

COVID-19 surge is raising our stress levels

What are the best ways to handle increasing anxiety?

With the rate of COVID-19 cases rising dramatically in the Americas, Europe, and other parts of the world, stress and anxiety levels are going up as well.

Everyone reacts differently to stress, and you may find that some ways of coping with anxiety work better than others. Here are some approaches you can try:

- 1) **Breathe.** Deep breathing increases the supply of oxygen to your brain and stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system, which promotes a state of calmness. Breathing deeply helps you feel connected to your body—it takes your awareness away from the worries in your head and quiets your mind. Meditation and yoga both use deep breathing techniques, but you can also take short breaks to just breathe deeply and slowly.
- 2) **Exercise.** Move your body every day. Choose activities you enjoy, whether it's running, biking, hiking, walking, yoga, Pilates, dancing, lifting weights, or anything else that gets your blood pumping and helps clear your mind.
- 3) **Eat healthy.** Good nutrition will help you feel better physically, and that has a positive impact on your mental health as well.
- 4) **Go outside.** If you're able to get outdoors and safely distance yourself from others, the fresh air can be rejuvenating.
- 5) **Get good-quality sleep.** Sleep makes a big difference in how we feel mentally and physically, so it's important to get enough. Try to maintain regular sleeping patterns and keep up good sleep hygiene practices – like avoiding screens before bed, cutting back on caffeine, and creating a restful environment.
- 6) **Take breaks from the news.** It's easy to get overwhelmed by news stories about the pandemic. You can still stay informed while cutting back on news consumption.
- 7) **Stay connected to people.** Keeping in touch with people we care about is important for our well-being. Also, you might want to try joining a virtual community or support group.
- 8) **Help others.** Supporting others is a way to stay connected, assist people in need, and feel good all at the same time—whether it's checking on a neighbor, volunteering, or just being there to listen.
- 9) **Spend time doing what you enjoy—or try something new.** The breadmaking craze might be over, but there are still plenty of other activities catch up on or check out—from learning a new language or playing an instrument, to knitting, cooking, or playing a game you haven't tried before.
- 10) **Get help through our resources.**
 - U.S. Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider NAME offers counseling sessions, a crisis hotline, coping resources, a mindfulness center, and more
 - Global EAP provider NAME offers counseling sessions, legal and financial guidance, expert support, and health and well-being videos and podcasts
 - Wellness apps offer support as well: NAME (to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression), NAME (for online therapy), and NAME (to enhance mindfulness)