

COUGAR WELLNESS

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OWNING YOUR WELLNESS DURING COVID-19

Lassen Cougars, this sure has been a difficult time. I know joining your community has not been what I expected. We were hopeful for workshops, trainings, and activities. Instead, I have watched all of that slowly be shut down. It's hard to not become anxious or afraid during continual change and uncertainty. On March 11,

“HEALTH IS ADDING A LEVEL OF INTENTION TO EVERY AREA OF YOUR LIFE”
- MIRANDA ANDERSON

2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared COVID-19 a pandemic. The spread of COVID-19, also known as the Coronavirus, has led to events, classes, and sports being cancelled. Entire schools are being shut down while recommendations have been made to self-quarantine. Panic buying has cleared out grocery stores and families are being forced to ration toilet paper usage.

Spring is supposed to be a beautiful time of hope and growth. Instead, we are unsure of what tomorrow will bring. Our lives have been turned upside down. It is critical that we be mindful of our mental health during this time of social distancing. Isolation and disconnection can breed and exacerbate anxiety. Connection is essential for mental wellbeing. Since we

may no longer have the organic connection by way of chatting with someone at the coffee shop on our way to work or class, for example, we must be proactive and intentional with our connections. Since I cannot reach Lassen College staff and students through on-campus activities, I thought a newsletter to connect would be the next best thing, for now.

Many are dealing with Coronavirus anxiety and cabin fever, as well as exacerbated physical and mental health conditions. What can we do to manage all of this? Here are 16 ideas to take care of your mental health during COVID-19:

1. **Exercise:** if you're first instinct when on self-quarantine is to grab the potato chips and binge watch your favorite show on Netflix, first of all, you're not alone. Second, stop! You are not doing anything to support your physical or mental well-being. Exercising releases endorphins, serotonin and dopamine into your brain. These are feel good mood-enhancing chemicals. Exercise can look different for everyone. For some it may be going for a run or doing some yoga. For others, this may look like trying meditation or learning a new relaxation technique. You can learn how to do anything online! At minimum, take a break, go outside and get some fresh air.
2. **Get a good night sleep:** In times of increased worry and stress it's harder to sleep. Exercise can

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- help with better sleep hygiene as well as limiting any screen time an hour before bed time.
3. **Eat healthy:** consume some immune boosting nutrient rich foods. Eating healthy makes you feel better and can even increase your immune system. If there was ever a time for that, it's now!
 4. **Social activity:** let me rephrase that, "safe social activity". This can be arranging a video chat with a friend, a phone call to a relative, participating in online book clubs or listening to talk radio. Doing activities with your family (a.k.a. your quarantine buddies) at home such as board games and puzzles. Be proactive and intentional in arranging these. You still have an LCC community! Stay connected and help others do the same.
 5. **Remote counseling:** If you already see a counselor, ask them if they have the capability of doing it online for now. If your struggling and want to talk to someone try the following resources: [NDMDA Depression Hotline](https://www.ndmda.org/depression-hotline): 800-826-3632 [Youth Crisis Hotline](https://www.youthcrisisline.org/): 800-448-4663 [Parental Stress Hotline](https://www.parentalstress.org/): 800-632-8188 [Suicide or Emotional Distress](https://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/): 800-273-8255 Or text "HOPE" to 916-668-ICAN (4226) National Suicide Prevention Lifeline also has an online chat available at <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/> [Veteran Crisis Line](https://www.veteranscrisisline.net): 800-273-8255 or online at <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net> Friendship Line (older adults): 800-971-0016 If you are employed, check to see if you have Employee Assistance Program (EAP) resources available.
 6. **Religious activities:** join online spiritual or religious groups. Create an activity or daily practice in your home to help you feel connected until you can return to your normal practices.
 7. **Prepare:** preparing helps with feelings of uncertainty. Purchasing essentials, having a plan for the 'what if's', preparing as much as we can will help with feelings of anxiety.
 8. **Take breaks from consuming updates:** step back from the constant updates. If you truly need information or an update, use reliable sources. Check with the Center for Disease Control (CDC) or the World Health Organization (WHO). These people look after your health for a living. Check out www.cdc.gov or www.who.int.
 9. **Write down your worries:** doing some journaling can help you get all of the worries out of your head and down on paper.
 10. **New hobby:** if you are stuck at home this is the perfect time to take up knitting, drawing, fly tying, discover new music, scrap book, learn to cook a new meal, yoga, writing, reading, teach yourself a language, try origami, start a blog, teach your pet a trick, start an online club with your friends, the possibilities are endless!
 11. **Create routine and structure:** this is the first thing that usually goes out the window during times of uncertainty. Routine and structure foster positive mental health and psychological resilience. Creating yourself and/or your kids a daily routine is beneficial for everyone.
 12. **Leaders/parents:** if you are in a position of leadership, this includes parents, reassure your employees and children. Lead with your values. Your team and children will remember how you handle this. Prioritize. Not everything needs to be done now. Show visibility in how you're adapting your own behavior. Have patience, adjustments will take time. Make space for reflection, listen and lead with empathy.
 13. **Gratitude:** gratitude and being service-oriented are evidenced-based approaches to bolstering mental health. Be grateful for what you have. Your team, your children, or your friends. Look ahead. Maybe what you can be grateful for is the resilience and close relationships that you'll have on the other side of this pandemic.
 14. **Be kind to one another:** the last thing anyone needs when going through stressful times is for someone to make them feel bad. Be kind to everyone you come in contact with. You don't know the battles they are fighting during this.
 15. **Be gentle with yourself:** It is okay to feel however your feeling. Your feelings may be different from everyone around you, and that's okay. You are not required to feel a specific way. However you are feeling, is okay.
 16. **Lastly, know that this will end.** Like any trying time, we will come out of this on the other side, wiser and stronger.

Be Well Cougars,
Seaira