

WAYS TO MIND YOUR MENTAL HEALTH IN CHALLENGING TIMES: TIPS FOR YOUTH



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CONNECT WITH OTHERS.

In COVID times, it can be harder to stay in touch, but there are still safe ways to connect.

- ✓ Meet a friend for an outdoor walk or a picnic.
- ✓ Schedule a weekly video call with your closest friend.
- ✓ Find a common interest and have “quality” time with those in your bubble. Ask someone you live with to teach you something they’re good at, whether it’s baking, playing an instrument or a video game.
- ✓ Set up a group Zoom, maybe include trivia about your favorite music or TV shows.





GET MOVING!

Sometimes when you're fed up or worn out, the last thing you want to do is exercise. Finding one physical activity you like and doing it on a regular basis, can make a huge difference to how you feel.

- ✓ Re-create dances from TikTok, music videos or YouTube dance tutorials: the faster the pace the better!
- ✓ Take a walk. If you find walking boring, listen to music or a podcast as you go, or phone a friend.
- ✓ Look for equipment-free workouts online. These will vary in length and difficulty so sample a few to find a good fit for you.

HELP OTHERS.

The pandemic has led to a lot of need in the community. Helping others can give you chances to connect, get moving, and feel like you're making a difference. It can help you feel better. It might be a little harder to find ways to volunteer if you're under 18, but public libraries, schools, churches, and the American Red Cross are places youth and young adults can volunteer.

- ✓ Vaccination centers are looking for volunteers to help keep sites efficient and safe and to provide transport for community members to get to their appointments. About one-in-ten households in the U.S. sometimes don't have enough to eat: check out local food banks or community pantries/fridges to see how you can help.
- ✓ Choose a cause that's close to your heart, whether that's animal welfare, social justice, sports, mental health, or cancer prevention. Many organizations need remote volunteers to help fundraise, make phone calls or create content.
- ✓ Formal volunteering isn't the only way to help others. Offer to do yard work, babysit, or pick up groceries for neighbors or relatives if you want to create an instant feel-good moment!



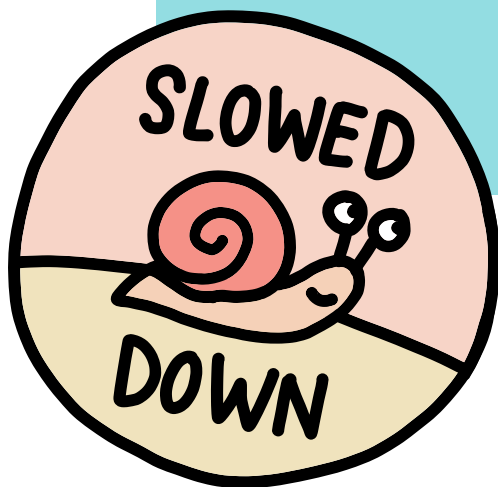


GIVE YOURSELF A BREAK.

You're living in a very strange time: a pandemic like this hasn't happened in 100 years. It's totally normal to feel stressed and uncertain.

Next time you feel overwhelmed, try these tips:

- ✓ Interrupt unhelpful thoughts: Do your thoughts tend to “run away from you” and you start to imagine the worst or say terrible things to yourself? If you catch yourself starting to go down that downward spiral, try to cut it off by distracting yourself for a while. That could be with TV, a book, or schoolwork, whatever gives you a break from those unpleasant thoughts.
- ✓ Practice being kind to yourself. You can be your own best friend or worst enemy! Instead of scolding yourself, try to replace that self-talk with a kinder version: take a deep breath and tell yourself “I know it's hard, that's ok, you're doing your best”.
- ✓ Approach your experiences with curiosity. You might have heard about mindfulness: it's the practice of observing without judgment. There are lots of mindfulness apps that will guide you through the process of observing your thoughts and feelings in a calm, non-judgmental way, so you can avoid being overwhelmed by them. *Check out the Resources on the next page.*



KNOW WHEN TO SEEK HELP.

Everyone can feel a little down or stressed from time to time but sometimes we need some extra support to guide us through a really tough time. There are support lines like the Samaritans or the Trevor Project (see Resources) that you can reach out to anytime for a chat about what's going on, with someone who will just listen.

Sometimes, you might need a bit more help, for example if you:

- ✓ Feel very low or very anxious more days than not, for a period of more than a couple of weeks.
- ✓ Are harming your body, for example by cutting or burning it, eating too much or too little on purpose, over-exercising, drinking alcohol, or taking drugs.
- ✓ Notice that your distress starts to disrupt activities you used to enjoy or be good at, like if feeling anxious prevents you from your usual hobbies or if you are falling behind in school.
- ✓ Feel that your emotions, thoughts, and behaviors are often “out of control.”
- ✓ Start to wish you were dead or wish you could fall asleep and not wake up.
- ✓ Have experienced a major life change or loss, like a death of a loved one, loss of a pet or service animal, move, illness, or family changes.



If any of these apply to you, consider speaking with a trusted adult and setting up an appointment with a school counselor, therapist, or primary care provider.

RESOURCES

- **Physical activity apps:** [Zombies, Run!](#) app (\$5.99/month or \$34.99/year); [Yoga for Beginners](#) app (free); [Nike Training Club](#) app (free)
- **Helping others:** [Volunteer Match](#) (volunteermatch.org or teenlife.com/category/volunteer)
- **Mindfulness apps:** [Smiling mind app](#) (free), [Healthy Minds Program app](#) (free)

HELPLINES

- **Samaritans** - (call or text 877-870-4673 any time);
- **Trevor Project** - Saving Young LGBTQ Lives (call 1-866-488-7386 or text START to 678-678 any time); National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (call 1-800-273-8255 any time) or visit [thetrevorproject.org](#)
- **Crisis Text Line** - Text “HOME” to 741741 to connect with a crisis counselor or visit [crisistextline.org](#)

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