



A Member of Cayuga Health System

CAYUGA CENTER FOR HEALTHY LIVING



Our mission at Cayuga Center for Healthy Living is “to positively impact the health and well-being of our community.” The current challenges related to responding to Coronavirus provide an opportunity for us to share information that might make things a bit easier for you. We will be sending some emails with ideas for healthy lifestyle and encouragement to care for yourself the best way you can during these uncertain times.

For the first email, we are sharing information and management ideas to address stress, which is certainly something everyone is experiencing. The day-to-day challenges of life in the 21st century can be daunting enough without throwing in a pandemic, but the tools to help manage those uncomfortable feelings and thoughts are much the same. At the core of stress management is basic self-care: eating healthy food, getting some exercise (outdoors if possible), having adequate sleep and having supportive relationships with others. Music, whether listening or creating it, and other creative pursuits, such as crafts and artwork, can provide relaxation by simply giving your mind something else to focus upon. Finding a little time for these activities might be a challenge, but very worthwhile. Maybe instead of checking a screen for the latest news updates, spend that time on yourself!

In terms of specific activities for stress reduction, meditation has been shown to be very helpful. Quieting the mind, becoming present in the moment, experiencing what **is** rather than trying to create what **might be** or remaining stuck in **what was**, are the doorways to freedom from the busy mind. Our minds need to be trained to be an effective ally, and the “practice” of meditation is actually how it works. You are training your mind to quiet the “noise,” again and again. The most basic meditation is often a focus on the breath for a few minutes, so let’s give it a try.

Start by sitting in a comfortable position in a quiet space and either close your eyes or soften your gaze (after reading the rest of the paragraph!). Take a few deep breaths, inhaling and exhaling completely, hearing the sound of the breath. After 3 deep breaths in and out, allow your breath to return to whatever is normal for you, try not to think about how deep any longer, but look for where you FEEL the breath...is it air moving through your nose or throat, or is it the physical movement of your chest or abdomen? Whatever is most obvious; shift your focus to how the breath feels as it moves in and out. Count 10 breaths in and out while feeling the breath moving in your body. If you lose focus or the number, return to 1 and start again, as many times as you need. Try to count through 3 sets of 10 breaths, then slowly open your eyes and allow your focus to return to wherever you are. Now read through once more and then start this 3-4 minute meditation on the breath.

Take a few moments to check in on how you feel after those moments of quiet focus on just breathing, hopefully a bit calmer than before, maybe even refreshed. Use this breath meditation throughout your day when you feel stress increasing, and do so for whatever amount of time you can.

A number of on-line and app-based resources are available for free to help address the current need. Below are several links to sites that provide guided meditation practices and additional information:

Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health is located in western Massachusetts and offers many videos for meditation and yoga at their website for free <https://kripalu.org/resources>

The following meditation and relaxation apps are highly rated; the first 2 are completely free!

<https://www.smilingmind.com.au/> (FREE!)

<https://insighttimer.com/> (FREE!)

<https://www.tenpercent.com/coronavirussanityguide> (free guide link)

<https://www.calm.com/?n=Maria&c=5aa2c3&u=4JtsDzSa> (free trial available)

<https://www.headspace.com/headspace-meditation-app> (free trial available)

<https://www.simplehabit.com/> (free trial available)

We hope that these suggestions and resources are a help to you and anyone you would like to share them with, as we work through these challenging times together. Please reach out to us if we can be of assistance. If you are feeling very anxious or depressed and not able to cope, talk to a family member, friend, medical provider or call the Suicide Prevention and Crisis Hotline (607) 272-1616 available 24 hours a day.

Best wishes,

The Team at Cayuga Center for Healthy Living
607-252-3590