

COVID-19 Winter Survival Guide

This guide is designed to help you navigate the unprecedented times in which we find ourselves. It's not an exhaustive list of all potential strategies to manage this situation, but it provides a framework to remind yourself of the tools that can help you weather this storm.

Please follow your local public health guidelines to manage the spread of COVID-19, including physical distancing, wearing a mask, practicing hand hygiene, and isolating if you are sick.

Move Your Body!

It doesn't have to be intense activity, but engaging your muscles and getting your heart rate up can be a great release for stress and help you take care of your body!

- ✳ Try going for a walk, stretching or doing yoga, or turning up some music and having a dance party for yourself
- ✳ Set aside time to have some level of physical activity each day if you can. Try not to go two days in a row without some physical activity!

Take Breaks!

You take regular breaks when working in the office, so you may need to remind yourself to take breaks when working from home. Get up from your work station, walk around, take your lunch (away from your desk if possible)

- ✳ Get time away from screens. Be intentional about your screen time. Screens are one of the main tools we use to connect and work, but they can be hard on our visual and sensory system. Take time to rest your eyes and look at different things in the room. Set time limits on apps on your phone, and try to have time away from tablets, computers, and TV, especially before bed.
- ✳ Take breaks from the news and social media. You don't need to be checking all the time to stay informed. Check reliable media once or twice a day and refer to trusted public health experts and epidemiologists to help inform your approach.

Spend Time Outside!

Unless it's too dangerous due to the weather, bundle up and try to spend at least 20 minutes outside each day. Getting outside will give you a change of pace and scenery, get your body moving, and help you get some fresh air. At the very least, try not to go two days without leaving the house

- ✳ Think of fun winter activities to try or winter scenery to explore
- ✳ Plan to have a warm drink, like tea or hot cocoa to reward yourself when you come in from the cold

Make Time for Things that Bring You Peace and Joy!

We've had to compromise on a lot to protect ourselves and our community, but chances are, there are still activities that bring you feelings of joy and peace

- ✳ Little activities like listening to music or podcasts, having a cup of tea or a tasty treat, or watching a funny or soothing video can help deal with the challenges we're facing
- ✳ Try transporting yourself to another time. Revisit old TV shows and movies that you used to love. It can be a nice distraction and feel soothing to watch something familiar
- ✳ Make a list of all the little things that make you feel better and place it somewhere prominent. Refer back to the list if you're feeling down or stuck

Practice Social Engagement!

We may not be able to interact the same way, but we still need some social connection. Regularly engaging in activities that connect us with others can help manage feelings of boredom, isolation, and loneliness

- * Try to initiate at least one get-together (remote or distanced in-person) every 1-2 weeks. You may not be able to ensure the activity happens, but by initiating you get a bit of that social engagement and connection
- * If you're struggling with loneliness, use that feeling as a cue to reach out. Text, email or message someone to check in with them. Chances are, you're not the only one feeling disconnected
- * Consider letter writing. It can be a nice activity to engage in and can facilitate joy to send and receive mail

Practice Self-Compassion!

Self-Compassion is about understanding that we are doing the best we can with the resources we have and the situation we find ourselves in, and reminding ourselves that this best is often enough. You are navigating a pandemic, so it may be harder to be as productive or active as you would like to be.

- * Try talking to yourself like you would talk to a friend who is struggling. What kind of tone would you use, and can you use that with yourself?
- * Practice a soothing touch. Give yourself a gentle hug or place your hand on your heart. Focus on the gentle pressure and warmth of this experience. Hold the pose for a few moments and breathe. It can help you feel calm and soothed.

Eat Well!

This isn't about eating "healthy." This is about reflecting on the ways to nourish your body and mind and taking the time to do so.

- * Think about the foods/meals/recipes you enjoy making and eating. You can also think about local restaurants you want to support if you have the funds
- * Take time to plan how you want to feed and nourish yourself and carve out time to enjoy preparing and eating your food. Set a table for yourself or use nice dishes to create an enjoyable experience.
- * Remember to stay hydrated. It can be easy to lose track of drinking fluids throughout the day, so make sure you have some water nearby while you're working and hydrate regularly

Be Creative!

Necessity is the mother of invention. Navigating the pandemic can be a time to get creative with activities, traditions, and outlets

- * Try different ways of connecting with people or think about new and different traditions to try.
- * Explore different parts of your city or town. Challenge your friends to a crating contest. Try playing video games with friends online, even if you're not a gamer. If a kooky or silly idea enters your mind for an activity, ask family and/or friends if they'd be interested!
- * It can also be soothing to engage in creative activities. You don't have to be talented or artistic to engage in creative expression. Explore some videos on YouTube on illustration, painting, baking, dancing or other creative outlets if you'd like to dip your toes in
- * Even painting your nails or playing with makeup can be a fun opportunity for creative expression

Manage Activation

Our brains and bodies have strong responses to threat or perceived threat. We can get tense, fearful, agitated, overwhelmed, paralysed, or lethargic. With the pandemic, there are more things in our environment that we may interpret as a threat: someone being too close to us, someone coughing or sneezing, or having to go to a store, may register in our brain as threatening. There's also more potential fear of being judged for our actions, which we can find threatening. All of these triggers can activate a strong threat response in us. When this response is activated, grounding and self-soothing techniques can help calm this response. Here are a few options:

Self-Soothing

- * Look up at the sky and notice all the things you see
- * Look at photos of people who make you smile
- * Look at images of nature or animals
- * Watch a video that makes you laugh or feel calm

- * Play music you like to listen to and sing along or lip-sync
- * Take a moment to listen to the different sounds around you
- * Ask friends or family to record a nice message for you and listen to it
- * Hum, whistle, or drum to yourself. Get into the rhythm!

- * Chew some gum or mints
- * Have a piece of chocolate or other sweet. Try to have one piece at a time
- * Brew and drink some tea or coffee

- * Think of scents you enjoy and try to have a sample or rollerball of them on you and take a quick sniff
- * Have scented lotion or soap and focus on the smell
- * Open up some spice jars and notice the scent

- * Play with a pen, piece of jewelry or your hair
- * Rub lotion on your hands
- * Wrap yourself up in a soft or heavy blanket
- * Gently rub your thighs. Focus on how the material of your pants feels and how your legs feel warmer as you rub them.

Grounding

- * Focus on your breathing. Remind yourself that you are breathing and notice how your breathing feels. See if you can try to deepen your breathing a little with each breath.
- * Describe your environment in detail. Take in and notice as many things as you can
- * Count to 10 or run through the alphabet. If you need more of a challenge, try going through the alphabet backwards
- * Stretch out your body. Roll your neck side to side. Loosen your shoulders. Open and stretch your jaw and then gently close it
- * Carry a grounding object in your pocket to touch and manipulate when you're feeling overwhelmed
- * Clench and release your fists

Managing Boredom

Take some time to list out five different things you can do when you're feeling bored or listless

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Managing Loneliness

Take some time to list out five different things you can do or people you can message when you're lonely

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Managing Distress

Take some time to list out five different things you can do when you're feeling distressed, anxious, or sad

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Creating and Maintaining a Routine

Having a basic routine that you can rely on can help you navigate difficult times and make sure your key needs are being met. You don't want to be too rigid, but setting up a consistent structure for yourself can be a big help. If you're able to, set a consistent bed and wake time. Also, try to set plan out a few activities throughout the day that you find helpful. Try to incorporate physical activity, social activity, creative activities, and pleasurable or calming activities. Try to pick one or two things for each part of the day. It can be something small like "go for a walk" or "have a cup of tea," anything that puts the tools to action.

BED TIME:

WAKE TIME:

MONDAY

Morning	Afternoon	Evening

TUESDAY

Morning	Afternoon	Evening

WEDNESDAY

Morning	Afternoon	Evening

THURSDAY

Morning	Afternoon	Evening

FRIDAY

Morning	Afternoon	Evening

SATURDAY

Morning	Afternoon	Evening

SUNDAY

Morning	Afternoon	Evening