

Newsletter

COVID-19 and You:  
How to survive in uncertain times

The Coronavirus pandemic is an unprecedented situation. We still don't have reliable information about risk, prevalence, or immunity. We have no cure and a vaccine is probably at least a year away.

Parents have to reassure and motivate children who've abruptly lost their daily structure, friends, sports and social activities. People worry about relatives and friends who are elderly or have chronic health issues. Families struggle with losing jobs and income. And we miss the simple things: Time with our friends, birthday parties, concerts, restaurants, the salon or barbershop, the gym, the lake, and being able to shop at our favorite stores.

We are all uncertain about the future and when we will return to normal, or if we will find a new normal. We're challenged every day to balance the needs of our patients with our own physical and mental health needs and our responsibility to protect ourselves and our families.

The virus isn't the only thing that is contagious. Anxiety and stress are contagious. But so are hope, faith, and compassion. We are all in this together. We all deserve to take care of each other and ourselves.



COPING WITH STRESS

First of all, **trust yourself**. Remember the difficult situations you've made it through in the past.

Accept what you cannot change, but **look for ways you can improve a situation**, even a little, whether it's in the next few minutes or next few days.

*If you're a visual learner, draw a circle on a piece of paper. Inside the circle, write down everything you can control. Outside the circle, write down everything you can't control. Then you'll know where to focus your energy and time.*

**Take breaks**. Go outside, take a short walk, sit in your car, listen to music, whatever – what is important is having some time when no one is asking you for help.

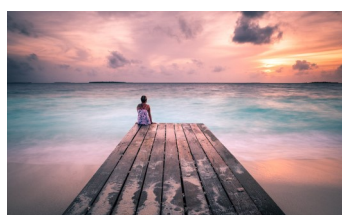
**Reframing** is a powerful way to change our thoughts, which in turn changes our feelings. You'll probably feel pretty anxious when you wash your hands 20 times a day if you tell yourself how scared you are of contagion. But you'll feel very different when you know you wash your hands because you are a smart person who takes control of your health.

Social media and 24-7 news can get overwhelming. **Tune out sometimes**. Use an app like BeFocused to set a time limit. When that time's up, switch over to a favorite movie, read a book, play a board game, or go for a walk.

Speaking of walks, **prioritize your health**. There are many free workouts online, and apps for all levels of fitness. One to try is MyWellness. Apps like Noom, MyFitnessPal, and LoseIt let you track your meals and nutrition, helping you be more conscious about avoiding stress eating

If your thoughts are keeping you awake, do a **"brain dump"** before bed. Write down your worries, ideas, and the to do list for tomorrow. Then, close the notebook (or shut down the phone) and let it go.

When we're stressed, we often tense our neck, shoulders, or back muscles. **Progressive muscle relaxation** is an easy technique to let go of anxiety and tension. Sit straight up with both feet on the floor or lie down on your back in a comfortable position. Tighten your toes and feet as hard as you can and hold the tension for about 5 seconds, then deliberately relax the toes and feet as deeply as you can. Next, tighten, hold, and relax the calf muscles. Keep working your way up until you get to your face, tightening, holding, then relaxing deeply. Repeat as needed.



## More Tips to Handle Stress

Stress and anxiety cause and are fueled by shallow breathing. Focus on **deep breathing**. Breathe in through the nose and exhale slowly through the mouth. Inhale for 4 seconds, hold the breath for 4 seconds, then exhale for 6 seconds. Practice for 3 to 5 minutes a day.



*If it's difficult to slow down your breath, imagine you have ten candles in front of you. Inhale through your nose, then imagine blowing out one candle at a time.*

**Meditate.** Meditation has proven health benefits for the body and mind. There are many guided visualizations online. Here's one to try: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mlr3RsUWrdo>.

Practice **self-compassion**. Imagine what you would say to a good friend or loved one going through whatever you're experiencing right now. Be just as caring and kind to yourself as you would be to them.

**Talk to someone.** You spend all day listening to our patients, being a calm and caring presence for them. You deserve that too. Heart of Florida offers an EAP with three free, confidential sessions. Many religious institutions are offering online services and spiritual counseling. SAMHSA sponsors a 24/7 national helpline, 1-800-985-5990, or text TalkWithUs to 66746. Closer to home, our behavioral health staff is here for you. Please reach out to any of us if you need to talk.

*Special thanks to Carali McLean,  
LCSW for submitting this article.*

## Local Childcare Funds Available for First Responders and Essential Workers



### **Are you a first responder or essential medical personnel in need of financial assistance with childcare? If so, contact the Early Learning Coalition of Marion County Inc.**

(Trabaja usted en servicios de emergencia o es parte del personal medico esencial y necesita ayuda con el costo de guarderia? Si es asi, comuniquese con Early Learning Coalition of Marion County, Inc.)



As you are on the front lines helping to fight the epidemic, allow us at the Early Learning Coalition of Marion County to assist with your childcare costs.

Income is not a part of the eligibility process through June 30<sup>th</sup> for this program, but you may be eligible for an additional 12 months of childcare assistance based on your family's gross income.

In order to qualify you must:

- Be a Marion County resident.
- Have a child younger than 13 years old.
- Be employed with a first responder organization or essential medical organization.
- Funding available through June 30, 2020.
- Contact the Early Learning Coalition of Marion County or your Human Resources department for next steps.

Como usted esta en primera linea ayudando a combatir la epidemia, permita que nosotros en el Early Learning Coalition of Marion County le asistamos con el cuidado de niños

El ingreso no es parte del proceso de elegibilidad hasta el 30 de Junio 2020 para este programa, pero usted pudiera ser elegible 12 meses adicionales de asistencia con el cuidado de niños basado en el ingreso familiar bruto.

Para calificar, debe de:

- Ser residente del condado de Marion.
- Tener hijos menores de 13 años de edad
- Estar empleado con una organizacion de servicios de emergencia o una organizacion de personal medico esencial
- Los fondos estaran disponibles hasta el 30 de Junio del 2020
- Contactese con el Early Learning Coalition of Marion County o su departamento de Recursos Humanos para saber los proximos pasos.

(352) 369-2315 ext.234 or ext.214



[www.elc-marion.org](http://www.elc-marion.org)



**Our New Building is on track to open early this summer!**

