



April 2020

Quick Takes

Coping With COVID-19

The social distancing, isolation, and quarantine necessitated by the COVID-19 virus can have a serious impact on our mental health. It's normal to feel depressed, anxious, and even angry in these stressful times, but with effective coping mechanisms—rather than unhealthy, destructive ones—we can help better our moods and feel more resilient as we endure the coronavirus crisis.



Coronavirus' Impact On Our Mental Health

By now, just about everyone is fully aware of COVID-19's physical symptoms, as well as effective prevention methods like social distancing and self-quarantine. But while this isolation is necessary, even mandated by law in some areas, it can take a serious toll on our mental health—especially when combined with the potent anxiety and fear of global pandemic.

The Symptoms

As we adapt to the life changes caused by the coronavirus outbreak, we're faced with new mental and emotional challenges. For many people, these include:

- Anxiety
- Excessive worrying
- Being on edge, or having a short fuse for emotional outbursts
- A fatalistic sense of "doom and gloom"
- Helplessness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Insomnia or difficulty sleeping

These are normal emotions to feel during a time of crisis. Before we can learn to effectively cope with these negative feelings, we first have to validate and recognize that we are experiencing them—rather than trying to deny it or "bottle it up." Once we acknowledge the reality of how we're feeling, whether it's due to the coronavirus, isolation, or some other cause, we can begin to process and cope with these negative emotions.

Unhealthy Coping Techniques

When we experience negative moods, we inevitably turn to coping mechanisms to help us deal with these difficult, and often complicated, emotions. Coping is natural, but there are healthy and unhealthy ways to do it. Here are few coping techniques to avoid, especially when you're isolating due to COVID-19:

- Alarmist thinking or panicking
- Overexposing to sensational media or social media
- Assuming anyone exhibiting symptoms (coughing, sneezing) has the virus
- Withdrawing socially (ignoring calls, texts, video chats, etc.)

Effective Coping Techniques

Bert Alicea, Executive Vice President of Health Advocate's EAP+Work/Life Division, [said it](#) best: "our thoughts produce our emotions." With that in mind, try practicing these effective, healthy coping techniques when you're feeling the isolation of coronavirus taking its toll on your mental health.

Getting the facts without overreacting. Source your news, updates, and developments of COVID-19 from health and disease authorities, like the [CDC](#), rather than Twitter, Facebook, or other forms of social media.

Staying physically healthy. There are countless at-home workouts you can do, and many gyms and fitness apps are currently offering discounted or free streaming classes. If working out isn't your thing, consider at least a short walk around the block. Just remember to keep six feet away from anyone you might encounter and thoroughly wash your hands before and after.

Staying connected to the "right people." While undergoing isolation, it's still important to maintain some level of regular social interaction, so be sure to stay connected to friends and family. Accessing that support structure uplifts our mood and serves as a crucial reminder that we're not enduring this alone.

Remember, this is a difficult and stressful time, and it's normal to feel this way. But with the right coping mechanisms, you can deal with COVID's impact on your mental health in a healthy, constructive way.

Source: Alicea, Bert. "Watch Now: Psychological Effects of Coronavirus." *Health Advocate Blog*, 11 Mar. 2020, blog.healthadvocate.com/2020/03/watch-now-psychological-effects-of-coronavirus/.

Lemon-Dill Pasta Salad Makes 4 servings

This fresh, crusty pasta salad features chickpea pasta for a gluten-free fiber boost. Canned wild sockeye salmon is worth seeking out; it contains not only healthy omega-3 fatty acids but also a large amount of vitamin D—two nutrients that can help tamp down inflammation.

INGREDIENTS

- 8 ounces chickpea rotini, shells, or penne
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest & 2 1/2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt & 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/3 cup thinly sliced red onion
- 1 cup thinly sliced cucumber
- 1 cup frozen green peas, thawed
- 2 (6-oz.) cans skinless, boneless wild sockeye salmon, drained
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh dill

DIRECTIONS

1. Cook pasta according to package directions, omitting salt and fat. Drain and rinse with cold water until cool; drain well.
2. Combine lemon zest, lemon juice, oil, salt, and pepper in a large bowl, stirring with a whisk.
3. Place onion in a colander or sieve; rinse with cold water. Drain well.
4. Add pasta, onion, cucumber, peas, salmon, and dill to dressing; toss gently to combine.



NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

436 Calories
 15 g Total fat
 2 g Saturated fat
 11g Unsaturated fat
 628 mg Sodium
 43 g Carbohydrates
 7 g Fiber
 4 g Sugar
 36 g Protein