

NURTURING

MENTAL HEALTH DURING COVID-19

ESTABLISHING ROUTINE

- Organize your life in as predictable a way as you can. Schedule when you get up, go to bed, plan activities at specific times, connect with individuals and take as much control as you can. E.g., Yoga at 11, virtual lunch with a friend at 12, your favorite show at 6.
- What do you look forward to? Make a calendar of connections and activities.

FINDING FREEDOM

- When we are physically stuck we can feel emotionally stuck or trapped
- Our bodies are used to doing "something"
- Seek connection and activity, create something in your home, gather food, do work around the house.
- While the future may be uncertain, it is important to stay grounded in the present. You may think to yourself, "one foot in front of the other" or "one thing at a time."



CREATING PEACE

- In times like these, it can feel difficult to control your emotions, behavior, and thoughts. You may try yoga, meditation, mindfulness, breathing techniques to calm down your body and control your physiological reactions.
- Avoid drugs and alcohol as a way to self-soothe. These substances can impact sleep and our immunity.
- Keep a journal: allow yourself to observe and know what you know.

CONNECTING WITH YOURSELF + OTHERS

- We are collective creatures. Being stuck at home, or spending time alone, can be difficult and unnatural. Interaction with other minds and bodies, even virtually can be very uplifting.
- When we cry, we are supposed to get a response. When we laugh, we hope someone will laugh with us. These are the rhythms of life by which we develop and sustain ourselves.
- Sounds, facial movements, and the rhythms between faces and voices keep us feeling connected. Call, video conference, etc and offer comfort to each other when you feel you can.

SEEKING SECURITY

- It is important to identify what makes you safe: is it specific music that calms you? Touch? Cuddling?
- If you are alone, can you find a comfort object? A blanket? Sentimental item?
- Everybody needs a place to which they can withdraw. Even if it requires some creativity, try to create space where you can be alone and chose not to interact. "When I am in my room, please give me time to decompress."

HEY YOU, BE KIND TO YOURSELF

- Numbing out is a protective way of walling off pain and terror. (ex: watching TV, excessive use of media)
- How do you restore a body and brain so you can be in sync with others? Activity and focusing on the task at hand is a way to create a sense of agency.
- When you're ready, take time to notice your needs. Maybe through yoga or a meditation.
- If we don't take time to notice, we can respond in an automatic or insensitive way often through anger, fear, or irritation.
- Once you can observe what's going on within yourself, you can make choices about how to respond.
- This is easier done if there's somebody out there who can help you to notice and to name things, as in: "this is what is happening to me". A yoga instructor, therapist, friend, etc. Seek out people with whom you can share your feelings and body sensations.

THIS IS HARD, AND IT WILL PASS

- When you are in great distress, it may feel as though time stops, and you may feel like it will last forever.
- When engaging in meditation, it is likely to notice uncomfortable sensations and uncomfortable thoughts, but the goal is to find peace, ground yourself to your breath, or to relax. The more consistently you do this, the more you may find it easier to let go of stress.
- Our bodies and the things occurring around us are constantly changing. Even the most uncomfortable sensations tend to pass with time.
- Try yoga, tai chi, chi qong, meditation to learn to observe yourself.