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PSYCHOTHERAPY, MINDFULNESS
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COPING LIST

*Before delving into individual coping methods, if you require immediate assistance, there is no shame in reaching out for help.

Depressed or anxious feelings can impact your daily ability to function. Be on the look out for symptoms such as, consistent bad mood, low energy level, irritability, lack of concentration or focus, lack of pleasure in activities you once found enjoyable, over or under sleeping, over or under eating, excessive worrying, racing thoughts, unwanted thoughts, heart palpitations or fear of impending doom. If this sounds like something you are experiencing, it may be a good time to reach out for professional assistance. It is possible to feel better with the right support!

Here are some hotlines to reach out to:

OMH Emotional Support Hotline: 1-844-863-9314

NYC Well: 1-888-692-9355

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH): 1-866-615-6464

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI): 1-800-950-6264

SAMHSA: 1-800-662-4357

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255

Psychology Today: Search for a local therapist in your area.

If you are feeling suicidal, please call 911 or go to your local emergency room.

Physical Coping Mechanisms

- **Balance your nutrition.** It can be easy to fall into extremes of nutrition during this time. Moderation is the best route – not too much restriction and not too many sweets. It is best to have a balanced meal as you are able. If you fall out of healthy eating habits, don't beat yourself up! Go easy on yourself and simply start over.
- **Get a good night's sleep.** Try to set aside time to relax before bed. Put down your phone if you can. Listen to some relaxing music, do breathing exercises, or use healthy soothing techniques

that work for you to settle into a good night's rest. Following your sleep, get up, shower, and get dressed. This will help you feel motivated and ready to start the day. If you can get up before others in your household and begin your day with some personal time for yourself that is ideal. This could include journaling, meditation, exercise, a healthy breakfast or just a few moments of silence with a nice cup of warm tea or coffee.

- **Exercise.** There are so many workouts online or on apps that provide levels of varying difficulty, intensity, and impact for all ages. Even besides structured workouts, just getting to move around each day is very helpful. Also, working out at home does not have to happen indoors only...
- **Get some fresh air.** You could exercise outdoors as well by taking a walk. Something as simple as taking a drive to the beach or a nearby park and walking a few paces can lighten your mood.
- **Reduce your risk.** Follow CDC guidelines – wash your hands, keep good hygiene, and wear a mask. Do what is individually best for you to help you feel in control.
- **Keep healthy habits.** If you can try to make all of the above a habit, it could help curb urges to fall into some unhealthy tendencies. Be mindful of negative techniques such as excess alcohol intake, too much caffeine, and the like that could exaggerate anxiety and depression.
- **Be kind to yourself.** If you try to form a new healthy habit and slip up, you can always reset. Create what stability you can with daily habits, but cut yourself some slack. Tomorrow is a new day!

Emotional Coping Mechanisms

- **If you are grieving, give yourself time and space.** Lean on others for support, and allow yourself to feel everything. There is no right or wrong way to feel. Practice self-compassion, my videos can potentially be of assistance here too.
- **Feelings.** Notice and label your feelings to work through them, and then leave them. Try not to fixate on them for too long where you cannot focus on anything else. If you need to, set aside times to worry. How we think impacts how we feel and how we act, so it is best to try and balance out the bad with the good.
- **Anxiety distractors.** If you are feeling anxious, look around the room. Pick a letter and find how many items in the room start with that letter. Or, do the same with a color. This will help distract your mind from your worried thoughts. When your mind goes to the worst case scenario of a situation, bring it back to what is happening in the present moment and notice that the majority of the worst things we worry about never actually happen.
- **Start something new...** Engage in an activity you have always wanted to try, read the book you've been putting off, try to cook something new, or engage in a new activity you find exciting.
- **...Or take back up things you love.** You could also pick up things you know you love and continue that feeling of familiarity and comfort. Reread your favorite book, cook your long-time favorite meal.
- **Write it down.** Work through your feelings on paper by 'dumping' them out with a pen. Journaling helps us release our emotions.
- **Power of 3.** Notice 3 things that you are grateful for at the end of the day. Perhaps something in nature, love from a family member, and a good meal can carry you through to the next day. And for every negative thought, try to think of 3 positive ones to counteract it. Also, at the end of the

day think of your three wins for the day. We tend to be hard on ourselves when we should be celebrating all that we do.

- **Resilience awareness.** Remember another hard time you went through, and recall how you got through that time. Be mindful about bringing up some past traumas, but if you are able to use healthy coping techniques that worked for you in the past, integrate them into your current life.
- **Find time for other topics.** Stay informed, but try to engage in topics unrelated to current times.
- **Humor.** Watch a funny movie or TV show, or engage with a friend to joke with them.
- **Create a toolkit.** Put together a self-care toolkit for yourself. For example, a stress ball, one of your favorite CDs, a photo that makes you relax, etc.
- **Reflect.** Ask yourself what you are learning from the current situation. What changes do you want to make to be the best version of you? How can you integrate these changes in the long term?
- **Fear/Faith.** The opposite of fear is faith. Trust that there is a bigger plan and things will get better. If prayer, deep reflection, or spirituality helps you, stick to those practices and find comfort in them, perhaps some answers as well.
- **Nothing is permanent.** Change is the only constant in life. This too shall pass. Experience the present moment, enjoying the good times and learning from the hard times.
- **Breathing exercises.**
Breathe in peace, breathe out fear.
Breathe in calm, breathe out stress.
Breathe in relaxation, breathe out anxiety.
Breathe in for 4 counts, hold for 1 count, and breathe out for 4 counts.
Breathe in for 3 counts, and breathe out for 5 counts.

Social Coping Mechanisms

- **Connect with loved ones.** Call a family member or old friend you have not spoken to in a while. Play a game with them online, create a group chat, anything to connect with them from afar. If your local restrictions have been lifted, social distance and spend time with loved ones in a way that is safe and that you feel comfortable.
- **Gain from giving.** You can make a donation to a worthy cause. Send a card to an elderly person who lives alone. Any time you can give to someone who is in need will help you feel good, too.
- **Communicate with immediate family.** Go easy on your family that you live with, and discuss schedules for the coming days. See if you can designate time for yourself as well as give your family bonding time with each other. Maybe decide on a game night, movie night, etc. Be mindful that everyone's moods are fluctuating right now due to life's stressors. Be kind and patient with yourself and others – especially those closest to you.
- **Parents, do some self-care.** It can be tough to care for others when you need some care yourself. Treat yourself to some quality time with yourself by reading a book, going outside, any activity to make you feel good so you can share that feeling with your children and each other. The more you show up for you, the better you will be for those you love. Write a list of your personal top 3 healthy coping/self-care techniques, and refer to it as a go-to in times of stress.
- **Give others the benefit of the doubt.** If you're driving and someone cuts you off or if someone is taking too long at self-checkout, try to shrug it off. Everyone is going through a hard time in

their own way. Try not to pass any judgments on others. We can only control our own actions and how we respond to our surroundings. Try to keep your mind open and attitude positive.

- **Say “no” when you need to.** Maybe you need to forgo that call you are dreading or turn down an offer to be social if you are overwhelmed – you can say no. Go easy on yourself and acknowledge that you do not have to agree to everything all the time.
- **Limit social media intake.** Staying informed is so important, but the magnitude of information online can be overwhelming. Try not to go online right before bed. Refer to the CDC and the World Health Organization to check the facts and not get too overwhelmed.
- **Get to know your best path to readjustment.** Everyone right now is having to adjust to new life situations and each person will have different ideas of what they need to do for themselves and that is okay. Accept everyone’s tolerances without judgment and have those difficult conversations and be honest about what works for you. Don’t sacrifice your own preferences for others.
- **Be compassionate.** Everyone has their own story, a lot which goes on behind closed doors. Try not to assume anything. Always show up with kindness. You never know what someone is going through.