

# Taking Care of Yourself in Troubled Times

BY BRIANNA MILES

The coronavirus has challenged the lives of many Americans. The country recently went on lockdown, closing down nonessential jobs and facilities and only allowing for essential jobs to be open. Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan has enacted an emergency order in the state of Maryland to close all non-essential business across the state.

According to the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, there are a total of 1.21 million confirmed cases, 160,000 recovered and 69,579 deaths in America as of this writing. Because of this, the government has enforced a stay-at-home order to slow the spread of the virus.

There is a new challenge that should also be considered, and that challenge is mental wellness. It is important to rest one's mind, body, and soul from stressors during these uncertain times.

Social isolation and loneliness, due to the coronavirus pandemic has caused an increase in depression and suicide. The CDC has found that stress during an infectious disease outbreak can increase the use of alcohol, tobacco or drugs, and the threat of contracting COVID-19 will cause people who suffer from mental health conditions to be affected as well.

The response to the pandemic has raised concern for individuals who have lost their jobs and college students who are forced to migrate to online classes for the remainder of the spring semester. This unexpected change has placed even more stress on students who do not have computers, printers, scanners or internet connection at their homes.

## How has transferring to online classes affected you mentally or physically?

"I don't feel as motivated to complete my work as I do when I'm at school in an environment that is used to promote my productivity," said Maitay Cattouse, a junior at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania.

Deajah Pulliam, a junior at Bowie State University, agreed. "Honestly, the transition to online learning has been quite frustrating as communication lines are now cut short and some professors have been unable to utilize all of their resources."

Staying on task has also been a challenge for another college student. "It's been harder to stay on a strict schedule for classwork and final assignments since we are no longer in a school setting, which has

led to some anxiety," said Khardiye Willis, another junior at Lincoln University

College students may also find themselves battling distractions at home. Students returning home are faced with parents treating them like a child. This is very common, due to parents viewing their child as the same person who left for college. Students may run into situations of needing to check in or restricted to house rules, lack of personal space from overbearing parents or siblings, which can be stressful.

There is a way to find peace and balance in uncomfortable spaces and it starts with finding the silver lining through meditation, finding your voice, seeking therapy and by staying productive.

Meditation can ease the effects of depression and anxiety. Meditation is the process of training the mind to focus through breathing techniques. People use meditation to develop a sense of positivity, self-discipline and healthy sleep patterns. This can be a perfect way to start the day with a clear mind or end the day on a positive note right before bed. Meditation can be the escape that soothes insecurities or worries.

## How to Meditate

Meditation has no time limit, but beginners should set aside 5 to 10 minutes each day. Here's how to get started:

- **Find a quiet place that's distraction-free.** This can be indoors or outdoors, whatever feels calm and quite to you.
- **Position your body.** Make sure that your body is stable and in a position that is comfortable for you. Remember you will be in that position for a while. You can sit with your legs crossed or you can kneel, whatever works for you.
- **Play soothing music.** Listening to soothing sounds can calm you in the process of meditating. Listening to Prabin Dangol's "Clear All Bad Energy & Mental Blockages" on Apple Music can be helpful.
- **Follow Your Breath.** Listen to your breathing by following the sensation of your breath as it goes in and out. In this space breathing in positivity and exhaling negativity can be good breathing methods.
- **Don't be hard on yourself.** When your mind starts to wander, your attention will leave the breath and wander to other places. When you get around to noticing that your mind has wandered,

in a few seconds simply return your attention to the breath. Don't judge yourself or obsess over the content of the thoughts you find yourself lost in. Just come back.

- **Close on a positive note.** Gently open your eyes and take a moment to notice any sounds in the environment, notice how your body feels right now and notice your thoughts and emotions.

Do you feel lighter? Is your mind clearer? Did your anxiety clear? If so, then meditation can be your new relaxation technique.

## Finding Your Voice

Journaling can be another form of therapy that can help you put the thoughts in your mind into words. There are no instructions for this, you are open to express yourself freely, whether it is through anger, positivity or creative writing. Finding a space to express yourself can make you aware of your feelings and where you are mentally. Seeing your thoughts on paper can also be an awakening for some to get professional help such as counseling, therapy or rehab.

Reaching out to campus counseling is the best way to get the help that you may need while in quarantine. Counselors at your institution understand that transitioning to online classes can be stressful and because faculty and staff are also in the same position, there is greater understanding and potential for bonding.

Bowie State University Students can schedule one-on-one sessions with counselors through telecounseling available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. To get connected with a counselor, send an email to [counselingservices@bowiestate.edu](mailto:counselingservices@bowiestate.edu).

Visiting [wellness and counseling services](#) students are directed to anxiety screening, alcohol screening, family crisis center of Prince George's County, etc, to help assist you. If you or a loved one are at risk of suicide or suicidal thoughts it is important to remember that you are not alone, and that help is near. Call or text the suicide hotline at 1-800-273-8255 and visit [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org) for more information.

## Stay Productive

While in quarantine there are other ways that you can clear your mind and relieve your stress and that is through productivity. Distracting your mind and focusing it on creative activities like painting, binge-watching Netflix series, and movies are all great things to tackle besides being on your phone.

You never know, you may discover a new talent/skill that you didn't know was there. According to the American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine, painting has scientifically shown to strengthen memory, problem-solving and motor skills. It can also provide stress relief and help to develop an optimistic attitude and promote emotional growth.

To prepare for the fall semester when some course may be conducted all or in part online, scheduling out your day/week is a great way to create a balance throughout the chaos that is happening around you.

Keeping up with online classes can take some getting used to, so keeping up with important deadlines for tests and assignments will allow you to stay on track of all of your classes.

Setting time aside to knock out homework assignments, lunch, and self-care will allow you to stay productive throughout the day when classes resume. Switching up your self-care and adding exercise is the best form of wellness not only for your mind but for your body as well. Exercise will sweat out the frustration of being indoors and confined to a computer screen.

Your mental and physical health will be tested during this time, but it is important to find the silver lining out of any obstacle you face.

Remember, "You have power over your mind, not outside events. Realize this, and you will find strength." - Marcus Aurelius

**CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19)**

Patients with COVID-19 have reportedly had mild to severe respiratory illness. Symptoms\* can include

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

\*Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure.

Seek medical advice if you develop symptoms, and have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 or if you live in or have recently been in an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19.

[cdc.gov/COVID19-symptoms](https://www.cdc.gov/COVID19-symptoms)

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**STOP THE SPREAD OF GERMS**  
Help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases like COVID-19.

**Avoid close contact with people who are sick.**

[cdc.gov/COVID19](https://www.cdc.gov/COVID19)

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