers or ear plugs to reduce interruptions.

In addition to these ways of boosting your immunity, it is also important to practice good hygiene. Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently. Cover your cough with your elbow, and avoid touching your face.
People need connection to thrive physically, emotionally, spiritually and intellectually. Your relationships shape your biology as well as your experiences. Connection is so important, in fact, that The Wellness Council of America (WELCOA) has named 2020 the **Year of Social Connection** and has reinforced that during this time of **COVID-19 and social isolation**.

**Social Connection**

The research shows time and time again that humankind requires connection. Your well-being depends on it. The single most influential predictor of human happiness is the quality of a person’s relationships, even above money. Here are some simple steps to improve connection:

» Listen as much as you share
» Express appreciation and gratitude
» Invest in the development of others
» Explain your reasoning
» Respect your own and others’ struggles related to change
» Ask for others’ opinions

**Empathy**

Empathy is the ability to relate to another person’s feelings. Compassion is a feeling of concern for someone else’s misfortune. As the challenges of this circumstance continue, even as they come to an end, our co-workers, family members, and neighbors will thrive if we can all leverage empathy and compassion.

When responding to other people’s misfortune, discomfort, or pain avoid statements that begin with “at least.” Lean into statements that acknowledge others challenges such as, “That does sound very difficult.”

**Compassion**

Being of service to others in the wake of this crisis will require empathy, which will, in turn, drive your compassion. Being more compassionate will help inspire you to do what you can, when you can to make the world a better, brighter place.

Being a part of a wholesome community begins with your ability to access and spread empathy and compassion. Hopefully this resource gives you some quick tips to help you lean into empathy, fuel your compassion, and improve your connections.
When so many things are changing rapidly, it’s hard to consider investing energy into a new routine. It may feel like the moment you get settled into it, things will likely change again. That’s valid; however, the reality is that nothing you’re experiencing now is similar to anything you’ve done or been through before and that can be very unsettling in the day to day.

In order to establish a new normal, knowing it could change again soon, try taking a lighter approach.

**Take 15 - 20 min and ask yourself these questions:**

1. What is expected of me right now related to my work, my parenting, my caregiving, etc?
2. Are there any patterns that emerge in those expectations? For example, if you have to log into work each day at 8:30 AM and your child has to log into school each day at 9:00 AM, then there is potential for overlapping priorities and that creates a pattern. Take a moment to consider what overlaps occur in your day to day priorities.
3. Once you have a sense of the patterns, how might you construct your daily routine? In the example above, if you need to be logged into work at 8:30 AM and your child needs to be logged into school at 9:00 AM, then you know that your child needs to be up and ready to start their day when you need to be online.

**Here is a sample morning routine for that example:**

7:00 AM - Wake up and shower
7:30 AM - Get dressed/personal grooming routine
8:00 AM - Breakfast
8:15 AM - Help children get ready for their daily school work
8:30 AM - Log into work
9:00 AM - Help child log into school

4. The next thing to consider once you have a general timeline for your day is to consider whether it’s realistic. This is perhaps the most important part of establishing a healthy new normal that supports your well-being in difficult times. We attempt to be excellent. We forget the emotional work load of responding to challenges that arise. Create a routine with lots of flexibility.

5. Consider what you need for self care, like frequent breaks, time to move your body, time to prepare food, and time for relaxation. Build these things into your daily plan.

Perhaps, it feels overwhelming to create something like this when in a few weeks it may change again. However, having an understanding of your needs and priorities and how they will be met throughout the day can be very helpful. If you live with other people, be sure everyone is aware of the daily plan and invite them to be helpful team members. Write the plan down somewhere where everyone can see it and refer to it.

Remember, the goal of this plan is not to live perfectly within it, the goal is to have a semblance of order. There will be many opportunities that require flexibility from the plan. Grant yourself and those around you flexibility when necessary and extra grace and kindness. The daily plan should help orient your household in a new way that gives everyone a framework.
As things continue to rapidly change, finding a new normal for work will be an evolving process. An assertive language skill set is important to ensure everyone’s needs are being met while maintaining respect and dignity for all.

Assertiveness is a key communication skill that provides clear information in a manner that upholds dignity and respect for all involved. It is important to remember that assertive is neither aggressive nor passive. Applying this skill set will allow you, and others to:

1. Communicate what information you are looking for.
2. Communicate your needs for clarity around processes and/or projects being asked of you.
3. Clearly communicate your boundaries.
4. Share how you are doing overall (physical, mental and emotional well-being are important factors when it comes to being a productive employee.

Below are some examples of assertive language to help you communicate effectively.

“I read the company email relating to flexible work schedules. I am grateful they have considered our circumstances. Does this mean that I will be able to complete some work in the evening hours after my kids go to bed? How will that impact our team calls? I think I can be available for our team calls, but I wanted to clarify expectations.”

“I think there may be some new opportunities for revenue given people’s need for home office equipment in light of the situation. Are there opportunities for us to build our business in that way, or are we sticking to our standard customer base? If I can move forward with those ideas, who do I need to include and work alongside?”

“I want to make everyone aware that my children are nearby and I have done my best to occupy them for the duration of the call. If they should pop into our call, please have patience and know that I am doing my best.”

The most important thing about establishing a new normal is to remember that we are all in this together and nobody has gone through what we are all currently experiencing.

**Here are some things to keep in mind:**

1. Everyone is doing their best to make the best of the situation as it challenges us and continuously evolves.
2. Gentleness, patience, kindness, and respect are of utmost importance.
3. When emotions and stress are heightened, people often grant themselves permission to be harder on others or on themselves. Make every effort to avoid this. It makes everything much harder and stresses already overloaded emotional states.
Financial security, or lack thereof, has a major impact on many areas of your life. Many people often equate financial security to increased income, but in reality, money management is the key. The weight of financial burden is heavy and during a global pandemic, it is something that many are feeling. Lost work, lost business, reduced hours, and uncertainty are creating financial concerns for many.

Financial stress impacts so many aspects of your life, including your IQ, decision making abilities, and even your interest in doing good for others. It also impacts your appetite and puts stress on your digestive system, both making it difficult to eat a diet that supports your health. The stress of it all can keep you up at night or cause restless sleep, which can impact your ability to think clearly and disrupt hormone balance leading to weight gain, and other health complications such as heart disease and diabetes.

Getting to a place where you can take better care of yourself in the midst of stress, especially financial stress, is no small task. However, you don’t have to do it alone.

Here are some tips and resources to help you move from financial stress to financial freedom:

» Meet with a financial planner. Having a third party that is not emotionally attached to the situation can be quite helpful and enlightening.

» Create a budget. Knowing what money you have coming in and what expenses you have will help you determine areas that you may be able to cut back on spending.

» Ask someone in your Human Resources department about any financial wellness resources your company has. Often times, the company that supports your retirement benefits offers free guidance to employees. Some companies may also have financial wellness programs, many of which will address concerns directly relating to the pandemic. Also, check out whether your company has an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), which often offers many different financial support resources and advisement.

» Visit https://www.consumerfinance.gov/coronavirus/ to see a list of consumer resources to protect and manage your finances during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Financial challenges are often associated with feelings of shame or guilt. Many people feel like they can’t tell anyone if they are struggling. Find someone you trust, who will have compassion for your situation and use that connection to ease your stress and shame so that you can move forward. You will also likely find that you are not alone. Sometimes just knowing you are not alone in your experiences will help you to reduce some of the stress associated with them.
This is hard. Right now you may be trying to work full time, help school aged kids continue lessons, and/or care for and entertain younger children. To believe you will be able to maintain a similar work/school load and home schedule is unrealistic. Everyone will need to adjust to find a balance that works.

Start by adjusting and becoming realistic about your own capacity.

- Communicate with your employer about your desire to continue doing a great job, and your need for adjusted expectations for the duration of the time you are working from home with kid(s) there too.
- Communicate with your children’s school teacher(s) about your desire to be a supportive parent, and your need to be realistic with your capacity to complete a full curriculum while balancing your own workload as well.
- Consider creating a schedule that will allow you to be fully present in your parenting and in your work. If you can’t compartmentalize your work in this way, consider smaller blocks of time where you can focus on one thing or the other. It will be very difficult to spend every day attempting to be present during work, childcare and schooling all at the same time.
- If you are co-parenting and your partner is also working from home, you may be able to trade hours in which for one hour you focus on the kids while your partner works and then vice versa.
- If you are a single parent with a situation where your kids go to another parent’s house for part of the week, you may want to talk to your employer about focusing your work more heavily on the days when your kids are at the other parent’s house.

When it comes to helping keep your kids’ brains active, there are a few things to consider:

- Give yourself a lot of grace. You are not expected to be a perfect teacher or introduce a lot of new learning and curriculum. Simply keep their brains active with activities like, reading, art, physical activity, etc.
- The most important thing is to simply provide your kid(s) with love and understanding as they are dealing with a lot of big emotions during this difficult time as well.
- Focus on providing a schedule for your kid(s). Routine and schedules make their environment more predictable, which is even more important in a time of high unpredictability.
- Ask family members, neighbors or friends to video conference with your kid(s) to read them books or just chat about their day.
- Your children do not need to focus on schoolwork for 6 hours each day. Have fun learning and take time to simply play games or do puzzles.
There are a lot of free online learning resources available to help you keep young minds active. Look through the following resources for ones that work best for you and your little ones:

Virtual Field Trips
- Scholastic Learn at Home
- PBS Learning Media
- National Geographic Kids
- ABCYa
- Fun Brain

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- Scholastic Learn at Home
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- National Geographic Kids
- ABCYa
- Fun Brain

You are not expected to be the world's best teacher, parent or employee during this time. You will have good days and rough days, and that is okay. Be open and honest with your employer, your partner and your kid(s) and ask for help when you need it.
Gratitude is one of the most powerful tools in your personal toolkit. It lowers stress and alleviates a scarcity mindset, or one in which it feels like we never have enough. Gratitude makes it possible to have more meaningful connections and can significantly increase well-being and life satisfaction, as shown in the research by UC Davis psychologist Robert Emmons. A key thing to remember when expressing gratitude is that it should be specific. The more specific, the more meaningful it is to you and to the person receiving it. Try incorporating some of these ideas into your daily routine and make gratitude a regular practice in your life.

1. Start or end each day by sending two or three emails, texts or social media messages to coworkers, friends, and family that you feel grateful for.

2. Take a gratitude walk. As you walk, think through the things you are grateful for at that moment, starting with the basics. For example, “I am grateful for the trees, for the five minutes to take this walk, for the fresh air.” Then move deeper into your gratitude with more specific concepts. Your mind will wander and that’s okay. Simply bring it back to your gratitude as often as possible.

3. Play the game ‘High, Low, Cheer!’ with your family at dinner time. Each person shares something that went really well in their day, something that didn’t go well in their day, which gives the opportunity to have connection in one’s hardships too, and something or someone they are grateful for or want to cheer for.

4. Write thank you notes each week and put them in the mail. There is something so special about a handwritten thank you note and you will find that you and the recipient will both appreciate this so much.

5. Practice gratitude meditation. There are free apps available that will take you through gratitude meditations, like Calm or Headspace. You can search for gratitude-specific apps in the app store of your choice.

Gratitude can be shared, or it can be practiced internally. Either way, it pays dividends. The more you do it, the easier it gets, and the more natural it becomes for your brain to consider what you are grateful for. During this difficult time, it feels like a lot of things are out of our control and stress levels are high. Now, more than ever, be intentional about noticing what is going well and lean into the feelings of gratitude.
Let’s talk for a moment about grief and trauma. If someone is in a car accident or if someone you know dies, there is a center of grief and trauma. In the very center are the people directly impacted by that, then layered outside of that circle are those people’s friends and family. A layer outside of that are those people’s friends and family. In those circumstances, the people who are not directly impacted can respond helpfully because they are not so focused on their own grief that they are unable to support others.

The situation you are in is different; in a pandemic, everyone is impacted. Psychologists call this collective trauma. The one good thing about collective trauma is that you can share it with other people. People around you experience the same thing as you, and you can lean into each other.

The challenge of that is that no one is unaffected by the trauma. There is a feeling of having nowhere to go to lean on others because everyone is struggling. You are learning to hold your own emotional needs and care for others’ equally and simultaneously. Sometimes what you need is going to be in direct conflict to what someone else needs. Here are some helpful considerations in collective trauma.

1. It’s okay to know that you are not capable of supporting someone else’s grief processing. When you are not feeling able to fulfill someone else’s needs, you can say something like, “I really want to be there for you, but in this moment, I am not doing so well myself and I don’t think I will be much help.”

2. If you reach out to someone to talk about what is challenging you, start by asking this, “I need to connect, but I want to make sure you are in a place where you feel okay. I know we are all going through this. Do you feel up to sharing with each other right now?”

3. When someone isn’t in a place to share with you or support you, don’t take it personally. Everyone is doing their best.

It’s okay to not be okay. You are experiencing something that you have never experienced. There will be a lot of feelings that may surprise you. Notice these feelings without judging them as good or bad, worthy or unworthy. There is not a right or wrong way to respond to what you are experiencing. The important thing is to allow yourself to feel what you are feeling, but not live it in. Give yourself grace and time, and then take it one day or one hour at a time. Find ways to build yourself back up, and keep moving forward.
Draw a stick figure with a circle around it. Next, draw a circle around the first circle and then draw one more circle around your second circle. You should have a stick figure in a circle and two more circles around that.

You are the stick figure. Inside the first circle with you are all of the things you can control. You can control what you eat, when you refill your water bottle, how you write your next email, and what you buy during your next grocery store run. In the next circle you have the things you can influence. These are things in which you can have some impact, but cannot fully control. Examples include the outcome of your next team-based work project, or the way in which your child completes their homework. In both of these examples, you have influence in the situation, but you do not have entire control.

In the last circle you will find all of the things that are outside of your control. In a pandemic, you may be wishing you drew it a little bigger because it feels a lot bigger. For example, right now, it is out of one’s control whether their grocery store has toilet paper or if work hours are reduced. There are a lot of things that are very much out of our control during a global pandemic.

This exercise is helpful in centering on the things you can control and influence. For many, anxiety increases when there are a lot of unknowns and a lot of things out of our control. The tendency when things feel out of control is to start planning for the worst. Instead, take a moment to complete this exercise and be intentional about how you exist in the things you can control, like how you respond to your next email. Focus on what you can positively influence and allow yourself to release the things in that last circle, which you cannot control.
LONELINESS DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE

4 ways leaders can support their teams and help them navigate "in-pandemic" loneliness

In a pandemic like COVID-19, self-quarantines, remote working, and the call for social distancing are crucial for arresting the spread of the virus and flattening the curve. However, it puts us at risk for isolation and loneliness. The ability of our teams to weather the forced remote reality lies in adaptability, resilience and collaboration. As leaders, we need to prioritize our employee's mental health and well-being.

Loneliness does not discriminate. Anyone can feel lonely at any time. The physical presence of significant others in our social circle or home is not enough. People need to feel connected to their significant others to not feel lonely. Consequently, one can be in the same house with a spouse and feel lonely. Just as one can be temporarily alone and not feel lonely because they feel highly connected with their family, and/or friends – even at a distance.

As comedian Robin Williams said: “I used to think the worst thing in life was to end up all alone. It’s not. The worst thing in life is to end up with people who make you feel all alone” (2009).
Loneliness emphasizes the fact that we are a social species. We require not merely the presence of others but also the presence of significant others we can trust, who give us a goal in life, with whom we can plan, interact, and work with together to survive and prosper.

A recent Cigna and Edelman survey: LONELINESS AND THE WORKPLACE: 2020 U.S. REPORT finds that of the 10,000 adults surveyed, 61% of Americans report feeling lonely (71% millennials, 79% Gen Z and 50% boomers). It might seem ironic that with the myriad of ways to stay connected, our younger generation is feeling more socially disconnect than ever. This is troubling from a human perspective, and bad news for our organizations. Loneliness has been shown to decrease job performance, creativity, engagement, and commitment to the organization.

During the COVID-19 crisis, our employees may need relief from fear, uncertainty, loneliness, and isolation. So, as leaders, how do we help our teams with the difficulties they may be facing right now, to support them, and help them navigate the "in-pandemic" isolation loneliness?

First, it's important to realize that loneliness is emotional, and isolation is structural. For leaders to help their remote teams thrive, it is essential to know the difference. As leaders, we need measures in place to identify and help mitigate the problem before it damages emotional health, engagement, and performance.

Loneliness is emotional. Isolation is structural

Loneliness is an emotional response. The subjective feeling that we don't have someone to connect to. It speaks to the quality of connection. Your employees can feel just as lonely working in the office as working remote.
Isolation, on the other hand, is related to access -- or lack of it. Those who feel isolated can't get the materials or information they need, they think their achievements or development are ignored, they feel cut off from the business. That isn't an emotional issue, it's a technical one. As a leader a top priority is to make sure your team has the materials and equipment they need to do their work. It's fundamental to engagement.

Social connection and our ability to have strong relationships and interact with people is the core of healthy behaviors. As human beings we crave interaction. Without this it leads to increased stress.

**What are the effects of workplace loneliness: on performance and business**

Loneliness has a huge impact on our organizations. Loneliness in the workplace decreases job performance, productivity, creativity, engagement, commitment to the organization and team relationships.

In the lonely, stressed mind-state, people become very sensitive to what others say, they become increasing reactive, which negatively effects relationships and worsens their own loneliness. It's a viscous maladaptive cognitive cycle.

One of the most important strategies to help our employees and team members to get out of this cycle is mindfulness and compassion so that our employees can think clearly again.

The good news is there is tremendous power in community. Leverage the power of social networks. These networks empower emotional contagion. Just like panic spreads like wildfire, so do positive emotions and acts of kindness.
As leaders it is incumbent on us to create organizations that connect with our employees. The silver lining is that we can come out of this crisis better. We have an unprecedented opportunity to upend business as usual mode and prioritize a culture of connection.

Moving overnight to a 100% remote work force has exposed gaps in programs that support employee mental health. For teams that were not connected, gaps in trust and social connection are exposed. It is up to us, now more than ever, to create supportive environments for our team. Listening to our workforce is a first step in strengthening and building relationships that will help mitigate loneliness.

What can leaders do to address loneliness in their teams and organization?

The irony of social distancing is that we are, and need to be more socially connected than ever. As we are connected into people’s homes, dogs bark, kids pop up, the door bell rings. If managed well this is an opportunity to foster deeper connections with your team.

- Be intentional: make the majority, if not all, meetings video chat meetings
- Schedule multiple team check-ins through out the day
- Take time to actually connect – ask questions like, ”how’s your head?, ”how’s your heart?”,”how’s your health?” so that your team speaks openly about how they are coping
- Holding virtual office hours for employees to have routine access to you
- Finding ways to bring levity to this situation
- Creating opportunities to express gratitude
- Encouraging frequent breaks
- Checking in on your teams emotional state
Resilient employees are equipped to deal with the stressors of shifting demands placed on them. These ideas are ways leaders can show support.

**Essential employees working in the field**

**Compassion:**
- Modify policies to minimize safety risks.
- Rethink what flexibility means

**Hope:**
- Focus on employees individual purpose and mission

**Employees working from home**

**Compassion:**
- Give employees grace and patience acknowledging that many are fulfilling multiple roles at home

**Hope:**
- Suggest options to contribute time and talent to the community based on mission and community needs

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**4 NEEDS OF FOLLOWERS**

**Trust**
Speak with truth to establish the foundation that enables well-being to occur

**Stability**
Provide support by sharing your vision for an improved future.

**Compassion**
Provide support by sharing your vision for an improved future.

**Hope**
Emphasize the importance of well-being to confront challenges and new ways of work

Four needs of followers identified by Gallup in their research
4 ways to help your employees

COMMUNICATE CLEARLY

Regular, open communication is key. With so much uncertainty, it falls to us as leaders to be the calm voice of reason and reassure employees. Remember how you communicate is as important as what you communicate. Communication should be concise, transparent and timely. What is changing? Why? What does it mean for your employee?

LEAD WITH INDIVIDUALIZATION

This is a moment in time when leaders need to lead with individualization. See each employee as an individual with unique needs. Leaders need to be particularly attuned to remote workers' physical and mental well-being. Evaluate assumptions by asking 3 questions.

- Do you feel that the organization cares about you as a person?
- Are well being initiatives we are deploying relevant and accessible to you?
- Are our well being goals aligned with our company values?

RELAX THE RULES

This is not "business as usual" but at home. We must acknowledge the psychological impact of being in lockdown and quarantined at home. Our teams needs, behaviors and attitudes will change. As leaders we need to be able to distinguish when behavior is born out of uncertainty and fear. Now more than ever, an "open door" policy is required. Leaders need to ensure we are accessible to our team.

PROVIDE RESOURCES

Leaders must remember that caring for employee mental health is a shared responsibility employers and employees both play a part. When it comes to managing our teams mental wellbeing, there are limits to the support we can offer ourself. As a leader the best thing we can do is be acquainted with the resources available and make sure your team knows how to access them.
Resources

American Psychiatric Association (APA)
- Working Remotely During COVID-19 Your Mental Health & Well-Being

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- COVID-19: Managing Stress and Anxiety

American Psychiatric Association (APA)
- COVID-19/Coronavirus Resources and Information Hub
- Coronavirus and Mental Health: Taking Care of Ourselves During Infectious Disease Outbreaks

World Health Organization (WHO)
- COVID-19/Coronavirus: Mental Health Considerations

Substance Abused and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
- Tips for Social Distancing, Quarantine and Isolation

National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI)
- COVID-19 and Mental Illness Guide

Call Centers and Hotlines If you are experiencing high levels of stress, anxiety or depression, reach out for support.
- Crisis Text Line: Text 741741
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255
MANAGING ANXIETY

There is no right or wrong emotional response to the global pandemic the world is experiencing. Due to the multiple unknown factors during this crisis, many people are feeling anxious. It can be challenging to avoid feeling fear and uncertainty when many things are outside of your control. This resource offers a few tips for responding to feelings of fear and anxiety when they arise.

Your mental and emotional well-being are as important as your physical well-being. If you are feeling routinely panicked and unable to find a feeling of calm, please seek support through your companies Employee Assistance Program (EAP) if one is available or reach out to your primary care physician. Other resources include:

» International Crisis Support: crisistextline.org/international
» Substance Abuse Support: samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline
» Suicide Prevention (US); (English): 1-800-273-8255 (tel:18002738255), (Español): 1-888-628-9454 (tel:18886289454), Text: HOME to 741-741
» Download SAMHSA Suicide Safe APP
» Domestic Violence Support (US): 1-800-799-7233 or text LOVEIS to 22522, Visit: thehotline.org

Here are some tips to respond to your feelings of anxiety and fear:

1. MINDFULNESS: Mindfulness is the practice of being present and paying attention. Everyone will be multi-tasking more than usual during this time of uncertainty. As often as possible, create time to do just one thing. For example, close out your email when working on projects so you can focus without distraction. If possible, take a few minutes each day to be silent and let your mind, body and soul rest.

2. STRETCHING: Being quarantined in your house can make you feel cramped. Stretching can take a few minutes and make your body feel more expansive and release physical tension.

3. 5-4-3-2-1: Take a moment to notice five things you can see, four things you can touch, three things you can hear, two things you can smell, one thing you can taste. This practice can bring you back into the present moment and bring awareness to your body. This practice is really helpful when you find yourself processing all of the potential outcomes and current unknowns or feel your thoughts spiraling.

4. GRATITUDE: Pause and give energy to being thankful. What are you grateful for? This practice helps even if you don’t say them out loud. Gratitude is a powerful skill in your toolkit. It is a very helpful response to feelings of scarcity and comparison and has actually been shown to lead to higher levels of happiness.

The best way to respond to your emotions is to first acknowledge them so that you can respond accordingly. Emotions are not right or wrong. They are simply information. You can notice your feelings, acknowledge what is happening for you and respond kindly and gently with yourself.
Under normal circumstances, it may make sense to expect that you keep the level of deliverables the same regardless of whether you are working from home or in the office. However, during a global pandemic, people need to be more flexible with each other and themselves. You may be trying to help your kids continue to learn while maintaining your job or perhaps sharing space and resources with a spouse, partner or roommates. You may be trying to salvage your work and financial stability, maybe even adding a second job to subsidize. You may be in the healthcare or public health space and finding yourself on the front lines of this pandemic.

The reality is that people are dealing with a lot right now, and it is not realistic for us to be able to double our workload and maintain the same output. Perhaps someone can do so for a day or a week, and some tasks or obligations might require you to do so from time to time, but you will eventually experience burnout. Here are some ways that you can proactively manage what is being expected of you during this difficult time.

**Adjust How You Think About a Work Day**

One silver lining in all of this is that technological advancements now allow many of us to do work from virtually anywhere. For most computer-based or collaborative work, the reality is that it can happen anywhere, any time. During the pandemic, it will be helpful to discuss with your manager and team members what their thoughts are for completing work within a more fluid and flexible time frame. For example, if you or your coworkers are having to provide school lessons for kids in the middle of the day, you may need to work after hours to complete some tasks.

As you begin to think about how to have a conversation with your manager about expectations for what your work day will look like, take heart that he or she is probably already thinking about how to shift expectations as well. This can be a great opportunity for you to build a healthier work relationship where you have some capacity to influence, moderate, and co-determine work outcomes.

**4 Great Ideas to Help Manage Expectations**

» **Focus on mission critical performance deliverables** rather than specific work hours. This demonstrates that you understand what absolutely has to get done, and you have thought about how to execute it.

» **Talk with your manager about benchmarks of work rather than logging tasks.** While it may seem tempting to log how you are spending your time on specific tasks, that will just create more work that may get in the way of executing critical performance deliverables. Suggest a discussion of daily or weekly milestones so you and your manager are both confident that you are proactively tracking toward success.

» **Ask your boss to provide clarity about “mission critical” benchmarks for each week.** Suggest a series of Monday meetings to review them quickly together.

» **Discuss more fluid needs for work deliverables.** For example, if you are working with your kids at home, you may want to let your boss know that you will be available throughout the standard 9-5 day, but that your focused delivery may happen later in the evening after kids go to bed.
You have likely seen in a sitcom when someone is panicking and they are given a paper bag to breathe into. It turns out this isn’t just good comedic content, it’s actually a good practice to calm our bodies and respond to overwhelming feelings of stress. The good news is that you don’t need the paper bag.

When you begin to feel overwhelmed, regardless of the reason, you can take a time out. In your personal time-out, use your breath to bring you some calm.

1. Find a quiet place to sit comfortably.
2. Focus on your breath.
3. Inhale through your nose for three seconds, hold that breath for two seconds, and exhale through your mouth for four seconds. You don’t need to have a timer, simply count slowly in your head.
4. Pay attention to the feeling of your lungs expanding, the sound of your breathing, or any other aspect of the breath that keeps you focused.
5. You can close your eyes or leave them open. The important thing is to keep focused for about 5-7 minutes on your breathing.

This simple act is incredibly helpful in reducing stress and anxiety. The more you do it, the better the benefits. During stressful times, like this global pandemic, it is not necessary to make any big changes in your health and wellness routines. In fact, what you really need is to find small ways to re-center which will help with the big emotions that occur in response to this crisis, and just do the next right thing.
Social distancing has created an increased opportunity to get healthy food into your body. Without the need to pack a lunch, or the convenience of fast food on the way to your next meeting, many people are eating at home a lot more. To invest in healthy food for your body, mind, and soul follow these guidelines.

> Food is meant to nourish you. It is meant to be eaten and enjoyed and usually in good company. Create meal times that allow you to eat and connect with others. This could be family meals or sharing a meal virtually with a friend. Avoid eating while working.

> There is no such thing as a super food. Have you ever stopped to think how often we act is if food has the power to condemn you or save you? It is important to remember that it does not. Right now, you may find yourself craving more carbohydrates. Stress does that. It’s okay. It is a natural response to what’s happening. If you indulge in some junk food, it’s okay. You will live. You will also find ways to nourish yourself later. Food perfection is not the goal right now. Nourishment is the goal. Don’t sweat it if you eat a candy bar in a moment of stress. You’ll recover later.

> Try to make half of your meals fruits, vegetables, and/or beans. This will naturally build a healthy plate. It’s an easy approach and a good start to a nutritious meal.

> Do not try to overhaul your diet right now. Just do your best day to day and fill your body with food that nourishes it.

> Don’t judge yourself for buying non-perishables. Since everyone is trying to take less trips to the grocery store, you may be stocking up on canned and frozen fruits, vegetables, and beans. That’s okay. These non-perishable versions of food are just as nutritious.

Always be sure to get nutrition information and guidance from Registered Dietitians. Here are some good websites to follow for more information:

https://livelytable.com/
https://www.thelangreenbean.com/
https://www.abbeyskitchen.com/
Movement is important and can be even more so in a crisis to support not just our physical health, but also our mental and emotional health. When individuals start to feel shut in, cramped, and anxious, physical movement can help them feel expansive and relaxed.

However, your physical activity is more limited right now because of your inability to go to a gym, or group fitness class, or meet up with a running group. Try to focus on a few small opportunities of physical activity rather than a big sweeping change to your activity routine.

**HERE ARE A FEW IDEAS FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AT HOME:**

1. Take several small 15 minute breaks to walk outside when the weather allows.
2. Climb the stairs in your home if you have them.
3. *Yoga With Adriene* is a good free yoga channel on YouTube.
4. Local fitness companies are offering virtual group classes without leaving your home, which is a good way to get exercise and support small businesses right now.
5. Stretching counts! Do a quick series of stretches to help you feel expansive when you might be stuck inside.
6. Spell your workout. There are many creative workouts where you do certain exercises for each letter and you spell out your name or a phrase. Simply do a quick online search for spell your workout and take your pick!
7. Get the kids involved. You may have kids at home (or even neighbors) that are missing out on their activities right now as well. Invite the neighbors out for a fun driveway workout with everybody in their own driveways doing jumping jacks, yoga, or a fun dance party. The kids and adults will both love this!

Remember that physical activity isn’t really about maintaining a healthy weight. It’s about giving your body what it needs. We were designed to move. To reward you when you engage in movement, you also get lower stress levels, increased happy hormones for your brain, and decreased risk for injury. Get moving in whatever way works best for you!
Twenty-five percent of American adults report insufficient sleep or rest at least fifteen out of every thirty days. Sleep is required to fight infection, support metabolism of sugar, make positive decisions, think creatively, and manage stress. Lack of sleep contributes to a variety of chronic disease such as diabetes, heart disease, obesity and depression.

In the book Wholehearted Living, Brene Brown said ‘Let go of exhaustion as a status symbol and productivity as self-worth.’ Now more than ever, this guidance is important.

In our society, there are a lot of common beliefs about rest. It is believed to be a luxury, or that people who rest more are lazy. It is believed that productivity is what makes us worthy. In this time of uncertainty, imperfection abounds. Everyone is doing their best and taking things hour by hour to make it through. This experience is exhausting because you are managing so many new ways of working and existing.

Play, or purposeless, all-consuming fun, is a biological need, as integral to our health as sleep or nutrition. People are designed by nature to flourish through play. Respecting your biologically programmed need for play can transform your work. It can bring excitement and newness to your job. It shapes your brain, helps you foster empathy, and is at the core of creativity and innovation. Just a little bit permeates through the rest of your life making you more productive and happier.

As the duration of this pandemic continues, consider investing in some play and rest by incorporating some of the following:

» If you have young kids, play a game of hide-and-seek or blow bubbles outside on a beautiful day.
» Take time to read a book.
» Enjoy time just sitting and relaxing on a sunny day.
» Turn on your favorite music and dance.
» Take a nap or go to bed earlier than normal.
» Play a virtual game with friends.
» Go for a walk and enjoy the sights and sounds of nature.
» Go for a bike ride.

Whatever you decide to do, the most important thing is to enjoy it. Making time to play and rest will pay dividends when it comes to your mood, your health and overall well-being.
Social connection is a key part of our well-being. In times of social distancing, it might seem like a good idea to create a lot of extra support to socially connect with people. However, right now, the best thing is to be intentional about social connection and ensure when you are connecting that it is high quality. In some ways you are now more connected to friends, family, and even coworkers than ever before.

Perhaps you’re on more video calls, your family created a group chat, or your kids are on group chats and logged into virtual classrooms. In some ways, you have a lot more people virtually in your household than ever before. You may have a lot of social connection that can be overwhelming and still leave you feeling a little lonely. In other instances you might have a lot less connection and find yourself missing the people you normally surround yourself with.

Quality connection is really important for your emotional and mental health. Here are some strategies for focusing on quality connections:

» Check in on those you care about. You may have elderly neighbors or relatives that are more exposed during this time. Give them a call to see if they need anything (perhaps grocery delivery) or if they just need somebody to chat with. They may be feeling alone and afraid, and knowing you care will help ease their minds.

» Avoid connection that amplifies your anxiety. Some people connect through fear or what researcher and author Brene Brown calls “Common Enemy Connection” which is when people find all the things they dislike together. These types of connection aren’t fully nourishing. Does this mean you can’t talk about what scares you right now? No, in fact it can be very helpful to talk about what scares you or what you are feeling. Be sure that the connections you seek are positive overall and allow all parties to support each other during this time of uncertainty.

» Find someone to have the conversation with who acknowledges your fears and reminds you that you are safe and loved. Conversely, some people hear your fear and pile on with more fear and anxiety. This is not helpful to either person.

» Prioritize connection that invites goodwill, kindness, joy, laughter, and peace. Based on the science of human connection, the saying “misery loves company” is true, but so is the saying “joy loves company.” People adopt the behaviors that others endorse. Find the right people to spend virtual social time with who will fill your bucket.

The *Power of Social Connection* is so strong that WELCOA has deemed 2020 the *Year of Social Connection*. And now in the face of a global pandemic, see how WELCOA is helping you connect.