

Building Inner Strength

Mental Health and Coping During COVID-19

Self-Assessment Screening Tools

Virginia Warm Line

Veterinary eCPR, National Crisis Line: (800) 273-8255, The Trevor Project

Get outside:

During COVID-19, [Killgore et al. \(2020\)](#) found spending more days per week and as little as 10–20 min outside predicts greater resilience. [Genevive et al. \(2020\)](#) found this dose produces "a meaningful impact in reducing stress, anger, anxiety, and an increasing vigor, comfort, positive affect, and a sense of feeling refreshed".

Keep moving, and move some more!

Engaging in more minutes of daily exercise was found to predict greater resilience ([Killgore et al. 2020](#)). Risk of COVID dangers outweigh any short-term fitness losses, but you can get creative by connecting to others using virtual challenges and distancing for long-term mental health ([Morey et.al., 2020](#)).

Connect:

Remain emotionally connected with those you care about. [Killgore et al. \(2020\)](#) found when people maintained connection, they experienced greater perceived support from family, friends, and/or a special caring loved one. Take that step to find additional support when you need it and check in with those you care about.

Keep communication lines open:

Dialogue is at the heart of building community resilience ([Houston, SAMHSA](#)). Routine, open, non-judgmental, communication builds individual resilience as well. Respectful and compassionate communication builds a sense of safety. Build in daily and/or weekly supportive huddles or meetings with members of your pod, group, or loved ones.

Embrace positive emotions:

Although it is normal to feel anxious and exhausted from COVID-19, "focusing on and savoring positive emotions that can be felt in the midst of it could serve as the first step in feeling more calm than ever before." Searching your strengths daily will give you strength during this difficult time ([Yamaguchi et al., 2020](#)).

Engagement:

"We all need something in our lives that absorbs us into the current moment, creating a 'flow' of blissful immersion into the task or activity." This type of "engagement stretches our intelligence, skills, and emotional capabilities". ([PERMA](#))

Sleep well:

Lower level of insomnia are found to be associated with greater resilience during COVID-19 ([Killgore et al., 2020](#)). [Altena et al. \(2020\)](#) recommends many tips, including: regular night-time and wake-time schedule, schedule 15 min breaks during day to reflect, exposure to daylight, find non-COVID distractions (humor!), limit COVID news exposure, eat at set times, and engage in relaxing activities at bedtime.

Create calm:

Routinely turning on your relaxation response, mindfulness and meditation reduces anxiety chemicals, increases feel-good brain waves, recharges your body, and improves decision making.. Start with 1-2 minutes at a time of just noticing your thoughts and feelings in a non-judgmental way. See apps: [insighttimer.com](#) and [theawakenetwork.com](#).

Gratitude:

When you try the [Three Good Things](#) exercise daily for a couple weeks, where you notice three things that went well that day, your mindset may shift and more positive emotions emerge. [Sexton & Adair \(2019\)](#) found improvements from baseline in work-life balance, emotional exhaustion, depression symptoms and happiness at 1 month, 6 months and 12 months.

Meaning:

Understanding the impact of your work and why you chose to "show up at the office" may help you enjoy the tasks and become more satisfied with what you do. ([PERMA](#)) See TED Talk [Awareness is Freedom](#). [Killgore et al \(2020\)](#) also found people who are engaging in activities for spiritual health experience greater resilience during during COVID-19.

3 Practice Ideas: [Healthy Strategies for Veterinary Wellbeing](#), [Psychological First Aid](#), [Harvard Project Implicit](#)