



# HELPING HANDS



## COVID-19 and your mental health

(excerpts from MAYO clinic staff)

**Worries and anxiety about COVID-19 and its impact can be overwhelming. Social distancing makes it even more challenging. Learn ways to cope during this pandemic.**

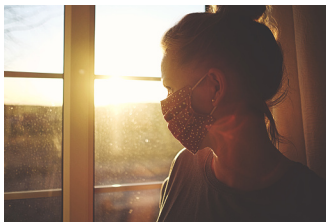
The COVID-19 pandemic has likely brought many changes to how you live your life, and with it uncertainty, altered daily routines, financial pressures and social isolation. You may worry about getting sick, how long the pandemic will last and what the future will bring. Information overload, rumors and misinformation can make your life feel out of control and make it unclear what to do.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, you may experience stress, anxiety, fear, sadness and loneliness. And mental health disorders, including anxiety and depression, can worsen.

**Self-care strategies.** Self-care strategies are good for your mental and physical health and can help you take charge of your life. Take care of your body and your mind and connect with others to benefit your mental health.

**Get enough sleep.** Go to bed and get up at the same times each day. Stick close to your typical schedule, even if you're staying at home.

**Participate in regular physical activity.** Regular physical activity and exercise can help reduce anxiety and improve mood. Get outside in an area such as a nature trail or your own backyard.



**Eat healthy.** Choose a well-balanced diet. Avoid loading up on junk food and refined sugar. Limit caffeine as it can aggravate stress and anxiety.

**Avoid tobacco, alcohol and drugs.** If you smoke tobacco or if you vape, you're already at higher risk of lung disease. Because COVID-19 affects the lungs, your risk increases even more. Using alcohol to try to cope can make matters worse and reduce your coping skills.

**Limit screen time and exposure to news media.** Constant news about COVID-19 from all types of media can heighten fears about the disease. Limit social media that may expose you to rumors and false information. Turn off electronic devices for an hour or more each day, and at least 30 minutes before bedtime.

**Relax and recharge.** Set aside time for yourself. Even a few minutes of quiet time can be refreshing and help to quiet your mind and reduce anxiety. Deep breathing, tai chi, yoga or meditation are techniques that can help.

**Keep your regular routine.** Maintaining a regular schedule is important to your mental health. In addition to sticking to a regular bedtime routine, keep consistent times for meals, bathing and getting dressed, work or study schedules, and exercise. Also set aside time for activities you enjoy. This can make you feel more in control.

**Use your moral compass or spiritual life for support.** If you draw strength from a belief system, it can bring you comfort during difficult times.

**Make connections.** If you need to stay at home and distance yourself from others, avoid social isolation. Find time each day to make virtual connections by email, texts, phone, or FaceTime or similar apps. If you're working remotely from home, ask your co-workers how they're doing and share coping tips. Enjoy virtual socializing and talking to those in your home.

**Do something for others.** Find purpose in helping the people around you. For example, email, text or call to check on your friends, family members and neighbors — especially those who are elderly. If you know someone who can't get out, ask if there's something needed, such as groceries or a prescription picked up, for instance. But be sure to follow CDC, WHO and your government recommendations on social distancing and group meetings.

## Recognizing What is Typical and What is Not Typical for You

Stress is a normal psychological and physical reaction to the demands of life. Everyone reacts differently to difficult situations, and it's normal to feel stress and worry during a crisis.

Many people may have mental health concerns, such as symptoms of anxiety and depression during this time. And feelings may change over time.

You may find yourself feeling helpless, sad, angry, irritable, hopeless, anxious or afraid. You may have trouble concentrating on typical tasks, changes in appetite, body aches and pains, or difficulty sleeping, or you may struggle to face routine chores.

When these signs and symptoms last for several days in a row, make you miserable and cause problems in your daily life so that you find it hard to carry out normal responsibilities, it's time to ask for help.

If you have concerns or if you experience worsening of mental health symptoms, ask for help when you need it, and be upfront about how you're doing. To get help you may want to:

- Contact your employee assistance program and get counseling or ask for a referral to a mental health professional.
- Call your primary care provider or mental health professional to talk about your anxiety or depression and get advice and guidance.
- Contact organizations such as the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) or the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) for help and guidance.



## IAM Peer Employee Assistance Program



The heart and soul of the District 141 Employee Assistance Program is the local lodge EAP peer coordinator. These dedicated men and women volunteer their personal time to assist other union members and their families who are experiencing personal difficulties. EAP peer coordinators do not make clinical diagnoses or clinical evaluations, however, they are trained to make a basic assessment of your situation and refer you to an appropriate resource for a more detailed evaluation. EAP peer coordinators will follow up to ensure you have been able to access services that addressed the difficulty you were experiencing.

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### Mental Health Resources

#### Get Immediate Help

If the situation is potentially life-threatening, get immediate emergency assistance by calling 911, available 24 hours a day.

If you or someone you know is suicidal or in emotional distress, contact the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#). 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or Chat Trained crisis workers are available to talk **24 hours a day, 7 days a week**. Your confidential and toll-free call goes to the nearest crisis center in the Lifeline national network.

SAMHSA Treatment Referral Helpline, 1-877-SAMHSA7 (1-877-726-4727)

Get general information on mental health and locate treatment services in your area. Speak to a live person, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. EST.