

Tools for managing stress and anxiety while self-quarantined

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It's normal to feel anxious during times of transition, change or uncertainty. When life feels unpredictable it's crucial to focus on our mental health, connections with family and friends and self-care. Here are some tools you can use to help manage stress and anxiety.

HALT

Addressing our [basic needs](#) can help ease anxiety and stress, especially if we haven't checked in with ourselves in a while. Use the HALT method to identify and address your needs in the moment.

- H: Are you hungry? If the answer is yes, take a moment to eat a healthy snack or meal. This will help relieve any "hangry" feelings and give your body an energy boost.
- A: Are you angry? If the answer is yes, it's important to identify why and how to address it. Take a moment to think through your emotions. It can be helpful to journal about your thoughts to find out what's really bothering you. Once you've identified the root of your anger, give yourself the space

and time to calm down and find ways to address it in a healthy way.

- L: Are you lonely? This doesn't necessarily mean you're alone, but do you feel distant, isolated, withdrawn or disconnected? This might be a clue that it's time to reach out and have a conversation about what you're going through with someone you trust. If you're apart from your friends or family, sharing what is stressing you out and what you've been dealing with may help you feel better and reconnect.
- T: Are you tired? Not just physically—are you mentally exhausted? If so, it may be time to take a break, do a quick meditation, stretch, lie down or simply close your eyes for a few minutes.

Identify areas you can control

As circumstances change, you may begin to feel a [loss of control](#) over different areas in your life. However, it's important to identify things that you can maintain control over in order to have a greater sense of structure and predictability. For instance, online classes can sometimes give you greater control over your schedule. Create a routine and schedule that works best for you right now and adjust as needed to feel more in charge of your day.

Identifying small areas you can control can also be helpful. For instance, you have power over how many times you wash your hands throughout the day and for how long (hint: 20 seconds) or how often you check in with your friends and family. Being intentional and identifying areas of your life that you still have control over can help balance feelings of uncertainty or unpredictability.

Set boundaries

Situations can change rapidly, and you may feel a need to stay connected to news, updates and other

messaging more than normal. However, it's important to set boundaries to support and protect your mental health. One way to set boundaries is to reduce the number of times you check your phone or email for updates.

For instance, if you feel bombarded by headlines and top stories, it may be helpful to turn off notifications for news updates. Instead, schedule 30 minutes during the day to review the news. Set a timer to keep yourself accountable. Once the timer goes off, go back to other activities that you need to accomplish or things you enjoy like reading a book, drinking a cup of coffee or video chatting with friends.

This technique can also help if you feel overwhelmed by school or work notifications and updates. Block out specific times in your daily schedule for classes, assignments and projects.

Stay connected with your social network

Social isolation can negatively impact your mental health. While [social distancing](#) is critical, it's also important to stay connected with the people you care about. Here are a few ways you can stay connected online:

- Video chat or talk on the phone. Seeing people and hearing their voices can be more impactful than messaging one another on social or over text. Schedule video dates with your friends, family and other loved ones. If you prefer texting, try using features like voice messages.
- Host a virtual watch party. Do you and your friends share a favorite show? *Love Is Blind*, *we're looking at you*. Schedule a time to watch the show as a virtual group and share your reactions over video or a group chat. If you don't have the same subscriptions to [streaming services](#), you can also use apps like Kast to share movies or TV shows and chat online.
- Play games together. Whether you have a gaming console or an app on your phone, playing games online is a great way to stay connected with friends. Try free apps like Scrabble or Psych! to get started.

- Start a book club. Social distancing is a great excuse to read more. Gather your friends for an ebook club. CU Boulder Libraries offers free ebooks to students, staff and faculty to check out. You can also download ebooks to your tablet, phone or computer from other [public libraries](#) using apps like Libby. Once you've chosen a book, set a schedule to virtually meet or chat to discuss the book. If you need inspiration, check out the New York Times Best Sellers list.

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