



COVID-19

3 STRATEGIES TO COPE WITH STRESS

Prioritise your own self-care during lockdown to try ensure you act in a healthy way rather than react to the unsettling events around you. Here we look at the different strategies for coping with stress.

1. Physical coping strategies

Getting enough sleep is always top of the list, together with physical activity and eating well-balanced meals. Establish a sleeping routine that starts at a reasonable hour and you can begin to feel an impact on your mood and energy level. Similarly, the serotonin release sparked by exercise has a big impact on your stress levels – although if you're new to exercise, talk to a doctor beforehand. Regular, balanced meals (and avoiding excessive alcohol), also helps keep your mind and body fuelled for the day. Other physical strategies include deep breathing and meditation-based activities.

2. Mental coping strategies

It's easy to fall into the trap of believing everything you read about the situation, so to get it straight in your mind, go to the World Health Organization (WHO) or your national health system website, for the real story on the situation. With the facts at hand, don't think about 'what-ifs', focus on the here and now: supporting your loved ones; getting involved in activities you enjoy and ticking things off your 'to do list' both at home and at work.

Start to structure your time, and plan your day – including social aspects – as large chunks of unstructured time can allow your thoughts to re-join the treadmill of 'what ifs'. Setting short-term goals can also play a part in staying focused – what do you want to achieve in the next hour? The next day? The next week? Always focus on your strengths, thinking 'I can handle this uncertainty' acts as a reminder that you're still in charge of your own life.

3. Emotional coping strategies

Don't keep all your feelings and fears to yourself, reach out to people close to you and talk through those thoughts and worries. Also make time to do activities you enjoy with friends and family. Finally, have realistic expectations for yourself. There are many unknowns in this situation, and you cannot have all the answers or control every outcome, so give yourself a break and remind yourself you're doing the best you can.

Together, all the way.®

