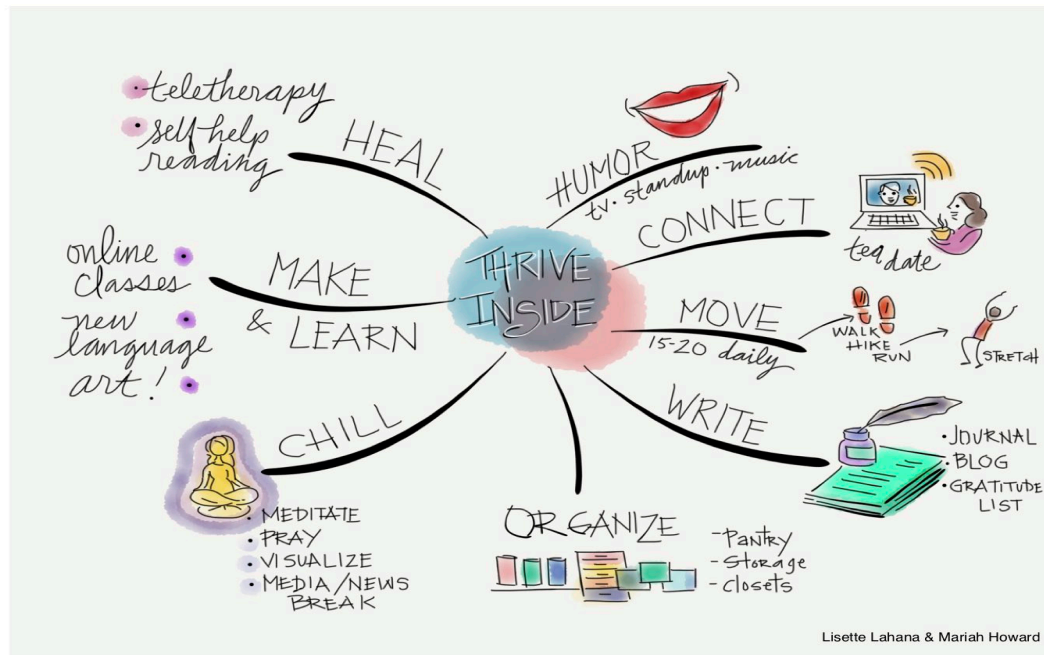


## Tips to Staying Sane During the Corona Virus Outbreak

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- **Fun and Humor.** Use comedy shows and/or music to change your mood. Ask friends about their favorite Pandora/Spotify stations, video games, online games you can play with others, audio books, movies, podcasts and TV shows. These are fun "to-do" lists to create.
- **Use Your Senses.** Slow yourself down to really enjoy your food and appreciate the colors and flavors. Sip your morning coffee slower, take in the warmth and tastes. Use essential oils or lotions to lift your mood. Practice self-massage on areas you feel most tense. Take in the pleasurable parts of your day that usually pass without notice, like hearing birds outside your window.
- **Be Online Creatively.** Schedule or suggest a spontaneous meet-up with people you care about by video. Find a recipe, cook and enjoy it together. Make a lunch or tea date!
- **Learn.** Take an online class through Coursera, Apple University or Udemy (many are free). Get into TEDx lectures or learn a language.
- **Daily Writing.** Start a diary or blog recording your feelings. Writing may help you gain perspective on your experiences with the virus's impact.
- **Be Grateful.** Use a gratitude journal to take notice of what you are thankful for. It can be an important addition to your routine and can improve your outlook.

- **Organize.** Find a few things you have been meaning to get done, like organizing photos, storage space, clothes, books or toys for donations. Finally, do it.
- **Carve Out Space.** If you share a home have a meeting about ways to bond as well as how to take healthy space from each other. With space taking, allow each person to carve out a time or place where they can be alone or close a door. Even with people you love dearly, spending a bit of time apart can decrease tension.
- **Self-Care.** Working from home or doing 24/7 childcare can cause you to forget the basics. Make sure to set alarms and schedule breaks. It can be tempting to overwork when at home as you might never officially clock out. Set boundaries by informing others in a group work chat when you will be back online.
- **Schedule.** Consider setting up a daily calendar for you and/or each child so that each will have structure. This can help you feel more in control and organized. Are there usually strict rules about the schedule for TV, iPad or video games? Give yourself permission to loosen rules so you may have additional breaks from your kids.
- **Get Old Fashioned.** Have a technology-free evening to do art, write creatively, play charades/"Bowl Game," make music, write poetry, read or play games.
- **News Hiatus.** Take a day or two off the news about the virus. Taking a break will help you hang in for the "long haul," feeling less stressed. You can ask a friend to keep you posted if something major happens.
- **Pet Break.** This can be a time to slow down and spend time petting, brushing, playing with or tending to your pet's needs. Connecting with them can be soothing, welcome distraction. This is an opportunity to get in touch with your pet's comings and goings and increase bonding.
- **Take Care of Your Body.** It may be tempting to use substances to cope. Consider the effect drugs, caffeine and alcohol have on your mood. Caffeine and some drugs can often increase anxiety and cause heart palpitations. Alcohol can have a negative effect on sleep quality and increase depression. Some drugs may cause temporary euphoria but deplete chemicals in your brain responsible for happiness. Others may cause you to feel drained or unmotivated.
- **Slow Down and Be Present.** When thoughts go toward fear or frustration make attempts to get back to the present moment learning a breathing meditation or by being in your body. Find something that holds your full attention and is distracting (E.g. Bubble Bath). Mindfulness practice can be a way to train yourself to be more present. Start with 5-10 minutes a day and build up to 20-45 minutes. Meditations, mindfulness practices and guided visualizations can be found on YouTube, Insight Timer, Headspace or Calm apps.
- **Grow Spiritually.** Local and national religious communities, meditation centers or 12-step groups may offer free online meetings or services. Use this time to strengthen your faith or spiritual practice. For those who pray, connection with god or a higher power may be what you need to get through this rough period.

Consider these 2 below ideas taking into account your health, local/national recommendations around contact with others and outdoor activities. Learn your risks [CDC decision tree](#).

- **Create a "Mini"**. If you and those around you are in a low risk group, choose a small family, a neighbor, or friend to create a “mini” unit with whom you spend regular time. You may do that physically distanced during a walk or having an outdoor picnic at least 6 feet apart. If you are single, being isolated may not be emotionally healthy for long periods. A "mini" can help you create a household-type unit to help you feel less alone during this time of physical distancing.
- **Get Active**. Even 15-20 minutes of exercise each day can keep depression at bay. Take a long dog walk, spend time in a park, take a hike or walk. Staying indoors? Consider using your stairs for a work out, stretch, use online exercise, yoga or Qigong classes.
- **Try Online Therapy**. Feeling worried all the time or extremely sad? Beginning to obsess about germs or cleanliness? Have you lost a loved one due to the virus and need help during your time of grief? Having trouble coping? Even a brief course of online therapy can help. Use websites that focus on online therapy or sort by "online therapy" in search sites like PsychologyToday.com. Keep in mind most states require your therapist to be licensed to practice therapy in your state.

In Crisis? Feeling Suicidal? Call Nationwide Hotline 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

En Español 1-888-628-9454

Written March 17, 2020 by a United States, California-based, mental health clinician. These ideas are directed toward people who are in greater isolation, social distancing, under 'shelter-in-place' zones or in quarantine due to the spread of COVID-19. Please always use common sense, prioritize local & national recommendations and follow [CDC guidelines](#) to decrease community spread and protect those at higher risk.



Lisette Lahana has been a licensed clinical social worker for over twenty years. She has a private psychotherapy practice in Oakland, CA and online. Ms. Lahana is bilingual in the Spanish language, helping clients across the lifespan. Welcoming to LGBTIQQA and/or clients of color. [Book](#) a free, brief, initial online psychotherapy appt (CA residents only).