

A Fresh Perspective

Even among the hardships there are moments worth smiling about and looking for them can only make us feel better. Glimpses of beauty, whether a bluebird flitting past on a morning walk or the smile on a child's face, call us to be present. By acknowledging delight and joy, no matter how fleeting, we are connecting with where we are right at that moment. Paying attention to something good.

--Grace Mattern



Wellness During Crisis

An important component of wellness is focusing on the strengths and discovering the lessons and meaning in our challenges and adversities. Now more than ever is it important to keep ourselves focused on the wellness model to help regain a sense of balance and order since our habits and routines have been disrupted due to the pandemic. We developed the wellness model to provide a *structure and focus* for regaining and rebuilding a self-defined lifestyle that meets our needs.

The wellness model includes a focus on our needs and strengths in the 8 dimensions. In recent weeks, we have been presenting many Zoom sessions on how to use the wellness model to create habits and routines and build our self-care skills.

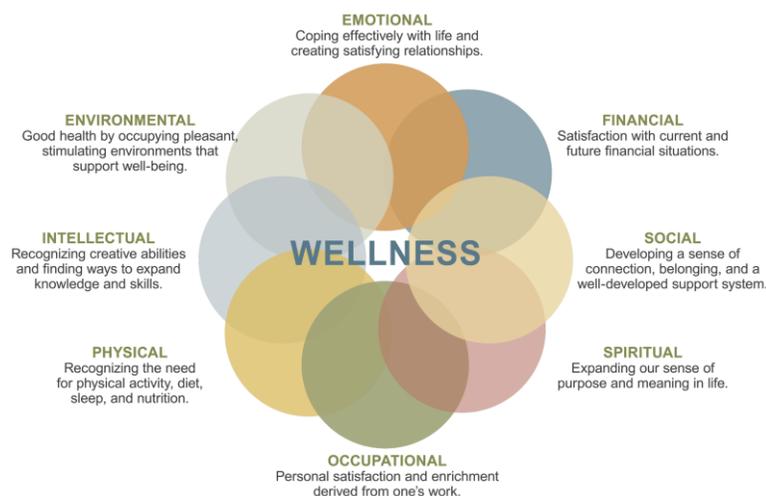
As quoted in a recent *Mental Health Weekly*, Peggy Swarbrick reminds us, "Our rhythm has just been shocked. We have to get back to basics: breathing, pausing, and getting in a good sleep routine."

In a presentation to NYAPRS on April 21, we got the most wonderful list of self-care ideas from our audience and have created a Wellness Alphabet, which you can find on page 2.

You can access a recording of our NYAPRS talk, which is posted on [YouTube](#).

Related topics

We are doing a series on self-care work life balance and working from home. You can learn more about working from home on page 4.



A Wellness Alphabet

Artwork, adult coloring, audiobooks
Breathing, bubble baths, baking
Comedy, cooking, cleaning, cartoons, coffee
Drinking lots of water, dancing
Eating well, exercising
Faith, friends, family, FaceTime, flowers
Grilling, gratitude journaling, grounding exercises
Hiking, horseback riding, home repair
Ice cream
Jogging, jigsaw puzzles, journaling
Knitting, kindness, kids
Laugh, love, live, limit news consumption
Meditation; music, music, music
Naps, needlepoint
Online courses and groups, outside activity
Pets, painting, phone time (lots of it)
Quizzes (trivia), quiet time by myself
Reading, resting, relaxing, raking, riding my bike
Spirituality, sleep, scavenger hunts, sewing masks
Taking breaks, tai chi, teatime, texting friends
Video games, vitamins, virtual hugs
Walks, writing, weeping
Yoga, yard work, YouTube
Zoom book club, Zumba



The Strength in Us

It's human nature to see the negatives in the world around us, in ourselves, and in others. Discovering and appreciating strengths requires a deliberate focus. Once we develop the habit of seeking strengths, we see them more easily.

As we spend time physically distant from one another, we will need to find new strengths in ourselves and new ways to tap into the power of community. There are strengths in each of us and strength in the “us” of remembering that we are connected to and reliant on our community as a whole. We really are in this together.

One way that people unite and connect is to sing together—at church, with the kids, or at a concert. People singing together through the magic of technology. Some recording artists are creating beautiful and haunting new tunes. Ordinary people are recording inventive and comical “stay at home” dance routines. Music is probably the most commonly reported self-care activity now.

For comfort, hope, and inspiration, we recommend listening to some of the many choirs that bring together people who live in the streets, where they can share the gift of music, use their beautiful voices together, and build community, such as the [Dallas Street Choir](#) and [Singers of the Street](#).

We are one people; we are only family. And when we finally accept these truths, then we will be able to build a beloved community, a nation, and a world at peace with itself.

—John Lewis

Grief

Experiencing this pandemic is difficult for us all. In addition to fear and exhaustion, people providing healthcare and support services will encounter loss—personal loss, struggles with loss of normal routines, and the loss of some people they serve. Because this situation is changing rapidly, and the future is so uncertain, grief and loss become complicated.

Sadness is to be expected in the face of loss. It is a natural feeling. Recognize and share it. Take moments when you can to experience your grief; don't bury it. Grieve together with others who have experienced losses. We recover by gathering and mourning with others—do this virtually, if you can't do it in person.

Alone-ness and loneliness can come from the imposed isolation and distance in a pandemic. Service providers may feel separate and alone, unsure if their experiences are unusual or their feelings are abnormal. Reach out to your co-workers, friends, and family. It is true that we are all in this together.

Helplessness will be a common feeling for those of us who have a calling and a career to help others. During this pandemic, the needs of others will be so much greater than what we can offer. Focus on what you can do; let go of the rest.

Mistrust of others may happen because we feel at risk—they could make us sick. We may have trouble believing what we hear from authorities. We may look for someone to blame. Remind yourself of who and what you can trust. Have trust in yourself—your strength, your caring, your kindness, and your commitment.

What should we do?

No single answer will work for everyone.

Remember that grief is hard work. You need rest, plenty of water, and good food to have the strength to get through it. Get help if your grief and exhaustion feel like too much to bear.

Take time—even the smallest moments of the day, to pause, take a deep breath, and appreciate the world around you. It really is a beautiful place.



References and Resources

Illustrations are listed online as free for reuse without attribution, and are from pixabay.com

The quote from Peggy Swarbrick on page 1 is from an article titled, “Amid COVID-19, self-care as important for providers as it is for patients.” From the April 20, 2020 issue of *Mental Health Weekly*, 20(16), page 1.

The link to the NYAPRS webinar recording is:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PgqdiYjg-Ss&feature=youtu.be>
- The downloadable PPT is [here](#).

You can find another webinar on Wellness Self-Care at <https://www.naminj.org/webinars/> (scroll down)

The links to the street choirs are:

- Dallas Street Choir
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SVIUolvIPDI>
- Singers of the Street
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S7003dS-ggq>

The article on grief was adapted, in part, from Pies, R. W. (2020, Mar. 23). Care of the soul in the time of COVID-19. *Psychiatric Times*. AND The Irish Hospice Foundation. (2020, March 20). *Grieving in exceptional times*.

Tips for Working From Home

by Pat Nemec

If working at home is new for you, it's quite likely you are experiencing many challenges—a new work space, a change in your work schedule and tasks, different demands, and more distractions. Perhaps by now you have solved most of your technology difficulties but you may find yourself suffering from Zoom Fatigue Syndrome, an unexpected side effect of the pandemic!

How can you stay productive in this new situation? I have worked at home full-time for over 10 years and part-time for many years before that. After much trial and error, and advice from experts, I have some tips to share. Some may be more useful than others—take what works and leave the rest!

First of all, remember that there are only 24 hours in the day. You need a fair amount of that time to sleep, eat, relax, and build in plenty of self-care. It's also important to realize that you have the exact same hours as everyone else—including people who are amazingly productive!

Here are three tools for productivity, collected from some of the most popular and useful gurus on the topic and tested with success by me.

Plan your time

Use a calendar to plan tasks and record deadlines, and schedule appointments.

Be thoughtful about your time. Chunk tasks that are similar into one time slot, such as sending quick replies to emails or sorting and filing papers.

Take advantage of your daily rhythm. For example, my mind is at its best in the morning and not much use in the mid-afternoon. I use that afternoon slump to file, do emails, update my to-do lists, and print notes for upcoming meetings.

Consider packing your lunch and snacks as if you were going to be out all day rather than use your workday brain power to decide what to eat.

Track your tasks

There are many ways to do this—you will need to create a system that works for you. Here are the main things you need to track:

- What do you need to do by when?
- What do you need to do next?
- What have you completed?

A good system helps you see what you need to do, so you can stop worrying. If it's on the list, it doesn't have to be on your mind.

Stay focused

Use a dedicated space and/or clear cues that you are *at work*. For example, wear work clothes. Use a workday coffee cup. Use a “getting ready to work” ritual to replace your commute in and a “wrapping up” ritual to transition home at the end of your workday. When you're on, be ON!

Limiting distractions is the hardest part for most people and needs a personal solution. When I must concentrate, I'll turn off my ringer and close my email program, so I am not distracted.

Work with your team and your supervisor to clarify requirements, set priorities, brainstorm, and solve problems. Don't waste time spinning your wheels trying to figure out what someone wants or needs. Save time and ask!

Finally, to repeat our self-care reminders, build in refreshing breaks throughout the day. Pause, breathe, and stretch. Take a real lunch break and do something different from work that will help you relax. When you're off, be OFF!

For more information, you might start with:

- David Allen, *Getting things done*
- Charles Duhigg, *Smarter, faster, better*

