

## Staying Positive During Stressful Times

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The current pandemic has taken us all by surprise and has led to a great deal of stress and anxiety. This in turn has created widespread physical and emotional setbacks in many of us. This article focuses on several strategies that can help us better cope with the present situation.

Moderate amounts of stress, especially at this time, can be a helpful motivator that keeps us in line with good practices such as social distancing, cleanliness and being more aware in general. However, consistent high levels of stress can negatively affect our physical and emotional well-being. A good place to start in dealing with this is to limit the exposure to media news reports. While being informed of worldly events is a good thing, too much negative information can lead to an increased state of anxiety. Instead, we must find a reasonable balance between staying informed and being overloaded. I have personally found that it is better to avoid lengthy conversations with others regarding the current day crisis as it leads to a feeling of helplessness. It is alright to acknowledge the situation; however, it is essential that we conduct ourselves in a more positive

manner and look at each day as new and unique. It is important to remember that this situation is out of our control for the time being. The following are several strategies that are especially helpful during these times.

### Cognitive Reframing:

In this context, cognitive reframing is a technique that consists of identifying any negative thought patterns and replacing them with positive ones. It encompasses viewing external events and associated internal thoughts and emotions with the intent of finding healthier alternatives. We can do this by learning to challenge our own perceptions and to change the way we think of them. For example, if you have made a habit of watching the morning news, it may be better to shift this to later in the day. Instead, that time can be used to start your day with some relaxation techniques. An excellent way to restructure your day is to make a list of things to accomplish. This can include things that you may have put off for some time that need to be done. Once things are written on a list, it can help to minimize worries and give you a greater feeling of being in control.

### Regular Exercise:

This is an essential habit that will benefit your health. Physical activity is an effective way to deal with stress especially during trying times. There are numerous benefits that can be gained from exercising. It is especially important to find a good exercise program to do first thing in the morning before breakfast. This can be stretching, yoga, outside walks, deep breathing or preferably any combination of these activities. It may also include solo dancing to your favorite music. Vigorous exercising will always bring a sense of wellbeing into play.

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### Catch up on Reading:

Use the stay at home time to catch up on reading materials that you never had a chance to in the past. It is also a good time to pick up books in new areas of interest to increase your general knowledge. This serves as a great way to get our minds focused on new endeavors.

### Try New Things:

This is a great opportunity to spend more time in the kitchen, learning to put together new recipes. Preparing healthy foods always provide a good physical and psychological boost. Other things to consider are cleaning areas of the house that may have been neglected for some time, working in the garden, and partaking in new hobbies. It is also an excellent time to practice and reinforce your dance steps and routines. This can be a very effective way to polish old routines and establish new ones.

It is helpful to remember that this current situation will not last forever. We need to stay on a positive path each day by making a point to support our physical and emotional wellbeing. Keeping busy with activities that we enjoy is a very good way to keep our minds off the negative things around us. It is a worthwhile investment to incorporate these pursuits daily to maintain our joy in life one day at a time.

