



As your EAP provider, we at Outcomes are aware of the unique challenges facing healthcare workers these days in the medical world. Please know that we are here to respond with supportive and professional behavioral health services, as always. Although the majority of our services continue to be provided through telehealth formats, we are maintaining our full staff and schedules for your convenience. Please call us at 505.243.2551 at any time to schedule an appointment. Following is an article addressing “COVID Fatigue and Self Care” compiled by one of our clinical therapists, Katy Fehr, LISW.

COVID Fatigue and Self Care

Whether you want to call it COVID Fatigue or Compassion Fatigue, we’ve all been there, especially those of us who are care givers! We give and give and give of ourselves. This can come at a price though, as we give without filling our own bucket, then we have little to give back and we burn out. Many of us find ourselves moving into freeze, fight and flight. Some of us are finding ourselves longer than we’d like and struggling to come up for air. The world is moving into a state of fear and we are grieving as a nation. As we continue to do our part to heal the wounds around us, we need to remember to give to ourselves and to take care of ourselves. We must put ourselves first so that we have the energy to keep helping those around us. It’s important during this time, to remind ourselves and our friends, family and coworkers, the importance of self-care. When we put ourselves first, in self-care, we have so much more focus and energy to give to others.

If you feel that the COVID 19 virus is a never-ending experience, you are not alone. As we move into fear, grief and sadness as a community, it can be easy to feel isolated and alone. This time is calling us to center ourselves and to go back to basics in how we are managing our stress and anxiety. Below are some tips that I hope will help you in this time. Remember that self-care does not have to be an hour-long task. Finding multiple moments in your day to take care of yourself will help and those moments will add up and you will begin to notice a difference. Below are some easy and concrete ways to take care of yourself and fill your tank along with some links.

1. **Get Grounded:** Think about the earth as a means of helping you feel more grounded. Get your hands in the dirt (weeding, gardening, planting or simply pick up some dirt and let it fall through your hands), lean against a tree or take your shoes and socks off and walk in some grass.
2. **Get Back to Basics:** Drink your water, eat some healthy foods, and move your body. Take your vitamins. Get all the colors in your diet. <http://www.winmedical.org/our-services/clinics/family-medicine/healthy-eating/the-importance-of-a-colorful-diet/>
3. **More on Moving Your Body:** Aim for 30 minutes a day of body movement. This can be simple. Walking, stretching, yoga, swimming, running, zumba, rebounding etc. Household chores can be a nice regulating way of moving your body and you feel better about the space you are in. Twenty minutes of raising your heart rate at a time can go a long way into helping you get into a regulated state. If you find you are prone to anxiety, your amygdala might be sounding the alarm, thinking you are in danger, so move your body and trick your brain into thinking you are running from that Saber Tooth Tiger!
4. **Breathe:** Take 3 minutes and focus on your in and out breaths. Breathe in to the count of 4, pause, breathe out to the count of four, pause and repeat. If you tend to move into panic attacks or anxiety, then breathe out to the count of 5 or 6, thus making your out-breath longer than your in-breath. Practice this 2-3 times a day. When you wake up and when you go to bed are perfect opportunities. You can even do this when you are taking a bathroom break at work.

5. **Get mindful:** In addition to breathing, practice simple mindfulness activities. This can be slow walks in nature, meditation practices or finding a labyrinth in town to walk <https://labyrinthlocator.com/> . Some great apps for mindfulness include the Calm app www.calm.com and Insight Timer <https://insighttimer.com/>.
6. **Gratitude Journal:** We will find what we are looking for. If we look for fear, we will find it. If we look for things to be grateful for, we will find those too. Look for things today that you can note in a journal at the end of your day or the beginning of your day tomorrow. Someone letting you out in traffic, a smile you see in someone's eyes, or a yummy desert you happened upon. These can be simple. Challenge yourself to write five things every day that bring you joy and gratitude! They are out there for you to find! <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/72-this-daily-practice-changed-my-life-and-my-business/id1245763628?i=1000429479026>
7. **Body work:** Take care of the body. The last thing we want to do is allow all these painful and stressful moments to move into and stay in the body. Grief also requires us to take care of the body. In addition to the ideas above, take time to linger in the shower and let the water flow over you, take a bath with Epsom salt or baking soda, use essential oils or lotions to care for yourself and your skin, get a massage, give acupuncture a try, get your hair done, etc.
8. **Self-expression and an ear to listen:** Journaling can be a wonderful outlet when you have a mind full of worries or concerns you need to get out so you can feel more centered. Art, music and writing are wonderful outlets to release and to create during this time. Some of us have friends and families to talk to but honestly, as we all are dealing with our own level of fears and emotional pain during this time, reaching out to a therapist can be very helpful too. Find someone to talk to and honor this time to expand your emotional growth. In the end, it will help you be a better caregiver and it will allow you to take advantage of this time of healing we are all being called to. You have a wonderful benefit through your EAP at Outcomes, and we are all here to listen without judgement. <https://www.outcomesnm.org/> 505-243-2551
9. **Pull from what you know works:** When we are stressed we have a tendency to stop doing the things that help us and we move back into survival mode. Start with something that feels easiest and move forward from there. Remember, it can be a few minutes at a time and each moment of self-care will make a difference. Put yourself first and the rest will follow. Reach out and ask for help and encourage those around you to take care of themselves as well. We are all in this together, even if it feels at times like we are alone.