

# ACADEMIC SUPPORT PROGRAMS

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## STRATEGIES FOR COPING DURING UNCERTAINTY

Life as we know it has changed. We are all trying to figure out how to adapt, while at the same time take care of ourselves, family, and friends. When we do not have control over our life circumstances, our feelings can feel overwhelming. The information that follows is to help us during this worldwide pandemic. Here are some strategies and resources to help us when we struggle with anxiety during uncertain times:

1. **Feelings:** Acknowledge your feelings rather than avoiding them or attaching to them. Mindfully observe your feelings with curiosity. Feelings protect us, but at the same time, be aware of how our thoughts on the future can escalate our fear and anxiety.
2. **Schedule:** Create and maintain a schedule or to do list. This is a way to keep yourself busy, so your mind does not obsess over worries. Perhaps you can use this time to spring clean or declutter. Maybe you have a neglected hobby that you can focus on, or a new one you have been wanting to learn about. Perhaps you have a home project and now you have the time to do so. Other ideas include starting or finishing a book, listening to podcasts, reading your favorite blogs, or watching webinars.
3. **Calmness:** Build relaxation and calm into your day, such as meditation, yoga, tai chi, mindful walking, knitting, crossword or jigsaw puzzles, or anything you prefer to calm down. Remember that fear can trigger our own trauma response which affects our immune system.
4. **Nature:** Nature can be soothing, and sunlight elevates our moods, improves immune function and helps us sleep better. Maybe you can go on a solo or family walk or hike or bike ride, sit in your yard or on your porch or work on your yard during nice days.
5. **Movement:** Try walking, biking, yoga, calisthenics, dancing, etc. Since gyms are closed, try on-line programs or apps, videos, or fitness lists. Some gyms are holding virtual classes as well.
6. **Nutrition:** It is important to really focus on your nutrition, so think vegetables, fruits, quality fats and proteins, and complex carbohydrates. Try to reduce processed food and sugars. Since we are social distancing, see what new healthy recipes you can try. Drink lots of water!
7. **Hope:** Put your focus on hope to uplift your mood. Notice how our community is banding together to deal with this challenge. See if there is a way to be part of helping others during this time.
8. **Social time:** Even though we are practicing social distancing, make time to call or video chat with friends and family daily, especially if you live alone. Are there friends and family members you have not talked to in a while? They may appreciate you checking in on them. Or Is this the time to start or join a book club (virtual, of course)?
9. **Gratitude:** Put your focus on what you are grateful for several times a day. Is it the sunny day, food that you have, your friends reaching out to you, family time, you slowing down to be mindful? Write down what you are grateful for and really focus on the feeling of gratitude. Below is the GLAD technique as an idea for you to express gratitude.
10. **Self-care.** Many of us are doers and strivers with little time to relax or be home for a long length of time. Take this time to nurture yourself, your family and friends, and community. Perhaps give yourself a facial, manicure, or take a bath, read a good book, or have a virtual coffee/tea date with a close friend. Below is a list of self-care ideas, but some may have to wait.

11. Give: Be a giver. Is there a way to help out others? By giving to others, this can take the focus off your worrying or stress over this situation.
12. Breathe: When you are feeling anxious, first take some very deep breaths and focus only on your breath rather than your worrisome thoughts. I prefer box breathing where you breathe in for 4 seconds, pause for 4 seconds, breathe out for 4 seconds, and pause for 4 seconds. I imagine visually tracing a box as I do this. After a couple minutes, you will be much calmer! There are many ways (apps, videos, programs) to breathe mindfully and meditate. Maybe this is when you begin your meditation practice!

This is a challenging time for everyone in the world. Think about what you do have control over. Stay present and stay healthy!



## SELF-CARE IDEAS

- ❖ Take a walk
- ❖ Take a bath/shower
- ❖ Light a candle
- ❖ Diffuse essential oils
- ❖ Meditate
- ❖ Drink tea
- ❖ Doodle or color
- ❖ Cozy up in a blanket
- ❖ Turn off phone
- ❖ Declutter
- ❖ Have a solo dance party
- ❖ Yoga
- ❖ Manicure and/or pedicure
- ❖ Massage
- ❖ Facial
- ❖ Sit in silence and breathe
- ❖ Dress up for yourself
- ❖ Cook a favorite meal for you
- ❖ Let go of the past
- ❖ Speak up
- ❖ Gratitude and appreciation
- ❖ Read spiritual or self-help book
- ❖ Journal
- ❖ Compliment yourself
- ❖ Avoid toxic people
- Take a nap
- Sauna
- Watch a movie
- Listen to music
- Sit in nature
- Inspirational quotes and stories
- Go to coffee shop
- Write yourself a love letter
- Write down feelings/thoughts
- Stargaze
- Go to a museum
- Draw or paint
- Eat favorite dessert
- Buy fresh flowers
- Electronic break
- Create a vision board or book
- Call someone you love
- Read a good book
- Positive affirmations
- Sleep in on the weekend
- Cuddle
- Hug
- Watch a comedy show
- Spa day
- Love yourself



## GRATITUDE

Expressing and feeling gratitude is a simple way to be present and mindful. It also helps our physical and mental health, improves our relationships, enhances empathy, reduces aggression, improves self-esteem, and helps us to be resilient. Here is a technique that can be used daily (or more often) to put us in a state of gratitude. You can think this, but writing it down is even better!

### G.L.A.D Technique

**G – Gratitude:** What are you thankful for right now? This can be as simple as your clothes you wear or water you drink, or it could be for a friendship or your health. Whatever it is, appreciate something that is relevant to your day today.

**L – Learned:** What is something that you learned today? Maybe you learned something about yourself or someone else that you did not know. Perhaps you learned a new fact or had a new experience. Be curious about your day and think about what you learned.

**A – Accomplishment:** What did you accomplish today? This can be big or small, ordinary or extraordinary. Maybe you ate really healthy today or slept well, or maybe you finished an important project.

**D – Delight:** What has delighted you today, or brought you joy today? Think about something that made you smile or laugh. Pay attention to your environment, such as a sunny day or a pretty flower. Perhaps a video or movie made you laugh, or a new recipe was really delicious.



## IDEAS FOR HANDLING SCHOOL BREAKS

It is not easy for any of us to get thrown off our schedule. Children, especially, have a difficult time with routine changes. Here are some ideas for students on a long break:

1. **Maintain a schedule:** Create a daily schedule with your child for academics and hobbies. Maintain bedtimes and mealtimes just as if they are in school. It may be helpful to make the schedule visual, or have your child help create the schedule and make it visual.
2. **Work with your children's strengths and interests.** Are they creative and artistic, or active and athletic?
3. **Make a list of things to do.** Work together to create a list of activities that children can do at home, such as board or card games, hobbies, puzzles, crafts, music, exercise, etc.
4. **Nature time:** It is important for children to get outside if at all possible. Are there games they can play in the yard, or even eat outside if weather and space permits?
5. **Have children be active.** Reduce screen time as much as possible. Plan for active games or games outside or family walks. This will also help moods and irritability.
6. **Set clear and reasonable expectations.** So much time together can be stressful at times. Even when we maintain a schedule and keep our children busy, there still may be behavioral issues that need addressing. Children feel safer and more confident when they know the expectations and when rewards and consequences are followed.
7. **Prepare for tough moments.** Take care of yourself. Be calm, firm, and consistent. Yelling or losing your cool may escalate stressful situations.



## **MINDFULNESS**

Mindfulness is a mental state of being aware of the *present* moment while acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations without attaching non-present or judgmental thoughts. This is time to pay compassionate and curious attention to our thoughts and feelings.

There are many ways to be mindful in one's daily life to help with creating and sticking to a daily mindfulness practice. Here are some ways to make your mindfulness practice habit. It is fun to try different ways to be mindful. You can use guided meditations, music, nature sounds, silence, affirmations, etc. Below are some apps or websites that can get you started.

### **Mindfulness for Children and Youth**

Mindfulness is for everyone. We start with ourselves as adults but then we can show our students mindfulness techniques that can be done fairly easily. They really do understand the concept and will partake in exercises. Below are some ideas:

#### **Mindfulness Practice Ideas**

Stop, Breathe, Think  
Virtual Hope Box  
Insight Timer  
YouTube meditations  
Take a Break app

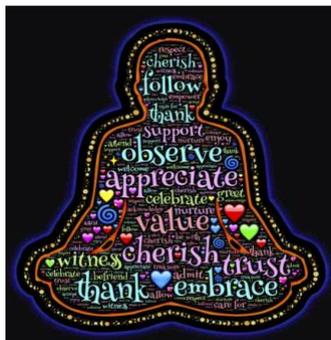
[www.palousemindfulness.com](http://www.palousemindfulness.com): This is a free online 8-week course with videos, readings, and logs for meditation. You can even get a certificate when you complete the whole course!

#### **Mindfulness Exercises**

Here are some ideas for practicing mindfulness:

1. Box or Diamond Breathing: Imagine a square or diamond. As you breathe, imagine tracing the shape with your finger or eyes from one corner to the next. On one corner, breathe in for 4 seconds, pause for 4 seconds, breathe out for 4 seconds, pause for 4 seconds. Repeat again and again.
2. Breathing Buddy: Lie on floor. Place stuffed animal on stomach. As you breathe in or out, focus on the rise and fall of the stuffed animal.
3. Hand exploration: Observe your hand without judgment for about a minute. Look at the lines, freckles, ridges, edges, etc. Now close your eyes and just observe your hand. Is it cold, warm, sweaty, dry, etc.?

4. Slow Motion Mindfulness: Choose a simple activity, such as tying your shoe, raising your hand, or drawing your name. Do this activity very slowly, just like a turtle moves. Focus completely on this activity without judgment.
5. Squish and Squeeze: tighten up your whole body from toes to legs to fists to stomach to shoulders to head. Hold for a few seconds. Relax. Focus on the feeling and sensation.
6. Seated Walking: Lift a foot and breathe in fully. Breathe out as you set your foot down. Do this with the other foot. Repeat 8 times.
7. Flower and Candle: Imagine a flower with pretty colors and a sweet smell. Take a deep sniff of the flower. Imagine a lit candle in front of you. Now blow out the candle through your mouth. Repeat several times.
8. Heart Beat Activity: Run in place for 10-20 seconds. Stop. Close your eyes. Put your hand to heart. Listen to your breath while your eyes are closed.
9. Coloring or puzzles: Put on calm music and low lighting. During this time, you can color an intricate picture, such as a mandala, or work on a jigsaw puzzle.
10. Rainbow Breathing: Sit comfortably and close your eyes. Imagine a vibrant rainbow. Imagine the color red traveling from your feet through your body and out through your head. Imagine the color orange traveling from your feet through your body and out through your head. Repeat this for every color of the rainbow until you have finished the entire rainbow.
11. Breath Counting: Sit in a comfortable position with your back straight and body relaxed. Breathe in through your nose silently and count 1 in your mind. Breathe out through your nose and lift 1 finger. Breathe in through your nose and silently count 2 in your mind. Breathe out through your nose and lift 2 fingers. Repeat for 3-5 counts.
12. Nature Meditations: [Waterfall, Birdsongs 20 minutes](#) [Rain 20 minutes](#) [Bubbling creek, Music 15 minutes](#)
13. Guided Meditations: [Smiling Mind Stop Breathe Think Gratitude Tree 12 minutes](#) [Peace Out](#)
14. Movement: [Yoga for Kids 25 minutes](#) [Kids Workout Beginners 16 minutes](#) [Brain Break-Move and Freeze](#)



## SUPPORTING STUDENTS: PARENT RESOURCE

Given this uncertain challenging time in the world, it is more important than ever for families and schools to work together to foster healthy relationships, understand emotional reactions, and teach positive coping skills. The National Association of School Psychology (NASP) put out some suggestions for parents when talking to their children about COVID-19 and how to support children during this time. It is important to teach children preventive measures, allowing them to talk about fears, and helping them see what they have control over during this time in order to help reduce their anxiety. Below are some guidelines:

1. Remain calm and reassuring. Children learn from adults around them. Your reaction can increase or decrease their reaction. Provide a safe space for children to voice their thoughts and feelings. Remind them that adults in their life are trying to keep them safe and healthy.
2. Avoid blaming and stereotypes.
3. Monitor television and social media. This may only heighten anxiety and is not always based on facts. Instead of screen time, this may be a time for board games, puzzles, or arts and crafts.
4. Provide a consistent structure and routine for children. Maintain a normal routine as much as possible that includes academics and extracurricular activities as well as bedtimes and mealtimes.
5. Children often imagine situations worse than they are, so make sure you have up to date factual information that you can convey honestly. Teach preventative measures, such as handwashing for 20 seconds, disinfecting home and school, covering mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing, not giving handshakes, and good nutrition.
6. Know the facts and symptoms of COVID-19. The Center for Disease Control is an organization ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)) that provides facts about this virus. Here you will learn the symptoms as well as preventative measures.
7. Some points of emphasis include: Not everyone will get this virus, and right now the country is trying to limit social contact in order to reduce infections. Students should treat everyone with respect and not jump to conclusions about who may or may not have this virus.
8. Remind children of their strengths and encourage their sense of belonging. All children have skills, strengths, and knowledge that is important to our society. Help children identify activities that they can engage in to show support and solidarity for each other.

