

PRACTICING SELF-CARE

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FINDING A NEW NORMAL

We are living in very different times right now, finding a new normal. There is much global, collective, and individual anxiety. One essential question is: How do we care for ourselves and our families both physically and emotionally?

Practicing self-care and finding ways to empower ourselves is so important. Presently, we are faced with concerns about health, economics, family and children's well-being, and more. When we feel anxious and scared, we can feel helpless. So, any way you can find to empower yourself and create security is extremely vital to your own well-being and for those around you.

Start by accepting yourself and your thoughts & emotions. Be gentle and kind to yourself. When we are having challenging times, and we all are, we need to support ourselves even more. I admit I have felt uncomfortable with some of my own thoughts recently, but it doesn't help to be angry with myself. Disliking or resisting the thoughts only makes them more powerful. I have had to say to myself, 'it's okay, I accept myself. This is a challenging time.' Thoughts and feelings aren't really right or wrong...they just are. They give us information.

FORGIVE THE THOUGHT

Gabby Bernstein, in her very recent article *Spiritual Tools to Relieve Anxiety*, wrote about the Choose Again Method. The method has 3 steps that focus on our thoughts. Step # 1. Notice the thought. Step #2. Forgive the thought. Step #3. Pro-actively choose a better-feeling thought.

In Step 1, we first notice the thought we're having. Yes, I am having this thought, of course I am. Notice your physical reactions to the thought. Where is your body tightening up? For me I feel it in my jaw, temple, and shoulders. Don't fight the sensations in your body, observe them, take a breath, and then let go. Step 2 is forgive the thought. Forgive yourself for thinking the thought. Say to yourself in your mind or out loud, "I forgive myself". We are practicing compassion, which we need now. Step 3 is choose a more supportive thought. Some positive, proactive thoughts are "I am healthy and filled with energy". Or "I have everything I need right now." You can even say to the thought, "Thank you for sharing. I know you're trying to protect me. Now, I choose to think differently." These supportive thoughts help to calm us down, affirm the positive, and help our bodies feel more peaceful, which helps our immune system stay healthy.

BEDTIME ROUTINE

Get good sleep. Turn off the TV and your phone at least an hour before bed. The anxiety about the virus can interrupt and affect your sleep. You want to go into sleep as peaceful and calm as possible. Read some uplifting literature before you go to bed, maybe a self-help or spiritual book.

NATURE IS ON YOUR SIDE

Spend time in nature. Nature is expansive, with the endless sky, birds, animals, now the flowers, trees, and plants all starting to bloom. Fresh air helps you feel better and relaxes your body. There is a peace in nature that can help you tap into your own inner peace. As much as you are able, get outside. I always feel better and renewed when I am outside. A friend recently said the divine order in nature is comforting. Yes, let's look to nature for that comfort because nature hasn't changed in light of the virus. We need to tap into the peace that nature provides us. Nature is alive in the present moment, which is the only place life ever really exists.

PRACTICE WHAT YOU SEEK

I know this is a time of uncertainty and confusion. It is also an opportunity to practice having faith and looking for the higher good. You may want to practice some of the slogans & prayers used in 12-step groups, such as 'Let go and let God', 'First things first', 'One day at a time', and the Serenity Prayer, which states:

GRANT ME THE SERENITY TO ACCEPT THE THINGS I CANNOT CHANGE, COURAGE TO CHANGE THE THINGS I CAN, AND THE WISDOM TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE.

I have had some serious down times in my life and I can honestly say, those down times did lead to good and growth. When it's black, bleak, and you can't understand in your mind what is happening, have Faith. Keep putting one foot in front of the other and show up for life. Go a day or a moment at a time. It can be faith in a Higher Power. But even more, it's faith in the Divine Order of life. You can see the divine order in nature. Every day on this planet the sun rises and sets, every month the moon goes through its phases, and the waves go through their high and low tides every day. Right now the trees are starting to bud, the flowers are starting to bloom, and the birds know where to fly for spring and summer. And we, humans, are not controlling any of that, but we are a part of it. So truly, there is an order and rhythm to our lives too, even when we're in the virus storm and can't clearly see our way at the moment.

RESOURCES

Our current situation, with many fears of the unknown, is also an opportunity to practice having faith, deepening our spiritual connection & beliefs, and connecting with others in safe ways via phone or internet.

Virtual Mental Health Support

weekly meetings on various conditions

- Adults 18+, Free, No Registration Required
- Confidential, Ongoing, No Diagnosis Needed
- **For a listing of MHA & community groups with call in instructions, visit MHA at mhalancaster.org/supportgroups .**

Virtual Social Group

for conversation on things besides covid 19

- Weekly Adult Social Group
- Weekly Youth Social Group
- Weekly Certified Peer Specialist Group
- **Visit our group guide at mhalancaster.org/updates-page-covid-19-responses-mha-programs-services .**

Prayer Line

816-969-2000

- The 24-hour prayer line called Silent Unity
- Call anytime

Online Spiritual Tools

gabbybernstein.com

- Spiritual tools to relieve anxiety
- Videos and Webinars to attend and watch
- Post a comment and Gabby will reply
- Advice and tips to manage feelings

Support & Referral Helplines

other ways to get help

- COVID 19 Statewide Helpline 855-284-2494
For TTY, dial 724-631-5600
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 800-273-8255
- Text "MHA" to 741741
- Lancaster County Crisis 717-394-2631

HOW I CAN HELP YOU

One To One Virtual Support

- Phone Support For Adults
- Help Manage Anxiety, Stress, Depression
- Guide You To Community Resources

I Will Advocate On Your Behalf

"I have dealt with times of anxiety and depression in my own life. I have also been in recovery for over 30 years, and have learned valuable tools to manage life's challenges."

Beginning April 6, 2020 our non-emergency phone hours have been extended to 8 AM until 7 PM until further notice to assist during Covid 19.



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