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## **Recommendations for Stress & Coping During COVID-19**

### **Lincoln County Health Department is here for you during COVID-19**

*Please follow these recommendations from the Washington State Department of Health, the CDC, and our Public Health Officer, Dr. Ralph Monteagudo to keep you safe and healthy during this time.*

First of all, remember the mandate is not only to stay home, but to “stay healthy.”

The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) may be stressful for people. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Coping with stress will make you, the people you care about, and your community stronger.

**Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations.** How you respond to the outbreak can depend on your background, the things that make you different from other people, and the community you live in.

People who may respond more strongly to the stress of a crisis include

- Older people and people with chronic diseases who are at higher risk for COVID-19
- Children and teens
- People who are helping with the response to COVID-19, like doctors and other health care providers, or first responders
- People who have mental health conditions including problems with substance use

**If you, or someone you care about, are feeling overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression, or anxiety, or feel like you want to harm yourself or others call**

- 911
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA’s) Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746. (TTY 1-800-846-8517)

**Stress during an infectious disease outbreak can include**

- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Increased use of alcohol, [tobacco](#), or [other drugs](#)

**People with preexisting mental health conditions should continue with their treatment and be aware of new or worsening symptoms. Additional information can be found at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration website.**



Taking care of yourself, your friends, and your family can help you cope with stress. Helping others cope with their stress can also make your community stronger.

### **Things you can do to support yourself**

- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.
- Take care of your body. Take deep breaths, stretch, or [meditate](#) external icon. [Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals](#), [exercise regularly](#), [get plenty of sleep](#), and [avoid alcohol](#) and [drugs](#) external icon.
- Make time to unwind. Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.

**Call your healthcare provider if stress gets in the way of your daily activities for several days in a row.**

Reduce stress in yourself and others

More support for COVID-19

info circle icon

- [Reducing Stigma](#)
- [Stop the Spread of Rumors](#)

[Sharing the facts](#) about COVID-19 and understanding the actual risk to yourself and people you care about can make an outbreak less stressful..

When you share accurate information about COVID-19 you can help make people feel less stressed and allow you to connect with them.

Learn more about [taking care of your emotional health](#).

For parents

Children and teens react, in part, on what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with the COVID-19 calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children. Parents can be more reassuring to others around them, especially children, if they are better prepared.

**Not all children and teens respond to stress in the same way. Some common changes to watch for include**

- Excessive crying or irritation in younger children
- Returning to behaviors they have outgrown (for example, toileting accidents or bedwetting)
- Excessive worry or sadness
- Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits
- Irritability and “acting out” behaviors in teens
- Poor school performance or avoiding school



- Difficulty with attention and concentration
- Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past
- Unexplained headaches or body pain
- Use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

### **There are many things you can do to support your child**

- Take time to talk with your child or teen about the COVID-19 outbreak. Answer questions and [share facts](#) about COVID-19 in a way that your child or teen can understand.
- Reassure your child or teen that they are safe. Let them know it is ok if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.
- Limit your family's exposure to news coverage of the event, including social media. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.
- Try to keep up with regular routines. If schools are closed, create a schedule for learning activities and relaxing or fun activities.
- Be a role model. Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members.

Learn more about [helping children cope](#).

For responders

Responding to COVID-19 can take an emotional toll on you. There are things you can do to reduce secondary traumatic stress (STS) reactions:

- Acknowledge that STS can impact anyone helping families after a traumatic event.
- Learn the symptoms including physical (fatigue, illness) and mental (fear, withdrawal, guilt).
- Allow time for you and your family to recover from responding to the pandemic.
- Create a menu of personal self-care activities that you enjoy, such as spending time with friends and family, exercising, or reading a book.
- Take a break from media coverage of COVID-19.
- Ask for help if you feel overwhelmed or concerned that COVID-19 is affecting your ability to care for your family and patients as you did before the outbreak.

Learn more [tips for taking care of yourself](#) during emergency response.

For people who have been released from quarantine

Being separated from others if a healthcare provider thinks you may have been exposed to COVID-19 can be stressful, even if you do not get sick. Everyone feels differently after coming out of quarantine. Some feelings include :

- Mixed emotions, including relief after quarantine
- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones
- Stress from the experience of monitoring yourself or being monitored by others for signs and symptoms of COVID-19



- Sadness, anger, or frustration because friends or loved ones have unfounded fears of contracting the disease from contact with you, even though you have been determined not to be contagious
- Guilt about not being able to perform normal work or parenting duties during quarantine
- Other emotional or mental health changes

Children may also feel upset or have other strong emotions if they, or someone they know, has been released from quarantine.

Here are some quick actions you can take if you are experiencing fear, anxiety, or other mental health issues because of COVID-19:

### 1) **Focus on what you can control v. what you cannot control**

For example, we cannot control the weather, the tone of the media, governor’s order(s), or the attitude of another. We can influence some of these things by:

- Weather—no luck on influencing but we can look ahead and schedule activities that match the weather. For example, rainy weather for the next few days?? Plan a schedule that includes movie times, indoor exercise routine, writing letters, indoor hobbies, etc. Sunny weather ahead—plan for an outing to the park that utilizes social distancing but keeps us in the community.
- Keeping media (TV, radio, etc.) to a minimum. Schedule a time during your day to “check-in” with the latest news reports and keep your exposure to only those times. A constant stream of media negatively impacts our emotions and thought-processes.
- Stuck at home with a Negative Nelly? Find a place of solace where you can be alone and gather your thoughts for a few minutes. Counter negative statements by making positive statements to yourself, or out loud, when negativities enter the environment. Use earphones or headsets to plug into an audio book for a while.

### 2) **Reframe, reframe, reframe!**

“We’re doomed” thinking will result in anxiety and depression. Try “wow, I now have time to learn karate!” or “I can do an indoor start of those garden plants (and be home to remember to water them!”)

No one wants to or should gloss over reality. We need to acknowledge our reality. But, we can learn and practice how to stay home without taxing our mental health. Take a 5-minute check each hour to think about your thinking—what kind of thoughts are you having? Are they helpful, true, and useful? Be meaningful and purposeful in learning a new skill, reading a book from cover to cover, joining an online exercise or support group, start a new, fun habit.

### 3) **Maintain a normal routine**



This is not the time to practice habits that undermine your physical and mental health. Maintain or adopt a daily exercise routine. Wake up and go to bed around the same time, eat meals, shower, brush your teeth and comb your hair. Do not stay in your PJ's all day, every day. Laundry, housekeeping and other daily chores can remain on the same schedule. Not only will sticking to your normal routine keep you active, your mental adjustment overall is less necessary and it will be easier to readjust to a work schedule once you return. Predictability is also helpful to those around you and helps everyone with an easier adjustment in an all day, every day stay-at-home environment.

#### 4) **Free-for-all muddling**

If we let go of predictable schedules, we will find that boundaries and good habits go out the window. We could find ourselves feeling lost and without purpose. Keep your refrigerator stocked with healthy food options and keep meals on a schedule. Plan for that night of “out-of-ordinary”, such as “Fun Fridays” or “Table-top Wednesdays”. Use social media tools to keep in touch with friends and family in a way you’ve not done before such as planning a Facetime mealtime as a group. Keep Saturday morning (or day) as PJ Day, if that’s already a part of your home schedule. Organized chaos can help clear the cobwebs and create a different focus. With all the insecurity happening outside your home, keep the inside organized, predictable and clean, planning fun and “unpredictable” times that balance good health.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control & Prevention; NEW Alliance Counseling Services

#### **Know your resources...**

- **NEW Alliance Counseling in Lincoln & Stevens Counties**  
<https://newacs.stevenscountywa.gov/>
- **Rural Resources** <https://ruralresources.org/>
- **Disaster Distress Helpline** 1-800-985-5990
- **National Domestic Violence Hotline** 1-800-799-7233 and TTY 1-800-787-3224
- **Lincoln County Health Department** [www.co.lincoln.wa.us/public-health](http://www.co.lincoln.wa.us/public-health)
- **Washington State Coronavirus Response** [www.coronavirus.wa.gov](http://www.coronavirus.wa.gov)
- **Centers for Disease Control & Prevention** [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)
- **Washington State Department of Health** [www.doh.wa.gov/coronavirus](http://www.doh.wa.gov/coronavirus)
- **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**  
<https://www.samhsa.gov/disaster-preparedness>

