



Taking Care of Yourself During a Public Health Emergency

“Hope is important because it can make the present moment less difficult to bear. If we believe that tomorrow will be better, we can bear a hardship today.”

– Thich Nhat Hanh

Coping with a public health emergency can be stressful and worrisome. You may have to deal with uncertainty, concerns about your health and the health of your family and friends, a change in your routine, limited access to needed resources, and more. Thankfully there are steps you can take to care for yourself during difficult times. There are also services and supports available if you need a higher level of emotional care.

STEPS FOR TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

It’s natural to feel stressed, worried, anxious, and overwhelmed during a public health emergency, but there are steps you can take to build your wellness. Here are some you can try.



BODY

- Be physically active or exercise regularly
- Eat well, maintain a healthy diet, drink water
- Get a good night’s rest, keep a routine sleep schedule
- Relax your body with breathing exercises and stretching



MIND

- Engage in activities or hobbies you enjoy
- Try as much as possible to maintain a daily routine
- Meditate or pray as a way to relax and find support
- Take breaks throughout the day



EMOTIONS

- Notice and accept how you feel, try not to judge your feelings
- Treat yourself with compassion and understanding
- Talk about your feelings with someone you trust
- Use calming self-talk (“I can handle this”, “One day at a time”)



SUPPORT

- Reach out to others by calling, texting, email, social media, video call
- Ask for help when needed from friends/family or professionals
- Access drug and alcohol sobriety support groups remotely ([AA groups](#) & [Al Anon groups](#))
- Access mental health support groups remotely ([Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance](#))

STAYING INFORMED WITHOUT STRESSING OUT

While it’s important to stay up to date with the most current information regarding the public health emergency, you don’t want to overwhelm yourself with news or media that causes you to feel anxious or distressed. What can you do?

AVOID	Excessive exposure to media coverage
LIMIT	Media exposure to a single credible source (https://www.cdc.gov/)
CHECK	Information updates at a specific time only once or twice a day
GATHER	Information that allows you to take practical steps to protect yourself and your loved ones

If you need help due to overwhelming sadness, depression, anxiety, or feelings that you want to harm yourself or others:

SAMHSA’s Disaster Distress Helpline
1-800-985-5990 Test TalkWithUs to 66746
TTY 1-800-846-8517

SAMHSA’s National Helpline
1-800-662-HELP

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-TALK
TTY 1-800-799-4TTY (4889)

WHAT DISTRESS CAN LOOK LIKE

1

COGNITIVE SIGNS

Forgetting things more often
Feeling confused
Having trouble concentrating
Difficulty making decisions

2

EMOTIONAL SIGNS

Fear, worry, anxiety
Anger, guilt, irritability
Sadness, depression
Wanting to isolate

3

PHYSICAL SIGNS

Stomach aches
Headaches, tight muscles
Worsening chronic health problems
Change in energy level

4

BEHAVIORAL SIGNS

Change in sleeping, eating habits
Crying easily
Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, drugs
Difficulty carrying out daily activities

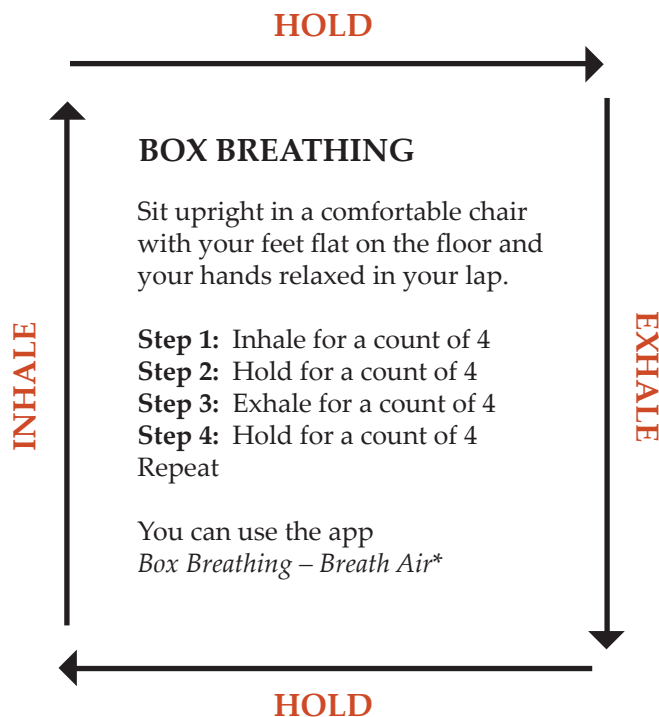
COPING STRATEGIES

KEEP A GRATITUDE JOURNAL

Write down 2-5 things for which you feel grateful. These things can be very small or very big. Think about something you enjoyed, someone with whom you interacted, an accomplishment, an obstacle you overcame, etc. You don't need to write in your journal everyday – just a few times a week is beneficial.

- Be specific and include details of the event, experience, accomplishment, etc.
- Try to focus on people more than things
- Think about being grateful for negative things that didn't happen or an obstacle you turned into an opportunity
- Think of the good things you receive as gifts
- Write down things that you didn't expect or that surprised you

Remember that being grateful doesn't mean there aren't difficult and challenging things going on. It just helps us to remember there are also good things happening.



HELPFUL APPS TO TRY

Mindfulness Apps*

The Mindfulness App
Headspace
Calm

Deep Breathing Apps*

Stop, Breathe & Think
Breathing Zone
Breathe2Relax

Connection Apps*

WhatsApp
GroupMe
Houseparty

* Note: Inclusion or mention of a resource in this fact sheet is meant to provide an example and does not imply endorsement by the Northeast and Caribbean MHTTC

Access Reliable Information: www.cdc.gov | samhsa.gov/coronavirus

Website: mhttcnetwork.org/centers/northeast-caribbean-mhttc Facebook: @NECMHTTC Twitter: @NECMHTTC

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