

The Science of Mood, Anxiety and Motivation

Coping with Change in the Age of COVID-19

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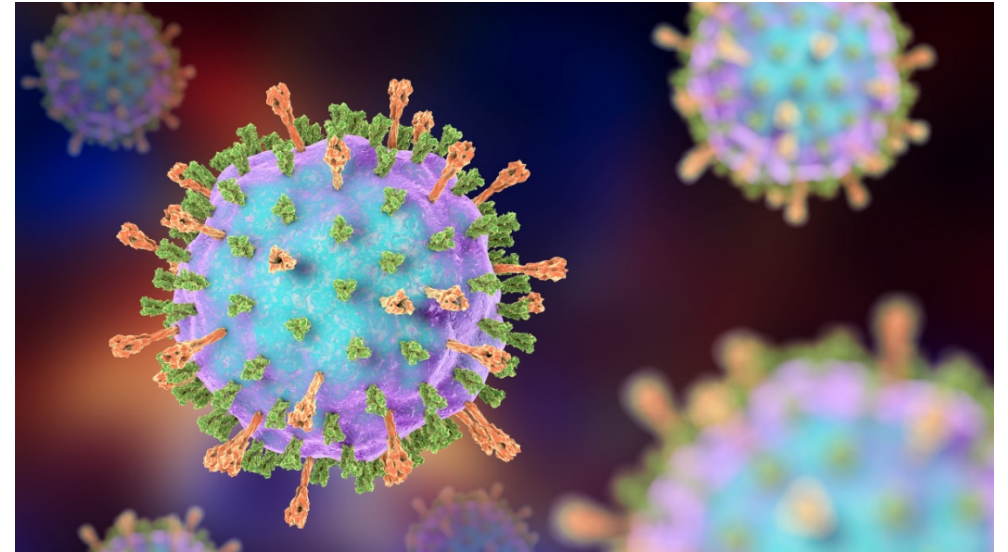


Agenda

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- Why We Worry
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- Suicide Warning Signs
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- Questions

Why COVID-19 Is So Unique

- Unpredictability
- Uncertainty
- Transmission rate and mortality rate
- Misinformation
- Social isolation
- Economic impact
- Fear and panic about resources



Why We Worry

- Fear about running out of essential supplies
- Anxiety, particularly about being separated from loved ones
- Uncertainty about how long you will need to stay at home
- Concerns for your physical safety and that of others
- Fear of getting sick



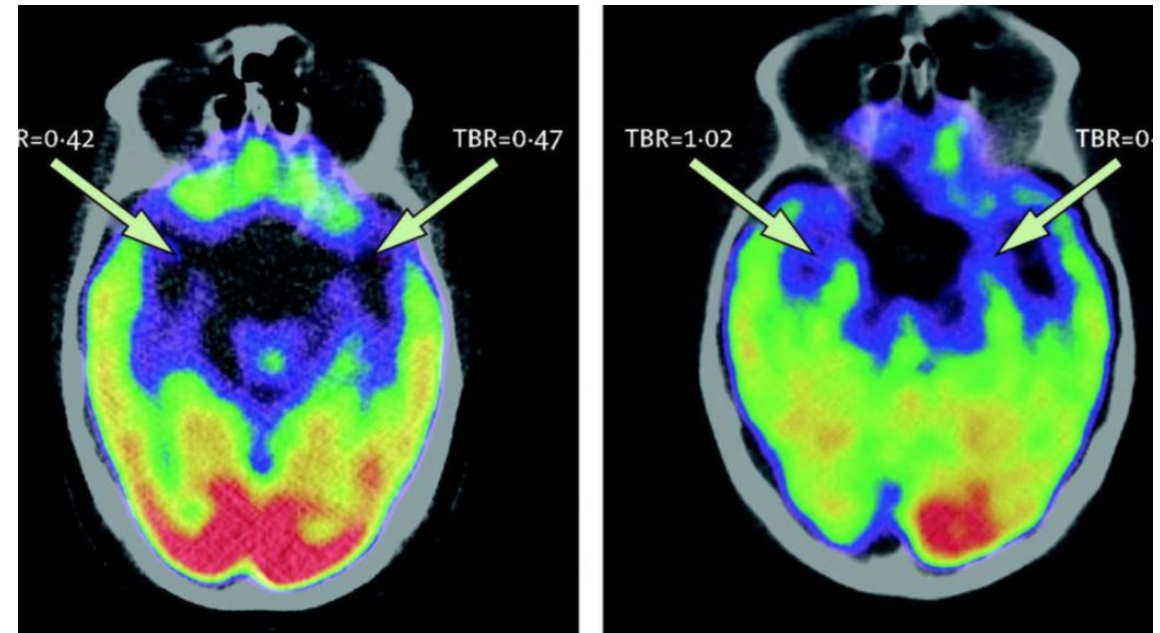
Why We Worry

- Guilt about not being able to fulfill responsibilities, such as work, parenting or caring for dependents
- Boredom or isolation
- Thoughts of blame, worry or fear
- Worry about loss of income
- Fear of being stigmatized or labeled if you become sick

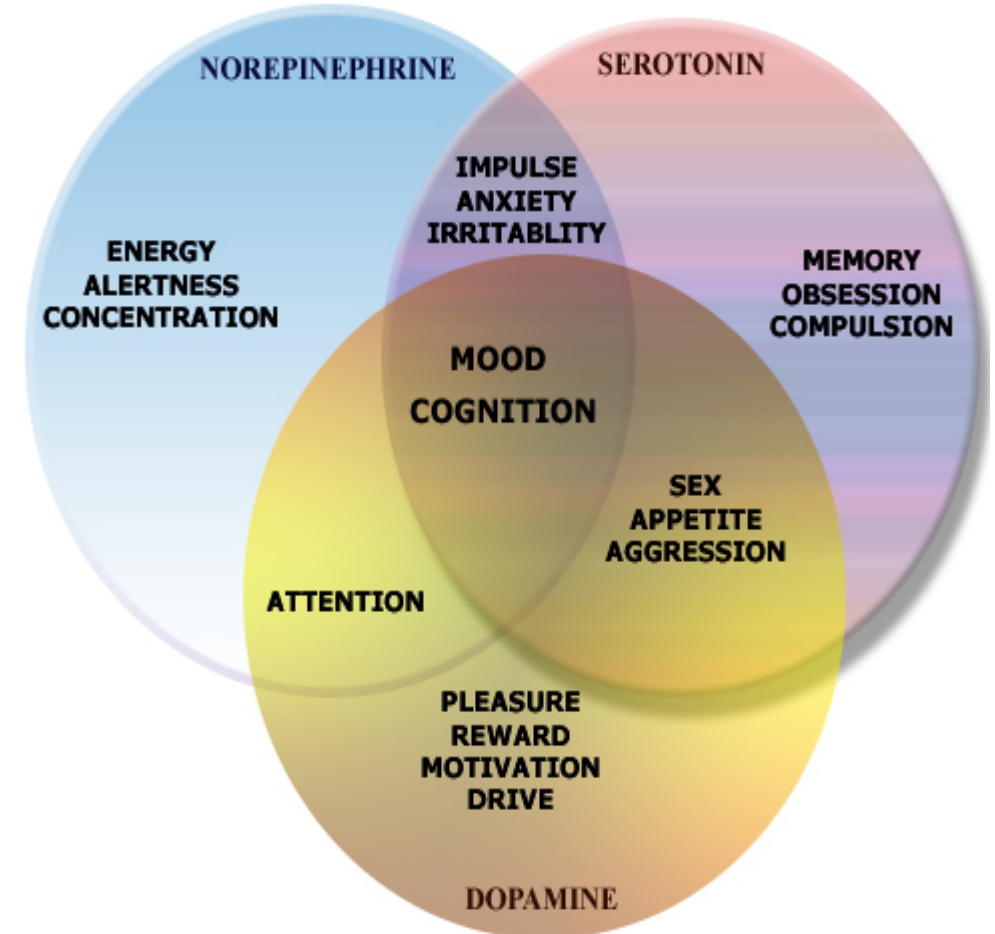
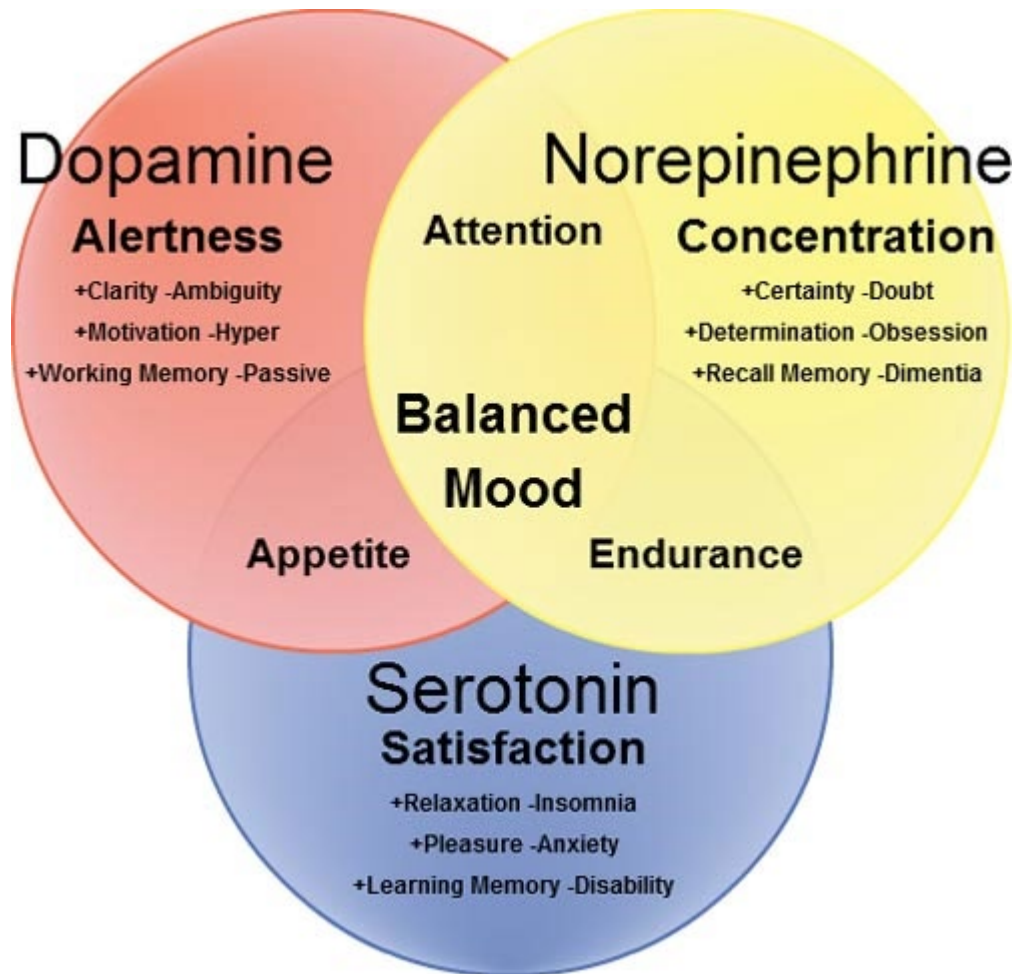


The Science of Anxiety

- Our brain senses a 'threat'
- Brain responds with initiation of 'fight or flight' response
- The limbic system (hypothalamus, thalamus, hippocampus and amygdala regions) is responsible for the emotions processing
- We experience physiological symptoms: rapid heart rate, heart palpitations, muscle tension, headache, diarrhea, pale or flushed skin
- Our brain cells (neurons) communicate via hormones (neurotransmitters)
- Serotonin: responsible for mood, sleep or appetite
- Norepinephrine: linked to alertness and attention
- GABA: slows down signals

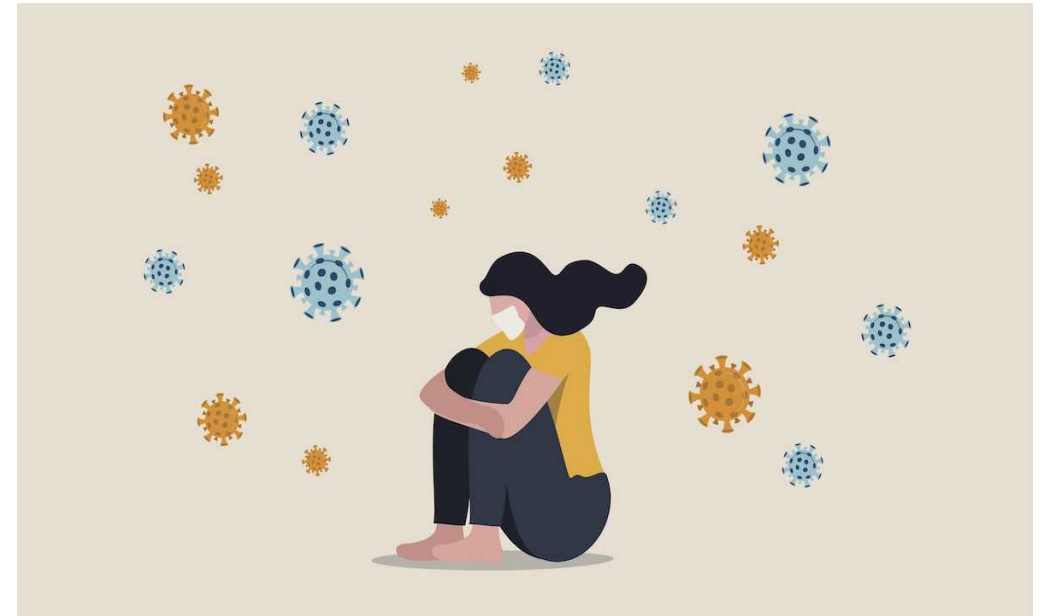


Serotonin Balance



How It May Impact Us

- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones, your financial situation or job, or loss of support services you rely on
- Feelings of feelings of fear, anger, sadness, worry, numbness, or frustration
- Changes in appetite, energy, and activity levels
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Worsening of mental health conditions
- Increased use of alcohol and other substances



Who's At Risk for Behavioral Health Issues?

- People who are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 (for example, older people, and people of any age with certain underlying medical conditions)
- Children and teens
- People caring for family members or loved ones
- Frontline workers such as health care providers and first responders
- Essential workers who work in the food industry
- People who have existing mental health conditions



Who's At Risk for Behavioral Health Issues? (cont.)

- People who have lost their jobs, had their work hours reduced, or had other major changes to their employment
- People who have disabilities or developmental delay
- People who are socially isolated from others, including people who live alone, and people in rural or frontier areas
- People in some racial and ethnic minority groups
- People who use substances or have a substance use disorder



Prevalence

- 31% had some symptoms of depression and anxiety
- 26% symptoms of trauma and stress related disorder
- 13% started or increased substance use as means of coping
- 11% seriously considered suicide within the past 30 days



The Harmful Effects of Mental Health Stigma

What stigma can lead to....

- Feelings of shame, hopelessness and isolation
- Reluctance to ask for help or get treatment
- Lack of understanding by family, friends or others
- Self-doubt – the belief you will never overcome your illness
- Not getting the treatment you need
- Not connecting with others

Understand that **you are not your illness.**



Suicide Warning Signs

- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Looking for a way to end their lives, such as searching online for methods
- Withdrawing from activities
- Isolating from family and friends
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Visiting or calling people to say goodbye
- Giving away prized possessions
- Aggression
- Fatigue



Suicide Warning Signs (cont.)

People who are considering suicide often display one or more of the following moods:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Loss of interest
- Irritability
- Humiliation/Shame
- Agitation/Anger
- Relief/Sudden Improvement



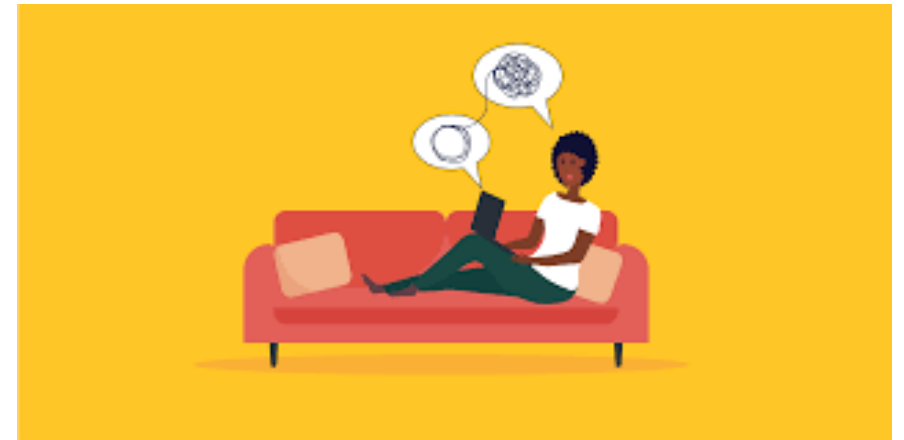
How To Cope

- **Take care of your body**– Try to eat healthy well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, and get plenty of sleep. Avoid alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.
- **Connect with others**– Share your concerns and how you are feeling with a friend or family member. Maintain healthy relationships, and build a strong support system.
- **Take breaks**– Make time to unwind and remind yourself that strong feelings will fade. Try taking in deep breaths. Try to do activities you usually enjoy.



How To Cope (cont.)

- **Stay informed**– When you feel that you are missing information, you may become more stressed or nervous.
- **Avoid too much exposure to news**– Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories. It can be upsetting to hear about the crisis and see images repeatedly.
- Try to do **enjoyable activities** and return to normal life as much as possible and check for updates between breaks.



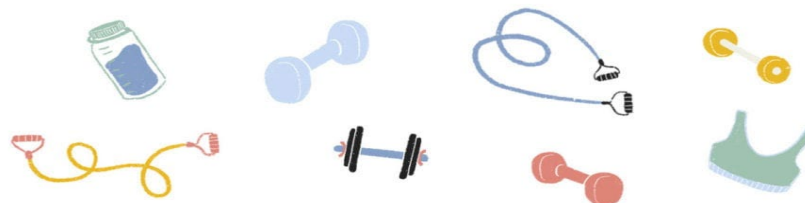
More Suggestions

- **Keep up daily routines**, and make changes only when necessary. Maintaining regular schedules and routines is a good way to keep anxiety at bay and feel normal.
- **Don't completely isolate yourself from other people.** Fear of spreading the disease can cause some people to withdraw socially, but maintaining relationships and social support are good ways to combat anxiety.
- **Limit screen time.** Too much time on the phone or computer, on social media or websites, can lead to less activity and more anxiety.
- **Practice gratitude** – focus on positives in your life through journaling or self reflection



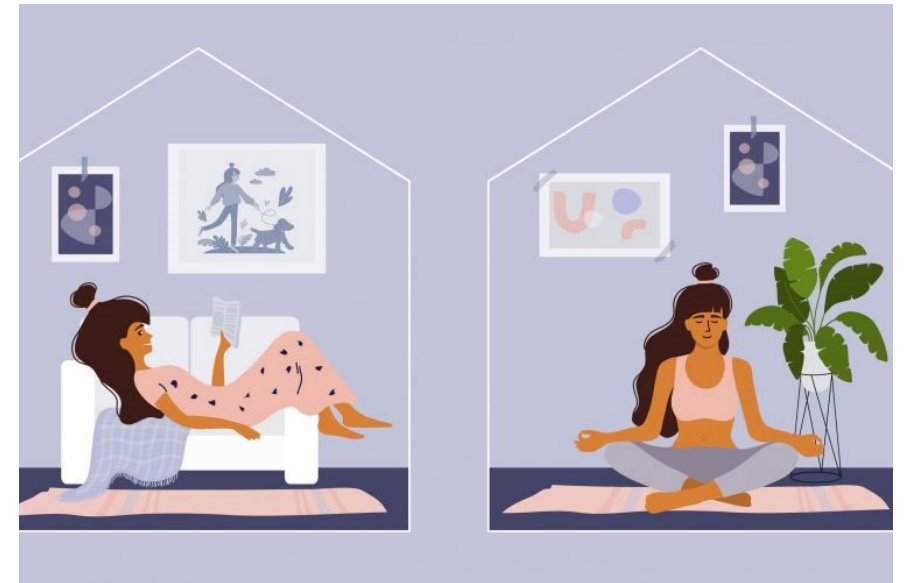
Self-Care

- Stay connected with loved ones through video calls, phone calls, texts, or social media.
- Remain informed with accurate information from trusted sources. Avoid social media accounts and news outlets that promote fear or rumors.
- Monitor your physical health needs and those of your loved ones. Eat healthy foods, and drink plenty of water.
- Unless you are showing signs of illness or have tested positive for COVID-19, going outside to exercise and walk pets is okay. In public, wear a cloth face covering and practice physical distancing by keeping 6 feet between you and others.
- Hold an image in your mind of the best possible outcome.
- Make a list of your personal strengths and use these to help both yourself and others stay emotionally strong.
- If you are religious or spiritual, follow practices at home that provide you with comfort and emotional strength.



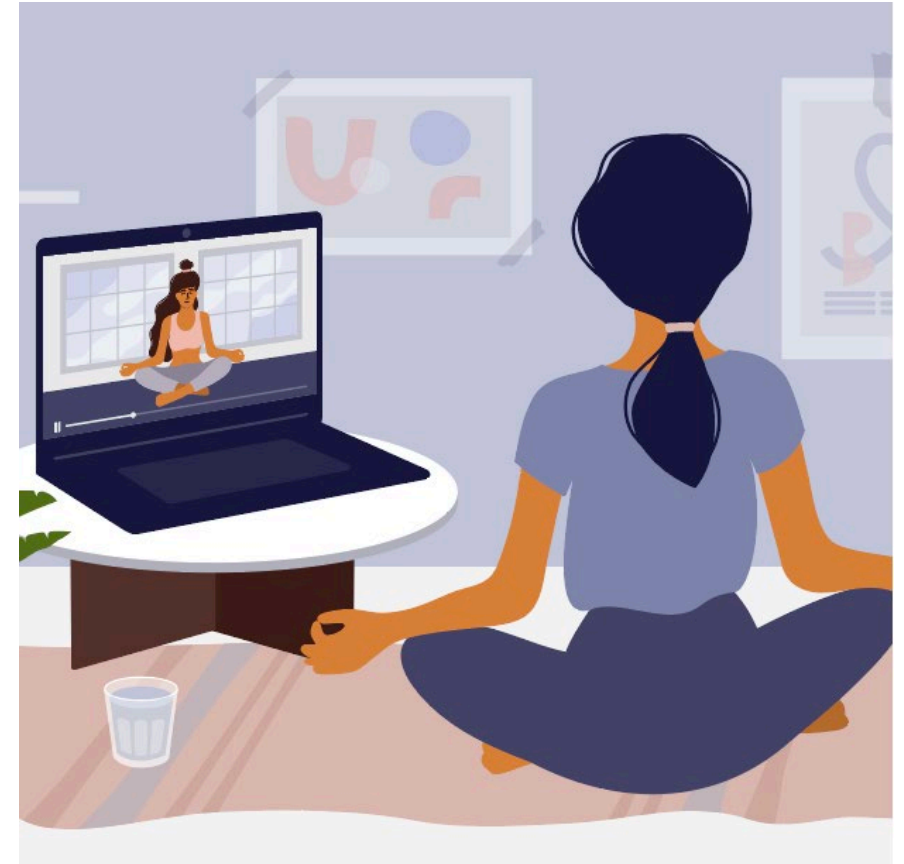
Mindfulness Techniques

- Accept that you may not be as productive as always
 - Give yourself time to process, accept and adjust to the present situation.
- Set realistic goals and reward yourself
 - Use time spent doing enjoyable activities as reward for time spend working.
- Create boundaries and minimize distraction
 - Assign a space in the house for work. Turn off notifications on social apps and check email only on assigned times during the day.



Mindfulness Techniques (cont.)

- Connect with colleagues/friends/family
 - Do a virtual coffee break to catch-up
- Prioritize well being
 - Give yourself sufficient amount of time to rest between and after work sessions – practice self-care.
- Set work hours and stick to them
 - Disconnect at the end of a work-day to ensure you attend to other areas of your life



How To Get Help

- Seek professional help from a mental health provider: psychologist, psychiatrist, counselor, or therapist
- Utilize your health plan's resources
- Contact your Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP)
- Consider virtual (online) resources for seeking help, i.e. telemedicine or telepsychiatry
- Consider mindfulness or meditation apps



Resources

Community Resources:

Disaster Distress Helpline	1-800-985-5990 (press 2 for Spanish), or text TalkWithUs for English or Hablanos for Spanish to 66746.
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline	1-800-273-TALK (8255) for English, 1-888-628-9454 for Spanish, or Lifeline Crisis Chat
National Domestic Violence Hotline	1-800-799-7233 or text LOVEIS to 22522
National Child Abuse Hotline	1-800-4AChild (1-800-422-4453) or text 1-800-422-4453
National Sexual Assault Hotline	1-800-656-HOPE (4673) or Online Chat
The Eldercare Locator	1-800-677-1116
Veteran's Crisis Line	1-800-273-TALK (8255) or Crisis Chat or text: 8388255

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