



## Taking Care of Yourself During a Public 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 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 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 emergency, you don’t want to overwhelm yourself with news or media that causes you to feel anxious or distressed. What can you do?

<b>AVOID</b>	Excessive exposure to media coverage
<b>LIMIT</b>	Media exposure to a single credible source
<b>CHECK</b>	Information updates at a specific time only once or twice a day
<b>GATHER</b>	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



### COGNITIVE SIGNS

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



### EMOTIONAL SIGNS

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



### PHYSICAL SIGNS

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



### BEHAVIORAL SIGNS

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

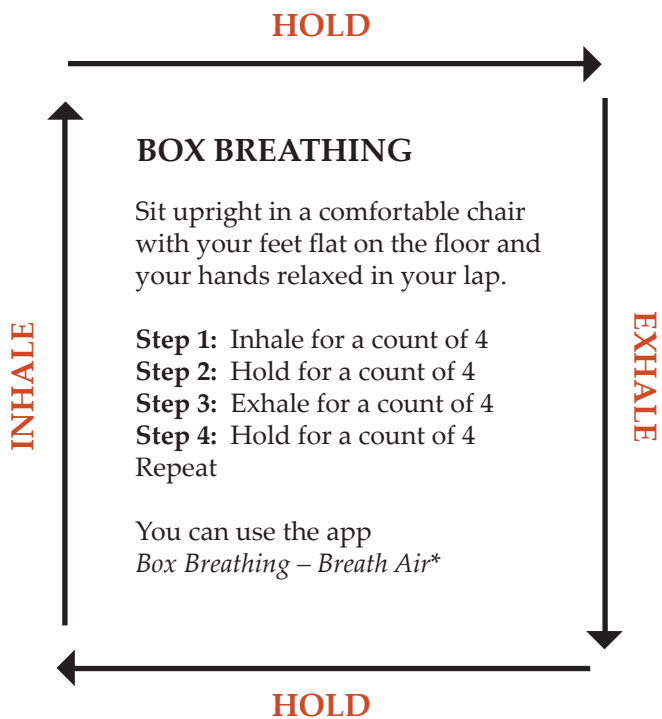
## COPING STRATEGIES

### 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*	Deep Breathing Apps*	Connection Apps*
	The Mindfulness App Headspace Calm	Stop, Breathe & Think Breathing Zone Breathe2Relax	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](http://www.cdc.gov) | [samhsa.gov/coronavirus](http://samhsa.gov/coronavirus)

Website: [mhttcnetwork.org/centers/northeast-caribbean-mhttc](http://mhttcnetwork.org/centers/northeast-caribbean-mhttc) Facebook: @NECMHTTC Twitter: @NECMHTTC

This work is supported by grant H795M081783 from the Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration