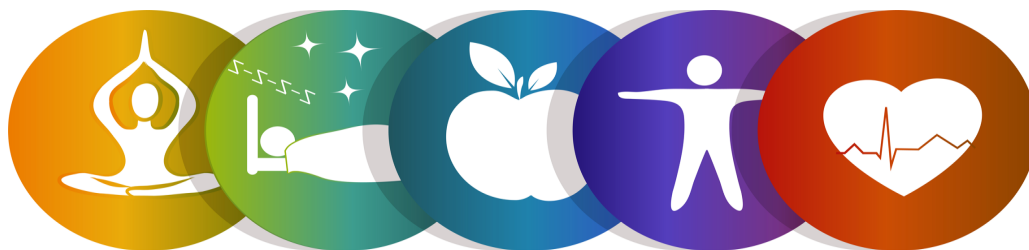


We'll get through this.  
Together.

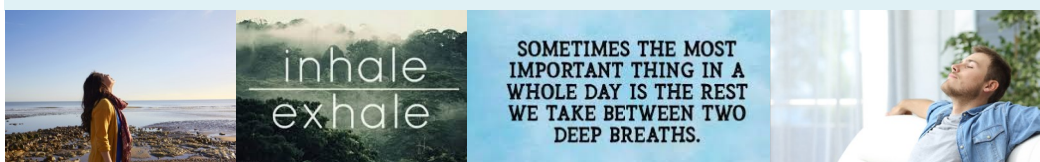


## Wellness Inspired

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### Now More Than Ever...Take Time To Breathe



Close your eyes. Take a deep breath in through your nose - hold it for 5 seconds - now let it out through your mouth. That's it. Feels good, doesn't it?

Amidst this quiet chaos in our lives, we need to take time to consciously breathe.

You'll see throughout this issue, there are many ways of practicing self-care. When we take extra good care of ourselves, we will feel happier and healthier; we'll feel a greater sense of control within this situation we're in; and we'll be able to free ourselves of the loneliness we may be experiencing. After all, none of us are truly alone in this. We're in this together and we'll get through this together.

Wishing you safety and wellness, *Your Health & Wellness Team*

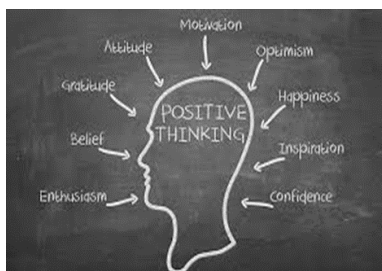
### Tips on How to Stay Positive During Anxious Times

Anxiety thrives on the unknown. Our world is changing with new rules and limitations. Anxiety can go hand-in-hand with mental health and negativity. Here are some tips on how to stay positive and maintain calm during anxious times:

- Focus on what you can control
- Engage in positive talk
- Start your day with meditation, exercise, and a healthy breakfast
- Eat well-balanced meals
- Do good for someone else - even in challenging times there are opportunities to focus the attention on helping someone
- Develop and practice an attitude of gratitude - say *thank you*, count your blessings, make a list of what you are grateful for
- Stay informed, but don't obsessively check on the news
- Read a self-improvement book - having extra time on your hands is a good distraction from the anxiety you may feel
- Take a wellness challenge
- Get proper rest

#### Sources:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>  
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/bryanrobinson/2020/04/01/the-perspective-less-taken-during-quarantine-10-tips-to-raise-your-spirits/#60241033427e>  
<https://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/13-tips-on-how-to-stay-positive-during-anxious-times>



## Reaching Out in Kindness



Extraordinary times such as this call for extraordinary kindness, and in those acts of kindness, we not only help others through this difficult time, but help ourselves too. Acts of kindness can really lift a person's mood, brighten their day, and make a difference in their life.

Whether it be for a colleague, neighbor, friend, family member, community members, or community businesses, there are many ways to reach out and lend a hand.

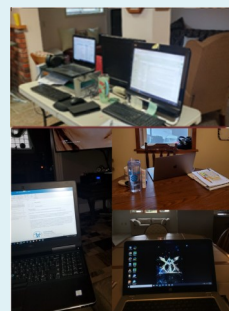
- Call to ask if anything is needed before you run to the drugstore, grocery store, or post office
- Help with yard work
- Take trash out and bring in empty cans
- Mail a card or letter
- Support local restaurants by ordering takeout (and offer to pick up takeout for a neighbor while you're at it!)
- Donate to your local food pantry
- Post words of encouragement for health professionals and first responders on their social media channels
- Make masks
- Call someone to check in on them
- Arrange a vehicle parade for someone who's missing out on a birthday celebration or other special event, or do it just because you'd like to make an ordinary day special and memorable for someone
- Leave a note and packaged treat in the mailbox for your mail carrier, or if you're expecting a delivery, leave something thoughtful for the delivery worker
- Supply food for healthcare workers or first responders



Kindness is needed in our world now more than ever before.

## Changing Spaces & Innovative Connections

Physical distancing, isolation, closure of schools and workplaces are very challenging for us all. We are all doing our best to try and maintain some semblance of structure and create a home environment void of worry, stress and anxiety. Due to the rapid change of COVID-19 organizations had to quickly implement a 'work from home' policy. In the picture below, you can see how creative some RIC folks have become in creating these temporary work spaces.



Top pic:  
Jean Brzuszkiewicz  
lower left:  
Deanna Durante  
middle right:  
Brenda Egelston  
bottom right:  
Jillian Christian

Mobile technology has never been more important in being a connectivity tool and a comfort tool bridging the communication gap between family and friends. Platforms such as social media, video conferencing and texting have become the new norm in socializing.



Outcome of a  
virtual cookie  
decorating  
party  
Brenda  
Egelston  
hosted online  
with friends.

For most of us, having to unexpectedly disengage with our family and friends has given us the opportunity to become creative with the way we currently communicate. How have you connected with your family/friends?

We would love to see pictures of your work spaces, how your family is spending time together at home, or how you are connecting with other family members or friends. Please email your pictures to [begelston@moric.org](mailto:begelston@moric.org) and we will share them on our Health & Wellness page.



Deanna Durante  
got really  
creative and  
brought her corn  
hole game  
inside!

## *Fun Things to do While Social Distancing*

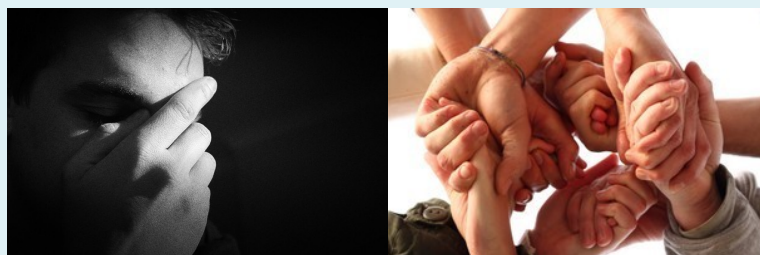


As social distancing continues, some of us may be going a bit stir crazy not being able to go out and do the things we're used to.

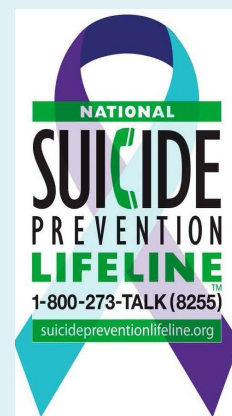
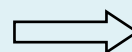
People across the planet are staying home, quarantining, and practicing social distancing. Though staying home is totally necessary right now, it means many of us have found ourselves with a lot of time on our hands. If you're struggling to figure out how to keep yourself occupied beyond your usual at-home hobbies, you're not alone. Here are some things you can do while you're stuck inside to keep your spirits up and keep you connected to others.

- Get organized, deep clean
- Read a book
- Pick up a new instrument
- Have a campfire in the backyard
- Camp in the backyard
- Connect with friends with House Party or social media
- Learn to draw or color with your kids
- Learn a new craft, hobby
- Play board/card games
- Binge-watch a series
- Listen to podcasts
- Go for a walk, get outside
- Watch a movie or movies
- If the weather permits, clean your car
- Cook, try a new recipe or create a new one
- Exercise, try yoga or kickboxing
- Make and decorate cookies/cupcakes
- Teach your dog a new trick
- Play video games online with friends
- Learn how to knit or crochet
- Take some time for yourself (me time)

It cannot be denied that we live in extraordinary times. While you may miss being out and about, you need to be grateful for being safe and alive. Do your part in the pandemic and practice social distancing by staying at home. Fortunately, being at home doesn't need to be boring. The above activities will help you sail through this difficult time and make it to the other side with a changed and positive mindset. Be safe!



If you or someone you love has thoughts of suicide, if you are concerned about a friend or loved one, or would like emotional support, the Lifeline network is available to everyone. Call **1-800-273-8255** or follow the link to their website.





## Being Alone During the COVID-19 Pandemic



It seems that a lot has been written and shared about how families can cope with being at home and limited in movement during this global pandemic. The challenges can be significant, from home schooling and food security to how to keep everyone engaged, entertained, and sane!

There is another situation that can be just as challenging in a different way. What about people who are truly alone for whatever reason? The coronavirus has struck in a time where more people are living alone than ever before. "In the United States, the numbers have almost doubled over the past half century, according to the research aggregator Our World in Data. In 2019, twenty-eight per cent of households were single-person—up from twenty-three per cent in 1980."<sup>2</sup> This doesn't mean that living alone equates to loneliness. However, in these times, loneliness is more likely to strike.

In the long term, research shows that anxiety and isolation can exact a physical toll. They increase the vulnerability to disease—by triggering higher blood pressure and heart rates, stress hormones and inflammation—among people who might otherwise not get sick. This can lead to cardiovascular disease and stroke, obesity, or premature death and is associated with a 40% increase in the risk of dementia, according to a 2018 Florida State University College of Medicine study.<sup>2</sup>

Honestly, the research on chronic loneliness and isolation and its negative effects is overwhelming. And it is the reason for including social connection on the Wellness Wheel. It is an important part of one's overall health and wellness. But, with that being said, what we are experiencing now is just a disruption in our usual pattern, a temporary situation that hopefully will not become a long-term state of being. Here are some tips if you are living alone during this crisis; they might be helpful for all of us!

**Regain control.** Think about what you DO have control over in this moment, for example, the food you eat, the clothes you wear, your activity right now. Don't let your mind spiral to worst case scenarios.

**Take care of yourself.** Breathe, read, exercise, light a candle, listen to music—anything that allows you to enjoy the moment and focus on your physical and/or emotional wellness.

**Schedule your day.** Plan time for work, projects, and relaxation. Have something to look forward to. Virtual happy hour anyone?

**Connect with friends and family.** Call on the phone, write a letter, or connect virtually. Research shows that video confer-

encing requires more and different work by the brain than physical presence, but it can help regulate stress brought on by social distancing and isolation.<sup>2</sup>

**Do something meaningful.** If time allows, this might be an opportunity to enroll in an online class for professional or personal growth; tackle your family tree and do some genealogy research; or anything else that allows you to add meaning to this stressful time.

**Create something.** Create a painting, photo collage, work on the great American novel, or pick up a hammer and start on your spring home improvement projects.

**Stay informed, but consider limiting your media time.** Keeping up to date on the latest advice and health information may give you an edge when it comes to protecting your mental health (and as a result, reducing the impact of loneliness), but limit your media consumption as necessary so you aren't overwhelmed.<sup>3</sup>

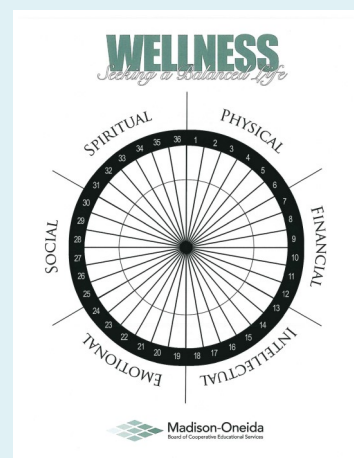
**Reach out for help if needed.** If you are having a difficult time while isolated and aren't able to pull yourself out of feelings of anxiety, depression, or fear, it is important to reach out for help. *NYS Mental Health hotline (online services): 1-844-863-9314*

Sources for this article:

<https://www.vogue.com/article/coping-with-loneliness-in-self-isolation>

<https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/how-loneliness-from-coronavirus-isolation-takes-its-own-toll>

<https://www.verywellmind.com/how-to-cope-with-loneliness-during-coronavirus-4799661>



## Self-Care During the Pandemic



Many of us have heard, “you can’t pour from an empty cup,” and that is especially true at this time. Self-care and coping skills are essential for all of us as we navigate these uncharted waters and begin to settle into a “new normal.”

Social distancing, quarantine and isolation may trigger many emotions such as fear, anxiety, frustration, boredom and even anger. It’s important how we cope with and manage all of these emotions we could be bombarded with. According to Tara Davis, Director of Staff Wellbeing and Engagement at the American Psychological Association, social media and news can fuel fear and anxiety. People are looking for some way to gain control of this situation, the news and social media are continuously reporting and unless we figure out a way to manage that process we may experience heightened stress and anxiety. Several coping strategies to help with this are: learning to embrace discomfort, whether with baby steps or a leap of faith, view it as an experience; limit your news and social media consumption, turn the television off, listen to music, go for a walk, change your scenery; maintain a healthy lifestyle, strive for five, eat lots of fresh fruits and vegetables, exercise daily; and create and follow a daily routine.

One particularly good practice is yoga and meditation. There are many benefits of yoga that are supported by science. Here are just a few:

- Easing stress and promoting relaxation
- Reducing fatigue
- Improving quality of life and mental health
- Increased flexibility and balance

There are many websites and YouTube videos for yoga practices and guided meditations. Locally, Mellow Flow Yoga ([www.mellowflowyoga.com](http://www.mellowflowyoga.com)) is offering free online classes for both. There are also several apps such as Calm and Headspace which offer guided meditation and breathing techniques. Practicing mindfulness will also help us stay in the moment, be present in your current situation. Staying positive can help us reduce stress. A gratitude journal helps us appreciate what we do have and what we can control.

As weather permits, experience nature. The following link can provide information on the benefits of stress reduction and how nature can impact our wellbeing.

### How Does Nature Impact Our Wellbeing?

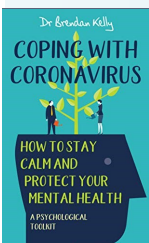
Being in nature can reduce stress, anger and fear. It can increase pleasant feelings and peacefulness. Nature may also reduce blood pressure, heart rate, muscle tension and the production of stress hormones.

Here are a few other websites with some good information related to self-care and coping during this unprecedented time:

### 35 Self-Care Tips For Thriving Together During Self-Quarantine Coronavirus Disease 2019: Stress & Coping Self-Care During Quarantine

We are all in this together and eventually things will return to some sort of normal (we hope). In the meantime, take care of yourself and your families. Be well and be safe.

## Book Suggestions



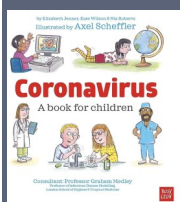
### **Coping With Coronavirus**

By Dr. Brendan Kelly

*How to Stay Calm and Protect Your Mental Health*

In his book, Dr. Kelly helps us cope with the anxiety associated with the Coronavirus, as this worry is so challenging due to there being something to fear, unlike with traditional disorders. He provides practical tools we may need to navigate the unique stresses of dealing with the COVID-19 threat within our homes, communities, and world.

Royalties from this book will be donated to medical charities assisting with the Coronavirus global response.



### **Coronavirus**

By: Elizabeth Jenner, Kate Wilson & Nia Roberts

*A Book For Children*

This book breaks down many concepts in a way that children can understand them and helps answer children’s questions about the pandemic. This is a free book available [here](#) as a pdf.

## *Something Valuable to Remember*

This is a good time to remember we have a valuable resource (the Employee Assistance Program-EAP) available to all of us and our family members. EAP is a voluntary, free, and confidential program that is staffed by mental health practitioners. It is designed to help resolve difficulties that may be affecting job performance and/or personal lives.

Recently, everyone should have received an EAP email from personnel with a *Coping With COVID* document attached. First on this document is a statement about secure teletherapy conferencing being offered. Additionally, there's a wealth of information and resource links to help us with the dilemmas we may be facing due to the pandemic. The broad range of topics include national hotlines, health guidance, mental/emotional health, online recovery resources/meetings, caregiving resources, physical health, financial help and information, and kids & COVID-19. Also, at the end of the document is a listing of articles related to coping with, and maintaining good health throughout, this season of Coronavirus. EAP has additional information available about every topic covered in our newsletter.

We have provided a link to this and other EAP documents here: [https://www.moboces.org/for\\_staff/health\\_wellness/employee\\_assistance\\_program](https://www.moboces.org/for_staff/health_wellness/employee_assistance_program)

The EAP Program is such a valuable resource. If you're struggling or are just in need of advice during this difficult time, reach out for help. You'll be glad you did.

## *Apps For Keeping Your Family, Friends, and Colleagues Close*



### **Facetime**

You can make both audio and video calls. With Family Sharing set up, up to six family members can use this app. Reach contacts using their phone number or Apple ID. Make both video and audio calls. Enjoy Group FaceTime with up to 32 people at once. Use effects to become an Animoji, place stickers, and much more right in your FaceTime call. Use the front-facing FaceTime camera to show your face, or switch to the back camera to show your friends what you see. Create Favorites for quick access to key people in the Phone app. FaceTime calls are integrated into your recent calls list in the Phone app. FaceTime works over Wi-Fi and cellular.



### **Google Duo**

You can call and hangout with friends and family using just one app. Group Calling: Bring together all the people who matter most, even when you're apart, with group calling. Duo now supports up to 12 people in a group video call. Video and Voice Messages, Photos, and More: Short on time or your friends can't pick up? Leave a personalized video message with fun effects, or share voice messages, photos, notes, and emojis. Voice calling: Make voice-only calls to your friends when you can't chat over video. Low Light Mode: Duo lets you make video calls even in poor lighting conditions.

A Madison-Oneida BOCES Health & Wellness Committee Publication



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Board of Cooperative Educational Services  
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### *Committee Members:*

Brenda Wolak

Lisa Seitz

Brenda Egelston

Jack Angrisano

Kristin Guinto

Lisa Lee

Cheri Schmalz

Giovana Annatone

The purpose of the Madison-Oneida BOCES Health & Wellness Committee is to improve the health, well-being and quality of life of Madison-Oneida BOCES employees by encouraging, inspiring, and providing resources to help them achieve a lifelong commitment to wellness.

We're on the Web! Visit us at [https://www.moboces.org/for\\_staff/health\\_wellness](https://www.moboces.org/for_staff/health_wellness)

*The text and links provided throughout this newsletter are for informational purposes and do not constitute endorsement by the Health & Wellness committee or Madison-Oneida BOCES. No content should ever be used as a substitute for direct medical advice from your doctor or other qualified clinician.*