



Top 10 Ways to Care for Your Mental Health During the Coronavirus Pandemic

- Acknowledge and validate your feelings. It is ok to not be ok. This is a time of uncertainty.
- Find what gives you a feeling of safety in your environment. This could be an item (i.e., a pillow) or a feature of your home (i.e., a door or a window).
- Do whatever helps you feel safe (e.g., using a fidget, moving around your home, washing your hands). Stims are emotional regulation tools, and now is a great time to use helpful stims.
- Grounding: what can you see, hear, touch, taste, and smell? Have one item for each sense to keep in a safety kit for when you feel anxious.
- The brain does not like uncertainty. Creating a routine can help with feeling more in control (i.e., an hourly schedule which includes times for reading, recreation, exercise and meal times).
- Social distancing can be very isolating. Check in on friends through text, e-mail, video chat, or a phone call—whatever feels most comfortable to you.
- If your mind is racing, slow your breath and practice square breathing or progressive muscle relaxation in order to calm to your body. This will make it easier to calm down your mind.
- Many people feel more in control and safe when they know what they're going to do should someone in the family become ill. Write down a plan and refer to it if you start feeling stressed from thinking things are out of control.
- After you've validated your feelings, consider using distractions to keep from getting stuck on negative thoughts (i.e., reading, watching videos, coloring, video games). Use the strength of special interests to your advantage if you can do so safely.
- Be aware of stinking thinking. Black and white thinking, catastrophic thinking, and other distortions may become stronger during times of stress. Recognize when you're doing this and try to reframe your thoughts.

Tips for Supporting Those On the Autism Spectrum

- Make sure you are addressing your own needs; all of the above can apply to you as well.
- Remind the person you are supporting that they are safe and redirect them to their support tools such as fidgets and other comforts.
- Unless a stim is causing harm, do not try to stop it. If they are using a harmful stim, work with them to find an unharmed way to have that need met.
- Allow hyperfocus to help your loved one alleviate negative ruminations.
- Communicate clearly. Bear in mind that repetition often is needed when people are stressed. Practice patience and consider writing down information that's been requested multiple times.