Wellness Self-Management for the COVID-19 Crisis

WSM-COVID19

Lessons developed by:
Anthony Salerno, Ph.D.
Community Technical Assistance Center of New York
McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research
Silver School of Social Work
New York University

Paul Margolies, Ph.D.
Center for Practice Innovations,
New York State Psychiatric Institute, and
Department of Psychiatry,
Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons

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| Lesson 1: Understanding the Coronavirus and COVID – 19 | 4 |
| Lesson 2: What Is Stress? Why is It Important to Understand Our Stress during the Covid-19 Crisis? | 7 |
| Lesson 3: Identifying Your Personal Signs of Stress during the Covid-19 Crisis | 11 |
| Lesson 5: Being Connected with Other People is More Important Now than Ever | 19 |
| Lesson 6: Staying Physically Healthy During the COVID-19 Crisis | 22 |
Introducing WSM-COVID19 to the Individual

In order for individuals to decide whether they would like to take advantage of these WSM-COVID19 lessons, they will need to know what is available. Please keep in mind that participation is entirely voluntary.

It will be important to structure a preliminary discussion that will help the individual make an informed choice. This may include providing information about WSM-COVID19, what is expected of the individual, and the structure of the lessons.

Please keep in mind that these lessons are designed to be used remotely as well as in person, individually and in groups. When using remotely (i.e., telehealth), some individuals may prefer a “discussion” rather than a formal lesson. That’s fine. You should be guided by the individual’s preferences.

Individuals should be provided with their own copies of these lessons.

Here are some possible questions and discussion points. You may think of others.

- Would you be interested in learning more about the COVID-19 crisis and how to cope with it?
- If you are, we have 6 lessons or discussions that we can use over the next few weeks.
- You can choose one, some, or all of them. It’s up to you.
- They are called:
  - Understanding the Coronavirus and COVID – 19
  - What Is Stress? Why is It Important to Understand Our Stress during the Covid-19 Crisis?
  - Identifying Your Personal Signs of Stress during the Covid-19 Crisis
  - Coping with COVID-19: What works? What doesn’t?
  - Being Connected with Other People is More Important Now than Ever
  - Staying Physically Healthy During the COVID-19 Crisis
- Each lesson or discussion will provide you with some important information, give you the opportunity to think about the importance of this information in your life, and identify action steps that you can take to make a difference.
- Do you have any questions?
- What do you think?
- If you’d like to do this, would you prefer to start with the lesson called “Understanding the Coronavirus and COVID – 19” or with a different lesson?
Lesson 1
Understanding the Coronavirus and COVID – 19

Beginning

- Today’s lesson is “Understanding the Coronavirus and COVID – 19”. What do you know about the coronavirus and COVID-19?
- Why is this an important topic?
- Today we’re going to talk about the virus, symptoms, and how to protect yourself. Let’s begin by discussing some important information.

Important Information

Viruses are very common and can be found around the world. They can infect people as well as many species of animals. When people catch viruses, they can become sick. Examples include the common cold and the flu.

Every so often a new virus appears and this occurred late in 2019. The novel coronavirus was first identified in China and has now spread around the world, including the United States. Large numbers of people have become sick from this virus, and many people have died from it. The disease caused by the novel coronavirus is called COVID-19.

 Symptoms
Not all people who are infected with COVID-19 have the same symptoms, but according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the common symptoms include:
- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Chills
- Muscle pain
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell

How does COVID-19 spread?
Scientists believe that COVID-19 spreads from person to person, often through coughing or sneezing. Liquid droplets pass from the infected person to others and these droplets can carry the virus and infect these other people. This is more likely to happen when people are close to each other, especially closer than six feet.

It is also possible that people can catch the virus by touching an object that has the virus on it and then touching their own face – especially nose, mouth and eyes. Although this may be possible, scientists currently do not think that it is the main way that people catch this virus.

What can you do to protect yourself?
Experts recommend that for now, we practice “social or physical distancing”, which means staying six feet or more from others when possible. This is why many mental health programs, schools and many businesses are now closed or reducing the hours that they are open. As we learn more about this virus and see fewer people infected with it, these restrictions will be reduced.

There are other things that you can do too, when possible:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds often, especially after being in a public space or coughing or sneezing
- If you don’t have soap and water, you can use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands
- Especially avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Cover your mouth and nose with a mask or face cover when around others
- Cover coughs and sneezes

What to do if you think that you are sick

- Talk to your counselors, care managers, or prescribers as soon as you can
- If you are sick, or thought to be sick with COVID-19, you will be asked to separate yourself from other people for a while (this is called a quarantine). You may be given some medicine to help with the symptoms. If the symptoms become very severe, you may be taken to a hospital for care.

How to learn more about this important topic:

It’s important to have up-to-date information, and there are many ways that you can learn more:

- Talking to your counselors and care managers
- Talking to your prescribers, physicians and nurses
- Websites (such as https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html) and other online resources
- Television
- Newspapers

Let’s Get Personal

How are you currently learning about COVID-19 and how would you like to learn more in the future (starting today!)? Please check the boxes that apply to you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGY</th>
<th>USING NOW</th>
<th>WILL USE STARTING TODAY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talking to your counselors</td>
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<td>and care managers</td>
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<td>Talking to your prescribers</td>
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<td>physicians and nurses</td>
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</table>
Websites and other online resources

Television

Newspapers

Other

Action Step
Choose a strategy to learn more about COVID-19 starting today.

Strategy: _______________________________________________
What will be your first step? ________________________________
When? _________________________________________________
Where? ________________________________________________
How will you remind yourself to do it? _____________________
Who could help you complete your Action Step? _____________
What might get in the way of completing your Action Step and how can you deal with this?
__________________________________________________________________________

Ending
• What were the main points of this lesson?
• How do you feel about what we have covered today?
• Consider using this affirmation, or one of your own choosing:

AFFIRMATION: You might find it helpful to affirm (state out loud) your ability and motivation to apply what you have learned to improve your health and wellbeing.

I have the information, knowledge and determination to use what I learned about Covid-19 to make smart decisions to stay safe and healthy. I can use this knowledge to support my decisions and help others make smart decisions. I am a worthwhile person who deserves to have the information I need to stay safe and healthy!
Lesson 2

What Is Stress? Why is It Important to Understand Our Stress during the Covid-19 Crisis?

Beginning

- What were the main points from our last lesson/call/meeting?
- Did you complete any action steps since that lesson/call/meeting?
- If so, how did they go?
- Today’s lesson is “What is stress? Why is it important to understand our stress during the COVID-19 crisis?”. What do you know about stress generally and especially during this crisis?
- Why is this an important topic?
- Today we’re going to talk about stress, learn why it is important to identify our worries, and why this is especially important now. Let’s begin by discussing some important information.

Important Information

What is stress?
“Stress” is a term people often use to describe a feeling of pressure, strain, or tension. People often say that they are “under stress” or feel “stressed out” when they are dealing with changes, difficult situations, or losses. The Covid-19 crisis is one of the most stressful experiences affecting our day to day living.

Why is understanding stress important?
The amount of stress we experience is influenced by our life experiences, how we make sense of the current crisis and our personal and social resources and supports. Before this crisis, many people were struggling with managing their mental health, physical health and/or substance use problems. Others were struggling with financial difficulties and/or managing day to day hassles. Too much stress associated with the Covid-19 crisis can worsen symptoms and result in relapse.

Stress is often related to our real or imagined fears and worries. Some fears and worries are natural and understandable during a serious and potentially deadly health crisis posed by Covid-19. Sometimes our stress is increased when we let our fears and worries take over our thinking and problem-solving ability. We might find it hard to think calmly and take action steps to stay safe and regulate our anxieties.

By understanding and identifying our fears and worries and discussing them with our therapist, peer counselor, family member and other trusted people we are better able to address our concerns in a way that reduces stress and improves our problem-solving ability.
Discussion Point

How much stress are you feeling most of the time? You can identify how much stress you are feeling by using a scale from 1-10 where 1 means you are feeling calm and have little stress that concerns you and 10 means you are very stressed out in a way that doesn’t feel manageable. A score of 5 means you feel anxious and worried but are able to calm yourself down and not let your fears cloud your thinking or disrupt your sleep and day to day activities.

1……………………………………………………………………………………………….5……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..10
Very calm                                               Moderately Stressed                                    Very Stressed

When do you feel most stressed out during the day?
What is going on when you feel most stressed out?
When do you feel most calm during the day?
What is going on when you feel most calm?

Let’s Get Personal
Below are the types of worries that people may experience during this Covid-19 crisis. As you review the list of worries, check those that you experience. After that, select the top three worries that are the most stressful for you. Discussing these worries with your therapist, counselor or others you trust may be a first step in coping with the stress associated with your worries.

Let’s begin by recognizing many of the common worries people are having during this time:
Are you experiencing any of these?

- Worries you will get sick
- Worries you will die if you get sick
- Worrying about other people you care about will get sick and perhaps die.
- Worries that you are alone and no one to count on if you get sick
- Worries about money
- Worries about having enough food to eat
- Worries about losing your job and how you will manage
- Worries that you have no one to count on to help you get through this crisis
- Worries that staying at home will put a strain on your relationship with your partner, children or other family members
- Worries about feeling depressed or frustrated because you miss the people, places, things or activities that helped you stay well.
- Worries about sleep problems
- Worries about eating problems
- Worries about being very irritable
- Worries about feeling a deep sense of loss of control
- Worries because emotional, mental health and/or substance use problems are getting worse
Worries that you won’t get treatment for emotional, mental health and/or substances use problems
Worries about increasing use of alcohol, prescribed medication for pain or anxiety, or street drugs
Worries about excessive eating
Worries about decreased appetite or losing weight
Worries about nightmares
Worries about thoughts of harming yourself
Worries about thoughts of harming others

List three (3) worries that bother you the most. You may find it helpful to discuss and examine these worries and find ways to address them in a way that works for you.

1. __________________________________________________________________________

2. __________________________________________________________________________

3. __________________________________________________________________________

Discussion Point
What are some ways you have tried to reduce your worries?
Have you considered asking if others have the same fears and worries and asking how they cope with it?

Important Point: In another lesson, you will have the opportunity to learn about and explore ways of coping that may help you better manage your worries, fears and stress.

Action Step
During the week, you might decide to keep track of when you feel most worried and when you feel most calm AND what is happening when you feel most worried and most calm. In this way, you can begin to develop a wellness plan that reduces worries and increases relaxation and calmness.

How will you track your fear/worry and calm periods during the week?
When will you record and write down what you are tracking?
This page has a weeklong schedule you might choose to use to track your experiences of high and low worry. If you choose to track your periods of worry and periods of calm, we can follow up during our next meeting.

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<th>Time</th>
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Place an X in the box during the time period when you felt very worried
Place a Y in the box during the time period when you felt calm and relaxed
Jot down what was going on during periods of high worry and periods of calm

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

**Ending**
- What were the main points of this lesson?
- How do you feel about what we have covered today?
- Consider using this affirmation, or one of your own choosing:

**AFFIRMATION:** You might find it helpful to affirm (state out loud) your ability and motivation to apply what you have learned to improve your health and wellbeing.

I have the knowledge and determination to use what I learned to better understand stress and to make smart decisions about managing my stress. I am a worthwhile person who deserves to have the information I need to understand stress and stay safe and health
Lesson 3
Identifying Your Personal Signs of Stress during the COVID-19 Crisis

Beginning
- What were the main points from our last lesson/call/meeting?
- Did you complete any action steps since that lesson/call/meeting?
- If so, how did they go?
- Today’s lesson is “Identifying your personal signs of stress during the COVID-19 crisis”. Have you been experiencing stress during this crisis?
- Why is this an important topic?
- Today we’re going to talk about signs that we are under too much stress, and how to recognize our own stress reactions. Let’s begin by discussing some important information.

Important Information

What are signs that we’re under too much stress?
When people are under stress, it can affect them physically and emotionally. Each of us show our stress in different ways. Under too much stress a person's thinking, mood, and behavior can also be affected in harmful ways. Some people show mostly physical signs of stress, such as muscular tension, unusual pain, headaches, digestion or sleep problems. Some people mostly have trouble concentrating or feel irritable, anxious, or depressed. Others may pace, bite their nails, use alcohol and/or drugs or overeat.

Being aware of our personal signs of stress can be very helpful, because once we realize we’re under stress we can start to do something about it. In this way, we are better prepared to regulate our stress so it doesn’t harm our overall health and wellbeing.

Let’s Get Personal
Knowing and recognizing our signs of too much stress.
You can use the following checklist to identify your own personal signs of being under stress.
Check all that apply.

SIGNS OF STRESS CHECKLIST

- Headaches
- Anger and frustration
- Sweating
- Feeling jumpy
- Breathing problems
- Anxiety
- Increased heart rate
Feeling restless or “keyed up”
Unexplained muscle pain
Tearfulness
Change in appetite
Forgetfulness
Difficulty falling asleep
Prone to accidents
Increased need for sleep
Feeling panic
Trembling or shaking
Wanting to use drugs or alcohol
Digestion problems
Being suspicious of others
Stomach aches
Isolating- avoiding opportunities to connect with others
Skin problems
Dry mouth
Mental health and/or substance use problems getting worse
Feeling very tired
Problems concentrating
Other signs____________________

Discussion Point
What are your personal signs of stress? Which of these personal signs concern you the most?

Action Step
Knowing your personal signs of stress.

In the next week, be mindful of your personal signs of stress. Please identify up to three signs of stress that come up during the week that concern you most:

1. _______________________________________________________________________
2. _______________________________________________________________________
3. _____________________________________________________________________

It is best to select a time and place when you will write down this information.

When will you write down these signs? _____________________________
Where? ________________________________________________________
How will you remind yourself to do it? _____________________________
Who could help you complete your Action Step? _____________________
What might get in the way of completing your Action Step and how can you deal with this? ________________________________
Ending

• What were the main points of this lesson?
• How do you feel about what we have covered today?
• Consider using this affirmation, or one of your own choosing:

AFFIRMATION: You might find it helpful to affirm (state out loud) your ability and motivation to apply what you have learned to improve your health and wellbeing.

I have the knowledge and determination to use what I learned to recognize my personal signs of stress during this difficult time. I will use this knowledge to make smart decisions to stay safe and healthy during this difficult time. I am a worthwhile person who deserves to have the information I need to stay safe and healthy!
Lesson 4

Beginning
- What were the main points from our last lesson/call/meeting?
- Did you complete any action steps since that lesson/call/meeting?
- If so, how did they go?
- Today’s lesson is “Coping with COVID-19. What works? What doesn’t?” Have you been trying to cope with this crisis? How?
- Why is this an important topic?
- Today we’re going to talk about ways of coping that may be helpful to you, and consider your own coping plan. Let’s begin by discussing some important information.

Important Information

The presence of the COVID-19 virus is creating a lot of stress for people. People are worried about getting sick, being alone, staying at home, not going to work or school or their treatment program. People are also worried about the health of their family and friends. Many people who are no longer meeting their therapist, doctor, nurse of other healthcare provider for mental health, physical health or substance use concerns worry about problems getting worse. These worries are very stressful and can harm our health and wellness.

When people experience stress, they naturally try to reduce the tension they feel. Most people want to know how to cope with stress in a way that is healthy and works for them. Some ways of coping work well and others may cause more harm than good. A way of coping that works well is one that relieves tension and doesn’t cause other problems. A way of coping that doesn’t work well is one that may relieve stress for a short time but ends up causing more problems in the long run.

The stress of this crisis is very new. We haven’t experienced this type of stress before. Everyone is trying to find ways to cope that really help and avoid ways of coping that don’t.

In this lesson you will...
1. learn about possible ways of coping that may work for you during this difficult time
2. learn about ways of coping that may cause more harm than good.
3. have an opportunity to learn and practice some simple relaxation techniques

WAYS OF COPING THAT MAY BE HELPFUL TO YOU

Below is a list of ways of coping that includes an example of one person’s experience. Many people have found these ways of coping very helpful in situations that were stressful.
KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH AND TALKING TO OTHERS.
“When I was packing up my stuff to move to a new place, I started having headaches and trouble sleeping. I called my sister and told her how stressed out I felt. She told me she felt the same way when she moved the last time. She even offered to help me pack. It made a huge difference.”

KEEPING A POSITIVE ATTITUDE: FOCUS YOUR THINKING ON WHAT IS GOING WELL AND REMINDING YOURSELF THAT YOU WILL GET THROUGH THIS DIFFICULT TIME.
“Before when I was under stress, I used to blame myself and think that there was no way out. Now I try to think more positively. I say to myself, ‘This is hard, but I can do it,’ or ‘If I take this one step at a time, I’ll be able to handle it.’ Thinking more positively is hard to do sometimes, but it makes me feel better about myself.”

MAINTAIN YOUR SENSE OF HUMOR.
“For me ‘laughter is the best medicine.’ When I’ve been on a subway ride that lasted two hours instead of 45 minutes, I feel very tense and agitated. I have some funny videos at home, and I’ll pull one out and have a good laugh. Believe it or not, it helps me to watch a Monty Python movie or one starring Adam Sandler.”

PARTICIPATE IN RELIGIOUS OR SPIRITUAL ACTIVITY.
“I grew up in a religious home. Although I’m not sure I believe every aspect of that religion, I still find it comforting to go to services. And sometimes instead of going to services I go for a walk in the park and see how beautiful nature can be. That’s very spiritual for me.”

EXERCISE AND INCREASE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY DAILY.
“I like to ‘work off’ my stress by getting some exercise. Sometimes I go for a run and sometimes I just do some jumping jacks until I calm down.”

WRITE IN A DIARY OR JOURNAL.
“I’ve started keeping a journal to write down my thoughts and feelings. I don’t care about the grammar or spelling—I just write down what comes into my head. Sometimes I write about stressful things and that seems to help. Writing helps me think things through.”

MAKE OR LISTEN TO MUSIC.
“I’m a music person. I put on my headphones and blow away the stress of the day. I can even do it on the train, to distract myself on the long ride.”

DO ART OR GO TO SEE ART.
“I like to sketch. I especially like drawing cartoons. I must admit I sometimes make some unflattering cartoons of people who are bugging me.”
PLAY GAMES OR DEVELOP A HOBBY.
“I like playing card games. When I don’t have anyone to play with, I like solitaire. It’s relaxing to me.”

USE RELAXATION TECHNIQUES. (See examples at the end of this lesson)
“If I’ve had a stressful day, it helps me to do some deep breathing. I put on some relaxing music, and sit in my favorite chair. Then I start by taking ten deep, slow breaths. I let my breath out very slowly. As I exhale, I try to imagine that when I let out my breath, I’m letting out the tension in my body. Then I take about 20 or 30 more breaths. Sometimes I try to imagine a peaceful scene, like the ocean, when I’m breathing. I usually feel more relaxed after that.”

KEEP IN TOUCH WITH HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS FOR PHYSICAL, MENTAL HEALTH OR SUBSTANCE USE PROBLEMS.
“Sometime I feel like I don’t want to rely on my therapist or counselor for help. I try to make it on my own. I now understand that reaching out to professionals and peers is taking charge of my life. I’m the one making that decision and I deserve the support of others who can help”.

Discussion Points
• How are you trying to cope with this very difficult situation?
• What do you feel has been working for you?
• Are you concerned about some of the ways you are trying to cope that might cause more harm than good? Let’s talk about them.

Let’s Get Personal
You might find it helpful to think about which ways of coping you currently use and which ones you might want to start using or use more often. Check all that apply to you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ways of Coping</th>
<th>I already cope in this way</th>
<th>I don’t cope in this way</th>
<th>I want to try this or do it more</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keep in touch with family/friends by phone, text messaging or video chat.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use relaxation techniques such as breathing or muscle relaxation exercises.</td>
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<td>Keep my sense of humor and positive mood (watch movies and read stories that are funny)</td>
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<td>Participate in online religious/spiritual activities and/or engage in prayer during this difficult time.</td>
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<td>Increase physical activity including exercising regularly at home or outside when it is safe</td>
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<td>Write down your feelings and thoughts in a journal or diary.</td>
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<td>Listen to music that is relaxing or uplifting.</td>
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<td>Get involved in online social and recreational activities (games, movies)</td>
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<td>Start a new hobby or creative activity (art, dance, singing, )</td>
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<td>Read books that are inspiring.</td>
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<td>Use positive affirmations: focus your thinking on what is going well and reminding yourself that you will get through this difficult time.</td>
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<td>Practice meditation with deep breathing</td>
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<td>Keep in touch with your healthcare providers (therapist, counselors, doctors, nurse)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other ways you cope</td>
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**Action Step**
Create your individual coping plan during this Covid-19 crisis.

One way of coping I would like to try now or in the next few days is __________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

When will I try this? ______________________________________________________

What steps do I need to take? ________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

What do I need from my therapist to support me in trying out this way of coping?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Relaxation Techniques
You may be interested in practicing relaxation techniques. If yes, here are two simple relaxation techniques to consider.

1. Muscle tension–relieving exercise
2. Deep-breathing exercise

Muscle tension–relieving exercise
When we are stressed, the tension we feel is usually in the muscles of our face, shoulders, arms, hands and neck. These simple exercises can help to relieve the tension in those areas where you feel the most tension. They can be done when you are sitting, walking or lying down, and they only take a minute or two.

- Tilt your head backward and try looking right up, feel the tension in your neck. Then allow your head to return to its normal balanced position. Notice the difference.
- Try hunching up the shoulders as far as they will go, and then let them go. Notice the difference.
- Try clenching your teeth or opening your mouth as wide as possible, then let the tension go. Notice the difference. Let all the expression go from your face. Look straight ahead and into the distance or, if you prefer, close your eyes.
- Try stretching your hands and fingers and then let them fall to your side or on your lap.

Deep-breathing exercise
One of the easiest ways to relieve tension is deep breathing. Under stress, people often take short breaths or breathe in a shallow manner. Deep breathing can be very effective in relieving tension. Here are some tips for breathing deeply.

- Find a comfortable place to lie down or just sit in a comfortable chair.
- Slowly breathe in through your nose. Your stomach should feel like it’s rising.
- Exhale slowly through your mouth, emptying your lungs completely and letting your stomach fall.
- Repeat several times until you feel calm and relaxed. Practice daily.

You can practice and use these techniques almost anywhere, at any time.

Ending
- What were the main points of this lesson?
- How do you feel about what we have covered today?

AFFIRMATION: You might find it helpful to affirm (state out loud) your ability and motivation to apply what you have learned to improve your health and wellbeing.

I have the knowledge and determination to use what I learned to understand how I cope with the difficulties associated with the Covid-19 crisis. I will use this knowledge to choose smart ways of coping that work for me and avoid ways of coping that cause me more harm than good. I am a worthwhile person who deserves to have the information I need to successfully cope with Covid-19 and stay safe and healthy.
Lesson 5
Being Connected with Other People is More Important Now than Ever

Beginning

- What were the main points from our last lesson/call/meeting?
- Did you complete any action steps since that lesson/call/meeting?
- If so, how did they go?
- Today’s lesson is “Being Connected with Other People is More Important Now than Ever”. What do you know about the importance of social support generally and especially during this crisis?
- Why is this an important topic?
- Today we’re going to talk about social support, why it is important – especially now, steps you can take to make sure that you have the social support that you want. Let’s begin by discussing some important information.

Important Information

What is social support?

- “Social support” refers to having relationships that are rewarding, enriching and helpful. Relationships can be considered “supportive” when both people trust and respect each other. Having social support means that you feel connected and cared for by other people.
- Sometimes even very caring relationships have problems. Differences in opinions are natural in any relationship. A supportive relationship can involve disagreements from time to time. In supportive relationships, disagreements are handled respectfully and can usually be resolved.
- Social support can come from relationships with a variety of different people, including family members, friends, peers, spouses, boyfriends/girlfriends, co-workers, members of religious or other spiritual groups, classmates, mental health practitioners, members of peer support groups, roommates and neighbors.

Why is social support important?

- Social relationships are an important part of people’s lives. For many people, the quality of their relationships is a major factor in their happiness. Supportive relationships make people feel good about themselves and more hopeful about the future. Having supportive relationships can also help people reduce stress.
- Social relationships play a very important role in recovery. People with mental health problems who have made big improvements in their lives often point to the importance of social support. Below is a list of some reasons they have given:
  - Social support provides a safe way to vent feelings.
  - People can help you figure out what is real and what is not.
People can help with day-to-day needs and problems such as money, housing and transportation.

People can offer comfort and reassurance during tough times.

Other people can help you watch out for signs of relapse.

You can talk over problems and get advice from other people.

Being with other people is one way of getting to know yourself better.

“Belonging” to a social group is a basic human need.

**Why is being connected with other people more important now than ever?**

Now that we are all practicing social and physical distancing, we don’t see others in person as often as in the past and many of us miss the personal contact. These are anxious times that leave some of us stressed out, sad and even scared. Having regular contact with friends, peers, family, counselors, therapists, doctors and case managers can help us to feel better about ourselves and our situations. Seeing each other in person is being replaced by phone calls and online meetings.

**How can we stay connected with other people now?**

Technology helps! Telephone calls, face-time and skype, online experiences such as zoom, and other social media can help us all stay connected. It’s important to identify the people that you want to connect with and how to do it. Some people may be reaching out to you. For others, you may need to reach out to them.

**Let’s Get Personal**

Who are you currently in touch with? Please list:

_________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________

Who are you not currently in touch with but would like to reach out to?

_________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________
Action Step
Select one or more people that you are not currently in touch with but would like to reach out to.

Who? _________________________________________________

What will be your first step? ______________________________

When? ____________________________

Where? ______________________________________________

How will you remind yourself to do it? _______________________

Who could help you complete your Action Step? _______________

What might get in the way of completing your Action Step and how can you deal with this? __________________________________________________________________

Ending
• What were the main points of this lesson?
• How do you feel about what we have covered today?
• Consider using this affirmation, or one of your own choosing:

AFFIRMATION: You might find it helpful to affirm (state out loud) your ability and motivation to apply what you have learned to improve your health and wellbeing.

I have the knowledge and determination to use what I learned to understand the importance of connecting with other people. I will use this knowledge to connect with others in a way that works for me. I am a worthwhile person who deserves to have relationships with others that helps me stay safe and healthy!
Lesson 6
Staying Physically Healthy During the COVID-19 Crisis

Beginning
- What were the main points from our last lesson/call/meeting?
- Did you complete any action steps since that lesson/call/meeting?
- If so, how did they go?
- Today’s lesson is “Staying Physically Healthy During the COVID-19 Crisis”. What do you know about staying physically healthy generally and especially during this crisis?
- Why is this an important topic?
- Today we’re going to talk about having a healthy lifestyle generally, things to do to stay healthy during this crisis, and the connection between a healthy lifestyle and mental health recovery. Let’s begin by discussing some important information.

Important Information
What is a healthy lifestyle?
A healthy lifestyle refers to making choices and taking actions that keep you physically and mentally fit. A healthier lifestyle can prevent or improve many serious health problems, such as diabetes, high blood pressure and asthma. A healthy lifestyle includes the following actions:
- Get regular medical check-ups.
- Manage physical health problems (for example, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol).
- Find ways to relax and have fun.
- Maintain good personal hygiene.
- Exercise regularly.
- Eat healthy meals and manage your weight.
- Get a good night’s sleep.
- Avoid unhealthy activities (for example, drinking, smoking, using street drugs, unsafe sex)

Why is a healthy lifestyle important?
- People can improve their physical health in ways that support their mental health and recovery.
- People benefit from information about their own physical health and take steps to improve it.
- Poor physical health takes energy away from activities that support your recovery.
- Good physical health helps you to better manage stress and other life problems.
- An unhealthy lifestyle could make your mental health problems worse.
- A healthier lifestyle may help relieve problems, such as depression and anxiety.

What can you do to protect yourself during this crisis?
We covered this topic in lesson 1, and it is so important that we will review it again now.
Experts recommend that for now, we practice “social or physical distancing”, which means staying six feet or more from others when possible. This is why many mental health programs, schools and many businesses are now closed or reducing the hours that they are open. As we learn more about this virus and see fewer people infected with it, these restrictions will be reduced.

There are other things that you can do too, when possible:
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds often, especially after being in a public space or coughing or sneezing
- If you don’t have soap and water, you can use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands
- Especially avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Cover your mouth and nose with a mask or face cover when around others
- Cover coughs and sneezes

What to do if you think that you are sick
- Talk to your counselors, care managers, or prescribers as soon as you can
- If you are sick, or thought to be sick with COVID-19, you will be asked to separate yourself from other people for a while (this is called a quarantine). You may be given some medicine to help with the symptoms. If the symptoms become very severe, you may be taken to a hospital for care.

Mental health benefits of living a healthy lifestyle
- Helps people avoid situations that may trigger a relapse (for example, drugs or alcohol, unsafe sex)
- Reduces depression and worry
- Reduces stress
- Gives a person more energy to pursue goals
- Keeps a person’s mind active and clear
- Helps manage side effects of medication

Let’s Get Personal

How are you currently protecting yourself from COVID-19 and what other things would you like to do in the future (starting today!)? Please check the boxes that apply to you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGY</th>
<th>USING NOW</th>
<th>WILL USE STARTING TODAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practicing social or physical distancing when you can – staying six feet or more from others when possible</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds often, especially after being in a public space or coughing or sneezing

If you don’t have soap and water, you can use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol

Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands

Especially avoid close contact with people who are sick

Cover your mouth and nose with a mask or face cover when around others

Cover coughs and sneezes

Other

**Action Step**
Choose a strategy to protect yourself from COVID-19 starting today.

Strategy: ______________________________

What will be your first step? ______________________________

When? ______________________________

Where? ______________________________

How will you remind yourself to do it? ______________________________

Who could help you complete your Action Step? ______________________________

What might get in the way of completing your Action Step and how can you deal with this? ______________________________

**Ending**
- What were the main points of this lesson?
- How do you feel about what we have covered today?
Consider using this affirmation, or one of your own choosing:

**AFFIRMATION:** You might find it helpful to affirm (state out loud) your ability and motivation to apply what you have learned to improve your health and wellbeing.

I have the knowledge and determination to use what I learned to stay physically healthy during this Covid-19 crisis. I will use this knowledge to make smart decisions that will help me stay physically healthy. I am a worthwhile person who deserves to have the information needed to take care of my physical health and stay safe during this difficult time!