

## A Healthy Outlook

## Managing Anxiety and Fear During COVID-19

**H**ere are some helpful tips for positive coping, using three antidotes to fear and anxiety: creativity, humor, and curiosity.

**CREATIVITY** Activities that draw on our creativity allow our emotions and actions to come together in order to help our emotions move and shift. This can be anything that has a beginning and an end and allows us to use our senses to create something we enjoy.

**HUMOR** Spending time with anything that brings you joy—whether through your own activities or enjoying other people’s expressions of joy—relaxes our minds and bodies. Tell a joke, read a funny book, get silly with your family, or watch a comedy. Finding humor and engaging in joy is a healing activity!

**CURIOSITY** When we are under a lot of stress, it is easy to catastrophize

and have fearful thoughts take over. This is part of our mind’s way of trying to protect us by getting ready for anything that might happen. This is when it is important to remember:

### **DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU THINK!**

Some strategies to help us stay curious:

- Catch the “what-ifs” and worries in your thoughts and label them. They are just thoughts – label them as “anxiety,” “fear,” or “worry.”
- Use reality checking to sort out which thoughts to listen to, and which ones to let go. Reality checking steps:
  - » Notice and name it: “anxiety,” “fear,” “worry.”
  - » Is this true? Even though something is possible, is it probable?

» What parts do I know are true, and what parts of it might not be true?

» What steps can I take? What is in my control?

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## My Mental Health: Do I Need Help? Guidance from the National Institute of Mental Health

**W**hen trying to decide if you need mental health services, first, determine how much your symptoms interfere with your daily life. Do I have mild symptoms that have lasted for less than two weeks? You may not need mental health assistance yet. Symptoms of this type might include the following:

- Feeling a little down
- Feeling down, but still able to do job, schoolwork, or housework

● Some trouble sleeping

● Feeling down, but still able to take care of yourself or take care of others. If so, here are some self-care activities that can help:

- » Exercising (e.g., aerobics, yoga)
- » Engaging in social contact (virtual or in-person)
- » Getting adequate sleep on a regular schedule
- » Eating healthy

» Talking to a trusted friend or family member

» Practicing meditation, relaxation, and mindfulness

If the symptoms above do not improve or seem to be worsening,

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## My Mental Health

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despite self-care efforts, talk to your health-care provider or your Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

Do I have severe symptoms that have lasted 2 weeks or more? Such symptoms might include the following:

- Difficulty sleeping
- Appetite changes that result in unwanted weight changes
- Struggling to get out of bed in the morning because of mood
- Difficulty concentrating
- Loss of interest in things you usually find enjoyable
- Unable to perform usual daily functions and responsibilities
- Thoughts of death or self-harm

If the above symptoms persist, you should consider seeking professional help. This might include the following:

- **Psychotherapy** (talk therapy)—virtual or in-person; individual, group, or family
- **Medications**
- **Brain stimulation therapies**

For help finding treatment, visit the NIMH [Help for Mental Illnesses web page](#). If you are in crisis, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255), or text the **Crisis Text Line** (text HELLO to 741741).

For more information about available resources, contact the MCPS EAP as follows:

**MCPS In-House EAP**  
(240-314-1040)

**External EAP-KEPRO**, passcode MCPS (866-496-9599). ●

## Tips to Share with Your Children About Food and Eating

**A**s the COVID-19 pandemic endures, we continue to spend more time than ever at home. This can be a good time to connect with your child, but it also can be painful if your child or teenager is having a difficult time and you notice eating habits that concern you. With that in mind, here are some tips to help your child maintain a healthy attitude toward food and eating:

Tips to Share with Your Children:

- No food is “good” or “bad.” Everything from pizza to carrots to peanut butter and candy can be part of a healthy menu.
- Eat when you are hungry. Stop when you are full. Try to do this most of the time.
- Don’t eat because you are bored, sad, or angry. Find something interesting to do or someone to talk with instead.

- Stay fit by exercising. You can take up a sport or join a virtual class like dance or karate, but you do not have to. Playing with friends can be just as energizing and fun!
- All bodies are different. People of all shapes and sizes can eat well and be healthy.
- Teasing hurts. Don’t take part in it, especially if it is about a person’s body, weight, or size.
- Remember that fat does not equal bad and thin does not equal good.
- If you’re unhappy with your body or weight, talk to an adult. Parents, school nurses, and teachers can often give you valuable information and support.

Information from the [Renfrew Center website](#). Printed with permission. ●

## Well-Being Matters

**W**ell-Being Matters is a new video series by MCPS staff members for MCPS staff members. Robyn Rosenbauer, LCSW-C, Employee Assistance Program, will be talking with local mental health experts on how staff members can take care of their emotional health and well-being during the ongoing uncertainties of

remote work and learning. Different topics will be covered, including anxiety, work-life balance, and more. The first two episodes are available on: [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLkZwAghwrSy-syAxHSw\\_IyjsMQZKO4px7](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLkZwAghwrSy-syAxHSw_IyjsMQZKO4px7). New episodes will be released over the next few months. Be sure to check them out!

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### ● Caregiver Support Group

To support our caregivers, MCPS EAP offers a Caregiver Support Group, designed to provide helpful resources and establish connections among the caregivers within our MCPS community. The virtual monthly meetings are held from 4:00–5:00 p.m. (day to be determined). Guest speakers present on important topics related to caring for a loved one. All are welcome to attend. **For more information or to register, please contact the EAP at 240-314-1040 or email Robyn Rosenbauer, LCSW-C, CEAP, at [Robyn\\_I\\_Rosenbauer@mcpsmd.org](mailto:Robyn_I_Rosenbauer@mcpsmd.org).** ●

### ● MCPS has Launched a Well-Being Website for Employees

This online resource is a one-stop shop where employees can get information to help them navigate and balance their work, home, personal, and community life, with an emphasis on staff well-being and self-care. The last few months have been challenging ones for all of us, and MCPS is committed to ensuring that our staff members stay safe and feel supported. [Click here to browse the site.](#) ●

# Depression In Women: Five Things You Should Know

1. Women experience depression at much higher rates than do men. Symptoms of depression can include not only sadness, but also physical symptoms like unremitting body aches, digestive problems, and exhaustion, which have a negative impact on motivation and make daily activities difficult.
2. Certain types of depression are unique to women and can occur throughout their lives. They are associated with the hormonal changes that women experience, including premenstrual dysphoric disorder, experienced by some women in the weeks preceding menstruation; perinatal depression, experienced by some women shortly after the birth of a baby; and premenopausal depression, experienced by some women as they transition into menopause.
3. Whether hormonal, psychological, genetic, environmental, or a combination, many of even the most severe cases of depression that women experience can be treated by a healthcare provider. The most effective treatments are antidepressant medications and psychotherapy. A healthcare provider or therapist can identify the most suitable treatment, with input from the patient, including the appropriate antidepressant(s), hormonal therapy, and/or the best type of psychotherapy, such as, cognitive behavioral therapy or interpersonal therapy.
4. Patients can seek input to find the therapist who they feel comfortable with. This decision may be made based on the therapist's experience working with the patient's specific condition; whether the treatments a therapist uses are the most beneficial to the patient's condition; and, importantly, the connection and rapport that the patient has with a potential therapist.
5. Women suffering from depression are not alone. There is help and understanding out there from many sources that address the unique realities faced by these women, including the following:
  - » U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health
  - » U.S. Food and Drug Administration: Women and Depression
  - » Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Depression Among Women

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*"Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass; it's about learning to dance in the rain."*

*Vivian Greene*

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## Achieving Mental Fortitude

Ever wondered how some people are able to weather extraordinarily stressful, even traumatic, times? There are things you can do to minimize the negative impacts of difficult situations, especially relevant now during the COVID pandemic.

● **Practice Flexibility.** There are certain things that are simply out of our control, such as the pandemic and the economy. Instead of dwelling on why something is happening, try to accept, adapt, and change in response to situations. In other words, ride the wave.

● **Acknowledge Your Reactions.** Notice when you are frustrated, angry, sad, or anxious. Recognize

that these are completely normal responses during trying times. Instead of resisting these feelings, let yourself experience them.

● **Adjust Expectations.** These are not normal times and it is just not realistic to

try to maintain typical levels of functioning. Give yourself permission to operate a little differently right now.

● **Maintain Optimism.** Individuals have endured extreme hardships throughout history and have gone on to live rich and fulfilling lives. Recognize that humankind has the capacity to adapt to challenging times and rise above.



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*"Applying the Science of Resilience to the COVID-19 Crisis."* Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/health-happiness/applying-the-science-of-resilience-to-the-covid-19-crisis-qa-with-dr-karmel-choi-and-dr-kristen-nishimi/>. Accessed August 26, 2020. ●

# Tips for Managing Zoom Exhaustion

**A**re Zoom meetings becoming overwhelming for you? Many of us are using Zoom at a higher rate than ever before. Zoom, and other video formats, may be familiar for some but not so familiar for others. Teaching, meetings, presentations, and more are being held on Zoom. Some of us may be experiencing these events frequently and for long periods. Being seated and focused on a screen for the majority of the day can be exhausting. Below are some tips to maintain your well-being and manage possible Zoom exhaustion:

- Moving throughout the day can help with the fatigue and exhaustion you may be facing. Getting your body moving may help you get through the day better!
- Consider having phone calls instead of Zoom calls when you can. This allows a break for your eyes and a change in routine.
- Taking breaks between calls and throughout the day can help minimize exhaustion. Get up, walk around, get some water, decompress, and get ready for the next meeting.
- Changing the location of your Zoom meeting is a good way to relieve the monotony of being in one spot all the time. Weather permitting, hold Zoom meetings

outside or go to different areas of your home.

- Give yourself a break! Refrain from high expectations with technology. We are in uncertain times, and you are adjusting the best you can!
- Take a few moments to settle and ground your attention before clicking "Start." Take a few breaths, feel your body on the chair, notice whatever is present in your mind, and allow yourself to arrive fully to the moment at hand.

If you need assistance or would like to talk with a counselor, the EAP is always available! You can reach us at 240-314-1040 or by email to [Robyn Rosenbauer](mailto:Robyn.Rosenbauer) or [Jeffrey\\_Becker](mailto:Jeffrey_Becker). We hope that you continue to take care of yourself during these challenging times.

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*Hickman, Steve. "Zoom Exhaustion is Real. Here Are Six Ways to Find Balance and Stay Connected." Mindful Self-Compassion. Recovered 6 April 2020. <https://www.mindful.org/zoom-exhaustion-is-real-here-are-six-ways-to-find-balance-and-stay-connected/>.*

*Advisory Board. "7 Ways to Avoid (or recover from) 'Zoom Fatigue'." Advisory Board. Recovered 27 April 2020. <https://www.advisory.com/daily-briefing/2020/04/27/zoom>. ●*

## ASK THE EAP

- Q.** *If I have a coworker who is having a psychiatric emergency (e.g., a nervous breakdown or is suicidal) is it okay if I ask them to contact the EAP for assistance?*
- A.** *An employee experiencing an emergency at your school or office can be a very challenging and anxiety-producing situation. Should such a crisis happen, even while working remotely, we encourage you to call our office and consult with one of the EAP specialists. This way, we can get more information about how the employee is doing and recommend best options. Potential steps include getting the employee to the crisis center, an emergency room, or calling 911. We are here to help guide you to make the most appropriate intervention. We recommend that the employee reach out to the EAP, but please contact us first and ascertain whether there is a counselor available to talk with. Remember, at this time all EAP contacts are done on the phone or via Zoom.*

*Do you have a question for the EAP? Send us your questions via Outlook to Jeffrey Becker. ●*

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**"Things turn out the best for the people who make the best of the way things turn out."**

*John Wooden*

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## A HEALTHY OUTLOOK

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**Important Notice:** Information in *A Healthy Outlook* is for general information purposes only and is not intended to replace the counsel or advice of a qualified health professional. For further questions, or help with specific problems or personal concerns, contact your employee assistance professional.

You may contact us or send your questions and comments to [Jeffrey\\_Becker@mcpsmd.org](mailto:Jeffrey_Becker@mcpsmd.org)  
Please note that email is not necessarily confidential.

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**HELP** when you need it  
with life's challenges—  
**BIG OR SMALL**