

Taking Care of Yourself in Stressful Times

It can be hard to prioritize self-care in challenging times, but this is exactly when it's needed most. This checklist can remind you to take time for moves that can help you be more stress-resistant.

Body

- ☐ Fit exercise in. It lowers stress and can help you sleep better. Even a short 15-minute stint can make a difference.
- ☐ Don't let sleep be optional. You should get enough rest each night to awake feeling well-rested and energized.
- ☐ Make time to eat and stay hydrated. Regular meals give you the fuel you need to stay strong and focused.
- ☐ Be aware that stress can push you to reach for carbohydrates because they trigger comforting brain chemicals.
- ☐ Be ready to meet cravings with healthy snacks, such as fruit, veggies, nuts, popcorn, or whole-grain crackers.
- ☐ Avoid turning to alcohol, drugs, or unhealthy behaviors as a way of coping.

Mind

- ☐ Stay informed, but don't overdo news exposure. Notice the impact news stories have and limit accordingly.
- ☐ Take mental "breaks" during the day to focus on something distracting, uplifting, or soothing.
- ☐ If needed, set aside a limited time in the day to review your worries and how to respond. Then let them go for the day.
- ☐ Notice signs that anxiety or stress is building for you. Recognize this as normal but have strategies ready to reduce it.
- ☐ Use positive self-talk to remind yourself of strengths and abilities: "This is hard, but I'm strong. I can get through it."
- ☐ Be open to turning to others for emotional and practical support. It's a strength, not a weakness, to reach out.
- ☐ Know that mental health professionals can help you problem-solve and identify strategies to manage difficult feelings.

Spirit

- ☐ Think about how you've coped with hard times before. Try to re-deploy the strengths and strategies that helped then.
- ☐ Find one or more enjoyable ways to relax your mind and body. Give yourself permission to recharge in this way.
- ☐ Lean on your support network. Look for listeners, givers of honest feedback, and nurturers to build you up.
- ☐ Get outdoors. The fresh air and sunlight can renew both health and spirit, as well as help regulate sleep cycles.

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