



NEW MEXICO OFFICE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN AFFAIRS

COPING WITH STRESS DURING COVID-19

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The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all of our lives. During these stressful times, the importance of our mental health has become increasingly evident.

While information about COVID-19 in the African American community can be concerning, there is also evidence to show that African Americans have experienced more hope and resilience compared to other groups during the pandemic¹. Resilience is a key strength that helps people handle stress in difficult situations.

In this article, you will find some pointers that can help you address stress and cultivate your resilience during COVID-19.

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FOCUS ON WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL

There might be a lot that feels out of your control right now. However, try to focus on what you **can** control. Develop a plan to protect your health that is in line with the Governor's Office guidelines. Pay attention to negative or anxious thoughts and work to shift those thoughts ([Click here](#) to learn how).

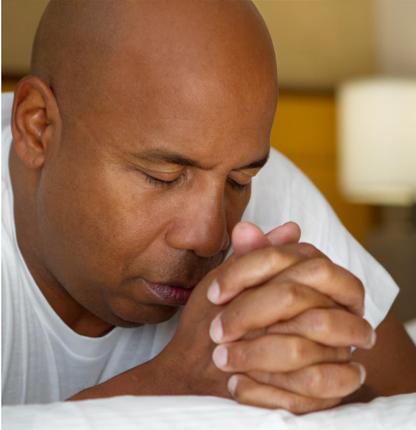
LIMIT YOUR EXPOSURE TO NEWS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

It is important to stay informed about what is happening in your community. However, receiving news updates all day long can cause anxiety or a feeling of helplessness. To prevent this, limit your exposure to media. One strategy is to set a specific **timeframe** to check the news each day.



PRACTICE SELF-CARE

Self-care is any activity that we do deliberately to take care of our mental, emotional, and physical health. It is not something that we force ourselves to do, or something we don't enjoy doing. Self-care is something that **refuels** us, rather than take from us². Exercising and keeping in touch with loved ones are two examples of self-care practices ([Click here](#) for more examples).

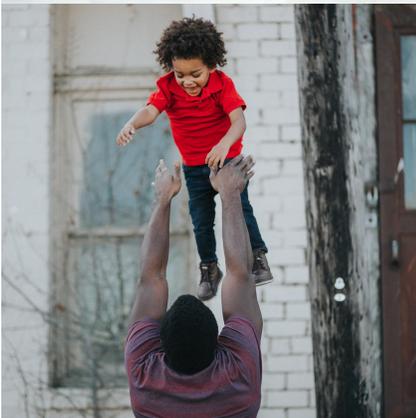


NOURISH YOUR SPIRIT

Faith and spirituality are sources of **strength and resilience** for many people. During these difficult times, don't ignore your spiritual health. Continue to engage in your faith practices at home (e.g.: prayer, meditation, etc.). Connect to your faith group safely (virtually or while social distancing).

ADDRESS RACIAL TRAUMA

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted racial inequities that have existed for decades including access to healthcare and housing. This can increase anxiety and stress for some people. During these times, it is important to recognize and address racial trauma. One way to do this is to identify racial trauma triggers and to develop a **response plan** to care of ourselves ([Click here](#) to access a toolkit on racial trauma)

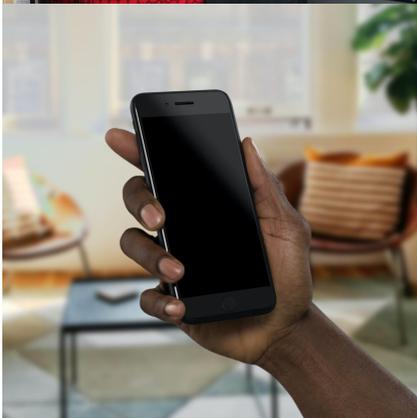


SUPPORT CHILDREN AND YOUTH

To help children and youth cope with COVID-19 stress, parents, caregivers and supportive adults can:

- **Set a good example** by taking care of themselves
- **Talk with them about what is happening:** Listen to their concerns, answer any questions they may have, address rumors and reassure them
- **Limit their exposure** to news updates and social media
- Make sure that they have a general daily or weekly **routine**

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IF YOU HAVE A PRE-EXISTING CONDITION

If you were diagnosed with a behavioral health condition before COVID-19, consider:

- **Talking to a professional:** Many behavioral health professionals are offering services through videoconference or text.
- **Stocking up on medications:** If you are on a regular medication, make sure that you have enough at home.
- **Using your strengths:** Use positive coping strategies that you have learned so far.
- **Allowing your support system to step in:** Ask for help when you need it ³.

IF YOU ARE AN ESSENTIAL WORKER

Essential workers may experience extreme fatigue and stress due to COVID-19.

- If you are feeling overwhelmed or unengaged, talk to your supervisor about your concerns and to develop a **plan** to address these concerns.
- Talk to your co-workers or a support group ⁴.

IF YOU NEED SUPPORT

Here are a few resources that can help you address behavioral health challenges and/or strengthen your resilience. Click on the title of the resource to learn more about it.

- **NM Connect App:** This app connects New Mexicans to behavioral health professionals who can text or talk via phone (24/7). The app is free and it also offers self-care tips and updates about COVID-19.
- **NM Black Mental Health Coalition:** Since COVID-19, this local organization has offered multiple virtual events.
 - Currently, the **People of Color Grief and Support Group** meets virtually on Tuesdays, 12-1 PM. For more information, contact Naja Druva (505-795-2865 naja.druva@ccs-nm.org)
 - September is National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. The NM Black Mental Health Coalition will be hosting the **Suicide Prevention - Listen, Learn, Intervene online workshop** on **September 8 & 9, 2020**. For more information, [click here](#).
- **Therapy for Black Girls:** In this weekly podcast, Dr. Joy Harden Bradford talks all things mental health and personal development.
- **Let's Talk Bruh:** This podcast was created to provide a space where black men can have deeper conversations.