

# Self-Care Tips for Hospitalized or Quarantined Patients

Patients who are physically isolated are likely to struggle with an increased stress response at the same time that they have limited coping resources available to them. Below are tips to help you practice basic self-care while hospitalized or quarantined. A list of potentially useful free apps are also provided.

## Self-Care Tips

- **Keep a routine:** You are undoubtedly limited in what aspects of your daily routine you can maintain right now, but keeping consistency wherever possible can help you feel more control and a sense of normalcy. This might include brushing your teeth as soon as you wake up, eating meals and snacks at consistent times, talking with friends/family at similar times each day, and even scheduling when you watch TV or read a book.
- **Healthy sleep habits:** Good sleep is important for good mental health. However, sometimes too much of a good thing is bad. While you may be increasingly tired due to illness, resist the urge to sleep longer hours due to boredom alone. Try to keep a regular sleep and wake schedule each day. Don't drink caffeinated beverages after lunch. Practice a "wind down" routine before bed, including disconnecting from social media and news coverage. Practice stretches or deep breathing exercises to help prepare your body for sleep.
- **Stay connected to friends and family:** Loneliness during hospitalization/quarantine can worsen your mood and your body's stress response. Stay connected by phone or video chat with people who make you feel cared for and hopeful. And don't forget about your fellow patients. Support one another, too.
- **Put your worries into words:** The nature of this outbreak can cause overwhelming worry and anxiety and fuels itself. You can slow that process down for yourself by putting what you are worried about into words, articulating any steps you can take to address them, and recognizing your limits. For example:
  - What is worrying you right now? *Getting my family sick.*
  - What can you do right now to address that? *Keep getting good medical care, follow my providers' directions, stay in quarantine for 2 weeks, and check in on how my family is feeling every day.*
  - What are your limits? *I cannot change that I contracted the virus, and I cannot control everyone else's behavior.*
- **Limit your exposure to news coverage and stressful social media:** Most of us want to know the latest information on the coronavirus outbreak. However, too much exposure is more likely to increase stress than reduce it. Similarly, updates from non-credible sources (including social media) may contradict existing knowledge and even put individuals at greater risk. Have a plan for where to get your news (i.e., a credible news source) and for how long each day. When that time is up, switch to something more relaxing or entertaining.

- **Acceptance:** The current situation is stressful. There are some aspects you can control (such as implementing the tips in this guide), but other aspects that you cannot. DO enact the self-care strategies that you can and recognize the healthy choices that you are making. DON'T ruminate on things that you cannot control right now. DO accept that you and your loved ones are coping as well as you can in a difficult and rapidly changing situation.
- **Adapt your typical coping strategies:** Some of your preferred coping strategies may not be accessible right now, but you might be able to improvise with a bit of creativity. If attending religious services is part of your regular self-care routine, you may be able to "attend" virtual services online or download religious texts to your tablet. You might not be able to engage in your typical fitness routine, but gentle stretches can keep your body moving and help you cope with stress. Think about the ways you usually deal with stress and try to adapt them to your current circumstances.
- **Allow yourself to grieve:** You may be missing an important family event or vacation. You may be missing your friends or loved ones. You may be missing the freedom to move freely throughout the world. These are all types of losses and naturally make us feel sadness and grief. While it's not helpful to ruminate on these losses, it is healthy to allow yourself time to grieve without judging yourself harshly.
- **Remember you are not alone:** Hospitalization, quarantine, and social distancing can all lead to feeling physically and emotionally isolated. But the truth is that millions of people are struggling with these same exact feelings right now. Everyone may deal with it differently, and some people may seem like they are coping better than others, but you are not alone in this crisis. Keep reaching out to others for support and return the favor when you can.

### Mobile Apps That May Be Helpful Right Now

NOTE: The descriptions written in italics are taken from the app's website and do not imply endorsement by any government entity.

- **Headspace:** *"Headspace is meditation made simple. We'll teach you the life-changing skills of meditation and mindfulness in just a few minutes a day."* A 10-day free trial is available in the iOS app store and on Google Play.
- **Breathe2Relax:** *"This app is a stress management tool, which will help you learn how to perform and use diaphragmatic breathing techniques for stress control."* Available for free in the iOS app store and on Google Play.
- **The Mindfulness App:** *"With a wide variety of options to suit all levels and types of meditators, The Mindfulness App is the perfect tool for anyone looking to improve mental health and overall wellbeing."* A free basic version is available in the iOS app store and on Google Play, with options to purchase a premium package.
- **Moodpath:** Designed for individuals struggling with depression and/or anxiety, *"Moodpath offers a wide range of courses, guided meditations, sleep aids, and other resources to help you improve your emotional health."* Available for free in the iOS app store and on Google Play.