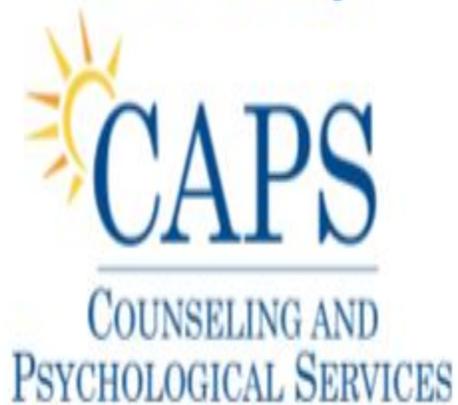


*Florida Gulf Coast
University*



*Surviving Covid-19: LGBTQ+ resource guide
for making it through social distancing*



We see you.

We recognize everyone's circumstances are different. You may have a tremendous support system where you are located, and you may not.

Either way, we know you may be experiencing a wide array of emotions regarding social distancing, online learning, and potentially being with/without your family of origin or being away from your chosen family.

We hope this guide can provide you with some support, belonging, and validation.

We look forward to the days coming and being able to be able to connect as a community together.

We see you.

Let's talk about Stress

What is it?

Stress is a normal reaction to the pressures of life. This includes school, work, family, financial responsibilities, etc. When we experience stress, the body releases the stress hormone, 'cortisol'. Normal stress tends to subside once the situation has passed.

How does chronic stress differ from stress?

Chronic Stress is the response to emotional pressure suffered for a prolonged period of time (i.e., a continuous release of cortisol), in which an individual perceives they have little or no control (such as: Covid-19, hurricanes, trauma, or dangerous environments).

How might this impact me?

Prolonged exposure to stress can lead to increased health related conditions such as psychological distress, physical disorders, and can affect our overall sense of well-being. Minority groups and communities tend to experience an increase in 'Minority stress' due to increased exposure to social pressures, prejudice or discrimination which can increase symptoms of stress.

What can I do about it?

While there may be a lot of factors influencing the level of stress you experience, there are ways to reduce stress. Creating a self-care/stress management plan can provide relief from the tension and pressures going on.

What can I control?

Step 1: Focus on what you do have control over

During difficult times, it can be hard to maintain a sense of perspective and control over our environment. Begin to regain your strength by noticing the aspects you can influence.

Step 2: Create a self-care/work routine

Creating a routine whether it's work, academic, or self-care can help you feel in control of your day as well as maintain your overall well-being.

Step 3: Practice mindfulness and compassion

Practicing mindfulness and compassion for yourself and others can help you stay connected to the moment, feel in control over your experiences and emotions, as well as ease anxiety symptoms.

Step 4: Utilize your resources to connect

Use what you have to your benefit. In a time of social isolation it can feel as though options are limited. Reach out, connect, or make space and time to take care of yourself by utilizing your resources.

What is Self-care?

Self-care is any activity that we do deliberately in order to take care of our mental, emotional, and physical health.

How do we do self-care?

1. **Be intentional:** Needs to be something you plan, not an accident or by coincidence.
2. **Stick to the basics:** Create a routine and find your own rhythm.

Rules for self-care

- ★ It is not something that we force ourselves to do, or something we don't enjoy doing. "something that refuels us, rather than takes from us." - Agnes Wainman
- ★ Self-care isn't selfish.
- ★ It is not only about considering our needs; it is rather about knowing what we need to do in order to take care of ourselves, being subsequently, able to take care of others as well.
- ★ Good self-care is key to improved mood and reduced anxiety. It's also key to a good relationship with oneself and others.

The 5 pillars of Mental Health

One way you can start improving your mental and physical health is through a self-care plan that accounts for these crucial aspects:

1. *Sleep:*

- ★ Aim for 8-10 hours of sleep
- ★ Keep a bedtime and wake time
- ★ Stick to a bedtime routine

2. *Eating:*

- ★ Quality and Quantity is key
- ★ Consistent schedule, consider meal prepping or cooking at home.

3. *Exercise:*

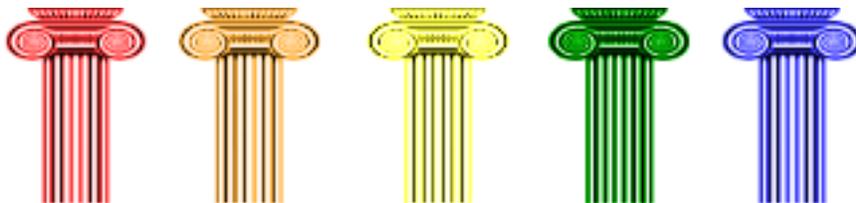
- ★ When we exercise the 'happy hormone' Endorphins are released
- ★ Positive emotion is associated with 55-70% of our max, or about 110-140 BPM for 18-22 year olds
- ★ 20-30 can rapidly affect our mood

4. *Hydration:*

- ★ Aim for 70-80 ounces a day, if you are thirsty you're already getting dehydrated

5. *Social Support:*

- ★ Connect with other people, talk about your experiences



Healthcare

1. Covid-19

- <https://transequality.org/covid19>
- <https://www.them.us/story/9-strategies-for-quarantining-in-a-non-lgbtq-accepting-environment>
- https://transgenderlegal.org/media/uploads/doc_800.pdf
- https://assets2.hrc.org/files/documents/Covid19_LGBTQ_Elders_Issue_Brief.pdf
- <https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/BH365/2020/04/09/staying-connected-lgbtq-resources-during-covid-19/>
- <https://lgbtfunders.org/covid-19-response/>
- <https://www.bustle.com/p/how-to-safely-chest-bind-amid-coronavirus-concerns-22679621>

2. Overall wellness

- <https://www.lgbthealthlink.org/Assets/U/Documents/FactSheets/lgbt-wellness--ten-things-know---2.pdf>
- <https://transequality.org/health-coverage-guide>
- <https://fenwayhealth.org/>

3. Self Care additional resources:

- <https://www.them.us/story/self-care-tips-queer-healers-coronavirus>
- <https://medium.com/@aapiforceef/community-care-during-covid-19-a-message-to-and-from-aapis-3e126f452231>

How can I connect through activities?

1. Music

- Try to connect through music, make a playlist, explore a new artist.
- A lot of artists are offering free concerts via technology
- Check out LGBTQ+ musicians to discover

2. Movies/shows

- Consider watching a new show, movie, or series
- Connect to the LGBTQ+ community through movies, shows, and series.

3. Art/literature

- Connect to art, written work, and creative expression within yourself or others.
- There are many ways to view and consume art virtually, try noticing your emotional connection to other people through art or literature.

4. Movement

- Connect to movement through virtual work outs, dance parties, and movement
- Find videos, virtual parties, and groups of people who are within your community looking to build connection through movement

5. Reach out

- Connect to an online group, supportive, fun, or for building relationships.
- Seek support if you need it, know that CAPS remains open and we can help you connect to resources around you.

Connecting while distancing

1. Music:

- <https://www.billboard.com/articles/news/pride/8513985/queering-up-your-playlist-lgbtq-artists-pride-month>
- <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-lists/musics-unsung-lgbtq-heroes-629374/>
- <https://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/pop/9335531/coronavirus-quarantine-music-events-online-streams>
- <https://www.npr.org/2020/03/17/816504058/a-list-of-live-virtual-concerts-to-watch-during-the-coronavirus-shutdown>
- <https://www.gaytimes.co.uk/culture/112909/up-and-coming-lgbtq-artists-you-need-to-be-listening-to-right-now/>

2. Movies and Shows:

- <https://editorial.rottentomatoes.com/guide/best-lgbt-movies-of-all-time/>
- <https://editorial.rottentomatoes.com/guide/best-lgbt-movies-on-netflix/>
- <https://www.netflix.com/browse/genre/100010>

3. Art and literature:

- <https://artsandculture.google.com/story/8-lgbtqi-artists-you-should-know/iQLiswH6mVfoJQ>
- <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-15-young-lgbtq-artists-driving-contemporary-art-forward>
- <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/the-read-down/the-ultimate-book-list-for-pride-month>
- <https://www.oprahmag.com/entertainment/books/g27455697/best-lgbtq-books-ever/>
- <https://bookriot.com/2017/09/15/books-queer-authors/>

4. Movement:

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_7wX2qNqbs
- <https://www.advocate.com/people/2020/3/17/queerantime-parties-ben-platt-dancing-shangela-rapping-indigo-girls>
- https://www.facebook.com/y2ktechnologiesatx/?tn-str=k*F
- <https://thequeergym.com/home35681705>
- <https://www.chicagotribune.com/coronavirus/ct-life-online-home-virtual-workouts-coronavirus-tt-0318-20200320-33lwwhwqavatzl3bz7jit7yozy-story.html>

Additional Resources

Mental Health:

- **CAPS is open during social distancing**
 - telehealth services are available
 - Call us 239-590-7950
 - Appointments available 8-5pm Monday-Friday
 - <https://www.fgcu.edu/studentlife/healthandsafety/caps/>

Help/Chat:

- <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>
 - **1-866-488-7366**
- <https://www.translifeline.org/hotline>
 - **877-565-8860**
- <https://fenwayhealth.org/care/wellness-resources/help-lines/>
 - **617-267-2535**

Online groups/connections:

- <https://www.validationstation.net/>
- <https://www.genderspectrum.org/blog/resources-for-challenging-times/>
- <https://www.trevorspace.org/>
- <https://www.sageusa.org/sageconnect/>

Online websites:

- <https://gaycenter.org/resources/>
- <http://www.loftgaycenter.org/>
- <https://www.lgbtcenters.org/LGBTCenters/Center/6569/Visuality-LGBT-Community-Center>
- <https://transequality.org/>
- <https://www.thetaskforce.org/>
- <https://www.glsen.org/>
- <https://pflag.org/chapter/pflag-fort-myers>
- <https://transgenderlawcenter.org/>

Additional Resources

My Daily Peace of Mind Plan (POMP)

Rationale: Consistently following a daily routine of taking simple (*but not always easy!*) action self-care steps can help us:

- *Remain OK despite what may be going on around us. “Inoculates” against stress effects!
- *Become less dependent on people, places and things to “get it right so we can feel alright.”
- *Experience increased freedom to move about our day as we would like with less “wear and tear;” not getting so easily bogged down by fear, anger, frustration or disappointment.

Core components / principles:

- *Staying in the present (versus the future or the past)
- *Focusing on things that ARE in my control today & relevant actions I CAN take.
- *Reducing self-focus; increasing sense of connection to something larger than ourselves (whatever works for you: spiritual, religious, nature, the Cosmos, humanity, etc.). Engage in small anonymous acts of kindness or helpfulness to others 3 X per day and notice the Effects. Initiate contacts with others daily to check in, broaden focus and get different Perspectives.
- *Avoiding traps like overthinking, future projection, dwelling on the past or things out of my control, defensiveness, argument and fault-finding that *DRAIN* my mental and physical resources and foster a negative, self-defeating attitude in self (*and others*).
- *Our ATTITUDE determines our direction. We tend to find what we are *looking for*.
- ***H.A.L.T.**: Watch and avoid becoming too **Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired**. These factors increase vulnerability to symptom flare-ups (irritability, emotional overreactivity, panic, low mood, hopelessness, mistaking feelings for facts, potentially setting off a spiral of negativity).

*Our Physical and Mental health are intertwined. Getting enough “fuel” (food intake), hydration and sleep are ESSENTIAL daily self-care action steps that cannot be ignored for long without negative impacts on our health and well being. **For those with trouble awakening, you might consider an app that detects sleep level and permits setting a time range for wake-up alarm to go off when sleep is at lightest level. Avoid hitting “snooze.”*

TODAY'S POMP* (Day: M T W R F; Date: _____)

***Morning (start of day):**

- Establish early enough wake-up time to “seize the day” and reserve 15-30 minutes for self-care in a place affording sufficient privacy.
- If desired, try a variety of nature sounds audios / videos available on YouTube and elsewhere as a helpful background.

Examples:

Spring forest with bird sounds: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H1iboKia3AQ> ;

Windchimes:

http://www.youtuberepeater.com/watch?v=YQ_X1thbljY&name=Wind+Chimes+Sounds+for+Relaxation+and+Baby+Sleep#gsc.tab=0 ;

Ocean waves: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ec_xGmM_tJc&t=2665s

- Cleansing “Good Morning / Day” breaths:
 - *Breathe IN slowly and deeply through the nose into the “belly” (diaphragm) for 4 seconds
 - *HOLD the breath for 4 seconds noticing and appreciating the fresh air intake
 - *Breathe OUT slowly through the mouth for 4 seconds FULLY EXHALING, as if emptying a balloon, noticing any stress or tension leaving the body with each out-breath
 - *HOLD this empty state for 4 seconds (as comfortable) noticing the difference between tension and calm.
 - *Repeat 1 or 2 more times
- Inspirational quote or brief reading (have fun searching for relevant material you can select from as desired; consider autobiographies of people you admire and aspire to be like).
- Meditation / Self-Reflection:
 - *Breathing normally and comfortably, imagine your day ahead concentrating on:
 - 1) the most ESSENTIAL tasks and responsibilities for the day ahead (“need to do vs. nice to do.”) and,
 - 2) Exactly HOW I want to move through the day today

(e.g., Resilient and Strong; Open & Flexible; Tranquil and Alert; Helpful and Compassionate, Experiencing just the right amounts of energy, focus and effort needed to maintain balance and achieve my goals for today; - incorporating as many sensory associations as possible (what does it sound, feel, look like as I picture moving through the day in these desired ways?).

3) Imagine how an admired figure (*past, present, real or fantasized*) would approach and respond as a source of inspiration and guidance.

[Include Aerobic movement of your choice as able and tolerated within the limits of your current health and abilities - possible options could include on-line exercise classes / workouts, walking, running, swimming, yoga, cycling, martial arts, dance, etc. Use Mindful meditation in noticing and appreciating the strength, flexibility and beauty in how our bodies feel and respond in motion.

*Mid-Day Pause & Reflection:

- Take some time as needed during the day to pause, breathe deeply, meditate and reflect on how the day is going in terms of your responses thus far and any adjustments that may be needed or desired as you envision moving through the rest of the day and respond as you would like.
- Check on H.A.L.T. and any omitted self-care action steps that need attention.
- Reach out to others as needed to check in, connect, refocus.

*End-of-Day Compassionate Self-Review:

- Pause, breathe and reflect on your self-care action steps today.
- "What did I do today to maintain my psychological / emotional well-being and health? (Did I pause, reach out to others, complete anonymous good deeds, read, move, eat, etc.?)
- What did I miss that there is still time remaining in the day to complete?
- What knowledge / learning can I take -away from today to apply to my efforts tomorrow? (Constructive self-appraisal to grow, not to tear down, dwell on or become morose over; consider writing down / journaling to help notice and recall for the next day)
- Inspirational reading, Ted Talk, etc. relevant to the day's experiences and goals for tomorrow and setting the stage for transition into rest, relaxation and sleep. Check out a variety of available on-line resources to see which ones you find most helpful.

(April 2020_Adapted by D. Christoffersen, PsyD_CAPS_Florida Gulf Coast University)

Parting message

Thank you for checking out our guide. We hope that in the coming days ahead you remember these resources and tips to help you stay well and connected. If you have further questions, comments, or concerns please contact:

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