

During this time of worldwide crisis, trauma survivors need more support than ever. Here are some ways to manage trauma symptoms during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Below are some general tips on managing anxiety during this time:

- Find ways to stay connected to the important people in your life. While you are being asked to isolate yourself from the public, you **DO NOT** need to try to manage this on your own. Use a form of technology that feels safe to you to connect with those you love.
- Remember that your trauma is still valid, even in times of global upheaval. It does not suddenly disappear, and you may need to find new ways to cope at this time.
- Get back to basics. Try your best to get enough sleep, drink plenty of water, get your body moving in a way that feels good to you, and eat the foods that your body needs to feel healthy.
- Remember your boundaries are still important! This applies to physical boundaries as well as emotional boundaries. If a friend or loved one wants you to be a sounding board for their anxieties, and you know you cannot offer that right now, it is okay to let them know. There will likely be a time where you will be able to fill that role for them in the future.
- Try your best to keep somewhat of a schedule each day. Structure is difficult, especially now, but having a plan for your day may help to make difficult news a bit easier to digest.
- Put together a coping tool kit of the skills you know help to decrease anxiety, depression, and/or trauma symptoms. Make an inventory, either with pencil or paper, or in a digital format that you can easily access. Include activities and objects that help you feel safe, bring you joy, and help you feel grounded. When times get tough, it is much easier to read skills from your list than to try to recall them by memory.
- Limit your exposure to the news and social media. It is important to stay up to speed on what is happening, but staying glued to the news for prolonged periods will NOT make you more informed. (For more information on this, refer to this article [Watching the News Can be Traumatizing](#)).
- Seek professional help when needed. Many counselors and therapists have transitioned to providing telehealth counseling services. If you are already connected to a provider, ask if they are able to have an online session or a phone session with you. It is okay to reach out during this time. If all else fails, normalize your struggles. Remember that you are not alone in this and many others are dealing with the consequences of this distressing time. Be kind to yourself (and others). Kindness and compassion can go a long way.

## Helpful coping strategies for managing trauma during crises

- Practice staying in the present. Research has shown that mindfulness practices are invaluable to folks managing trauma and PTSD. Below are several suggestions for ways to create mindful practices in your daily life:
  - Learn how to recognize internal triggers
  - Learn a grounding technique and use as needed
  - Utilize deep breathing exercises and/or techniques
  - Keep a daily log or diary to help increase self-awareness
  - Take a mindful walk (maintaining social distancing standards). This includes noticing how the outside world interacts with your senses in the moment. How does the air feel on your skin? What can you hear or smell? Do you notice anything you have never seen before in your neighborhood?
- Keep track of your thoughts and actions throughout the day. If you find yourself mindlessly eating, spending too much while online shopping, or using drugs or alcohol to numb emotions, it is time to focus on the feelings driving these actions. You may be able to sort this out on your own, but you do not have to. Reach out to those people who support you or a mental health provider for help.
- It is easy to get caught up in the chaos and lack of control that comes along with it, but making an effort to focus on what's in your control right now will help. We cannot change what is happening, but we can change our thinking about what's happening or how much we are digesting news about what is going on. Utilize the activities that brought you calm or stability before the pandemic began.
- Whatever you do, do not stop coping altogether. This is the only guaranteed way to make yourself feel worse. If you get to a point where you are not coping at all, call a local or national hotline.

### Local Resources

- Women's Resource Center of the NRV – (540)639-1123
- ACCESS Emergency Services – (540)961-8400
- CONNECT Emergency Services – (800)-284-8898

### National Resources

- National Sexual Assault Hotline 1-800-656-4673
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- NAMI hotline 1-800-950-NAMI (6264)
- <https://www.crisistextline.org/>

### Need more suggestions?

- Have several go-to hobbies you can do from home (read, knit, play video games, make a TikTok, follow inspiring Instagram accounts, jog or walk in your neighborhood, binge-watch your favorite shows, etc.)
- Switch up chores with loved ones or housemates to break the monotony
- Have a family or zoom movie night a couple days a week
- Allow yourself to have personal space
- Try meditation or yoga in your room
- Allow yourself and your loved ones to have personal space
- Find things that you enjoy or make you laugh
- Recognize when you are Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired (HALT), and take the appropriate self-care measures
- Practice religious faith, philosophy, spirituality
- Write, draw, paint, get creative!
- Limit caffeine and substance use

Three basic aspects of self-care (adapted from <https://psychcentral.com/blog/what-self-care-is-and-what-it-isnt-2/>)

· **Awareness:** The first step is to seek awareness. This requires you to slow down and focus inwardly to determine how you are feeling, what your stress level is, what types of thoughts are going through your head, and whether your behaviors and actions are consistent with the person you want to be.

· **Balance:** The second step is to seek balance in all areas of your life including work, personal and family life, rest, and leisure. You will be more productive when you've had opportunities to rest and relax. Becoming aware of when you are losing balance in your life gives you an opportunity to change.

· **Connection:** The final step is connection. It involves building connections and supportive relationships with your co-workers, students, friends, family, and community. One of the most powerful stress reducers is social connection.

### **Articles and Resources**

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/surviving-and-thriving-after-trauma/202004/what-is-post-traumatic-growth-and-coping-in-pandemic>

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/parent-caregiver-guide-to-helping-families-cope-with-the-coronavirus-disease-2019>

<https://psychcentral.com/blog/minimizing-the-risks-of-ptsd-from-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

<https://psychcentral.com/blog/what-self-care-is-and-what-it-isnt-2/>