



MAY 2020

Wellness Matters

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Your Healthy Body

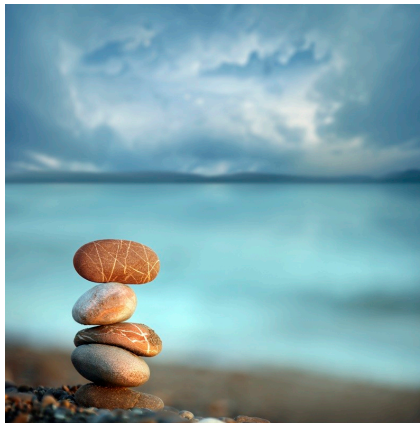
Boost Your Mental Health: Meditate

The coronavirus pandemic has increased stress for many across the country. Maintaining your mental health is even more important during these uncertain times—that's where meditation can help.

What is meditation?

Meditation is an activity that can calm your mind and keep you focused on the present. In a meditative state, you can clear your mind of cluttered thoughts and memories. Studies show meditation can help control anxiety, enhance the immune system, and reduce conditions like high blood pressure, substance abuse, and chronic pain. There are many meditative techniques; these are the most common:

≈ **Concentrative meditation** focuses your attention on a single sound, object, or breathing pattern to bring about a calm, tranquil mind.



≈ **Mindful meditation** keeps your mind aware but you do not react to sensations, feelings, or images around you.

≈ **Transcendental meditation** puts your body at rest while your mind is fully alert to bring about a deep state of relaxation.

How to Practice Meditation

There are many ways to meditate but it can take practice; try these mindful techniques next time you feel stressed:

≈ **Relaxation breathing:** close your eyes and take a deep breath in for a count of four, then exhale for a count of eight. Repeat five times.

≈ **Five-minute body scan meditation:** Sit or lay in a comfortable position and take a few moments to find a calm,

steady breath. Bring your awareness to sensations in your body and spend several slow breaths on each focal point, starting with your left toes and then up through your left hip. Repeat on the right side; use the same process through your torso, arms, and head.

Successful Meditation

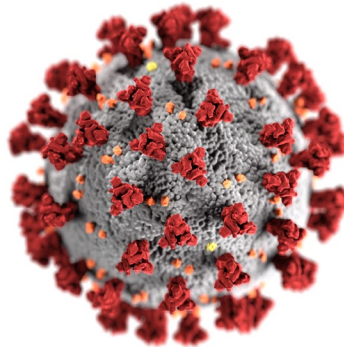
If new to meditation, try these tips to get started:

- ≈ Schedule your meditation session just like you would any appointment.
- ≈ Create a designated meditation spot; as you continue meditating, you'll begin to subconsciously relax in that space.
- ≈ Use noise-cancelling headphones for better focus.
- ≈ Don't get discouraged: it can take a few days or even weeks to successfully add meditation into your life. *Keep trying!*

Protect Yourself While Running Essential Errands

As the coronavirus pandemic continues, people are facing new challenges and questions about how to meet basic household needs like grocery shopping, banking, or picking up medications. Here are some suggestions on how to meet those needs in a safe and healthy way.

- ≈ Stay home if you're feeling sick or showing [symptoms](#) of the coronavirus: fever, cough, or shortness of breath.
- ≈ Limit in-person contact as much as possible.
- ≈ If you must go out, stay at least 6 feet away from others.
- ≈ Cover your mouth and nose with a [face covering](#).
- ≈ Run errands when fewer people will be out, e.g., early morning or late night.
- ≈ If at [high risk](#) for illness, find out if the store you are visiting has special hours for high-risk customers.
- ≈ Wipe your shopping cart with disinfectant wipes.
- ≈ Do not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- ≈ If possible, use a touchless payment option; if you must handle money or use a card or keypad, use hand sanitizer immediately after paying.
- ≈ Bank online whenever possible.
- ≈ Use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol while out; wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds when you return home.
- ≈ Call pharmacy orders ahead of time.
- ≈ Use the pharmacy drive-thru window, curbside services, or mail-order when possible.
- ≈ Check with your doctor and pharmacist to see if you can get a larger supply of medications so you don't need to visit the pharmacy as often.



Healthy & Delicious Emotional Eating

Food is commonly used as a coping mechanism for sadness, depression, anger, and boredom, especially now during the coronavirus pandemic. But this can lead to weight gain and more depressed feelings.

Food often serves as a distraction from the real problems in our life—comfort foods can calm nerves and suppress anxiety; instead of worrying about the problems at hand, the eater is fixated on the positive feeling of eating. Yet, once done eating, emotional eaters focus not only on their problems again but also how much they overate. This leads to more depression in the long run. So here are some solutions that could work:

Learn to identify real hunger: if you ate only a few hours prior and your stomach is not rumbling in response to hunger, then you should probably not eat.

Identify triggers: keep a food journal and write what you eat, your emotions right before eating, and how you felt after eating. Analyze what emotions accompanied food intake to determine what caused the need to eat.

Find comforts outside of food: start a new hobby, watch a movie, take a walk, or call a friend instead of eating when feeling particularly sad.