

# Stress Busters

We are all living through an incredibly difficult time. For many of us, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought change, loss, and grief. It has also caused a lot of stress. While this stress may feel overwhelming, there are things we can do to calm our bodies and brains.

- We can pay attention to how stress affects us to help us identify it early, decide if it is helping us, and work to manage it. How does stress show up in your body, emotions, and behaviors?
- We can be kind to ourselves. As researcher Kristin Neff says, “With self-compassion, we give ourselves the same kindness and care we’d give to a good friend.” What can you do to be kind to yourself right now?
- We can make time to do at least one thing that brings us joy every day. Laugh at a cat video. Read a book or do a puzzle. Buy yourself flowers. Reach out to someone you care about. Have a cup of tea. We all deserve joy in our lives, especially during tough times!
- We can reach out to get support and learn more about managing stress. The evidence-based stress busters can help!

## Ways We Can Bust Stress

We all have inner strengths and resilience that can help us deal with challenges and stress. What helps you get through stressful times? Here you’ll find some additional stress-busting strategies. Which new ideas do you want to try? Remember that you are the expert on what works for your body and brain. Think about developing a plan just for you to help you manage stress.

Turn this page over to find ways to build your stress-busting muscles.



**SOURCES:** Bhushan D, et al. *The Roadmap for Resilience: The California Surgeon General’s Report on Adverse Childhood Experiences, Toxic Stress, and Health.* Office of the California Surgeon General, 2020. • *California Surgeon General’s Playbook: Stress Relief during COVID-19.*

The above sources are available at <https://osg.ca.gov/additional-information-and-links-for-support/>

This resource was reviewed by the California Collaborative ACEs Learning and Quality Improvement Collaborative (CALQIC) Patient Community Advisory Board.

## SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS



*Spend time with family. Connect with friends and coworkers.*

- Connect with supportive family, friends, and neighbors from a distance.
  - Call or do a video chat.
  - Send a text or picture.
  - Write a postcard or send a care package.
  - Take a socially distant walk together.
- Get involved in your community.
- Explore ways to find support at work.

## QUALITY SLEEP



*Sleep, nap, and rest.*

- Create a calm, cool, quiet, distraction-free place for sleep.
- Be patient, kind, and compassionate with your-self when resting and sleeping are challenging.
- Try to go to bed and wake up at the same time each day.
- Avoid electronics, caffeine, alcohol, and exercise close to bedtime.

## BALANCED NUTRITION



*Try to eat regular meals at a relaxed pace.*

- Create a calm space to sit and enjoy your food.
- Try to include a variety of whole grains, fruits and vegetables with meals and snacks.
- Go easy on sugar, alcohol and highly processed foods.

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



*Find fun ways to move, move, move!*

- Find ways to move that feel good to you every day.
- Schedule times to get up, stretch, and move during your workday.
- Walk or run. Dance. Stretch. Do a few jumping jacks, push-ups, or sit-ups.
- Play catch, throw a frisbee, jump rope, or hula hoop.

## MINDFULNESS PRACTICE



*Notice how you feel. Take a deep breath.*

- If accessible, guide your attention to how you're feeling, physically and emotionally.
- If noticing your breath is useful, take a few moments to breathe in and out.
- Reflect on 3 things you're grateful for.
- Try a mindfulness app (e.g., Insight Timer, UCLA Mindful, 10% Happier).
- Make prayer, meditation, and/or yoga part of your daily routine.

## EXPERIENCING NATURE



*Get outside, breathe fresh air, feel the sun.*

- Go outside every day!
- Look up at the sky. Feel the sunshine or rain on your face.
- Breathe fresh air.
- Smell flowers, walk on grass, listen to birds, touch a tree.

## MENTAL HEALTHCARE



*Resources and support are available if you want them.*

- Talk with your family about how everyone is feeling.
- Minimize news or other media content that feels upsetting.
- Make a plan for what to do when you get stressed, angry, or overwhelmed.
- Reach out for support. You can start by visiting <https://covid19.ca.gov/resources-for-emotional-support-and-well-being/>

## ADD YOUR OWN IDEAS HERE!



## Resources for More Support

Find resources at 2-1-1 California: <http://www.211ca.org>

California Parent and Youth Helpline: 1-855-427-2736 (8am - 8pm)

California Peer-Run Warm Line: 1-855-845-7415 non-urgent support (24/7)

If you are feeling like you are in crisis, find hotlines to call at <https://covid19.ca.gov/resources-for-emotional-support-and-well-being/>