

# Staff Care Packet

SHOW-ME

H  PE

MISSOURI

**Show Me Hope is here to help people and organizations be resilient in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic...**

**Show Me Hope Offers:**

- **Individual Crisis Counseling**
  - **Support Groups**

**SHOW ME HOPE HELP LINE**

**1-800-985-5990**

**24/7 ACCESS**

**This packet is brought to you by**



**agency partners in the Show Me Hope program**

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## ***Are You Experiencing Disaster Stress?***

Dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic can lead to a variety of reactions that look differently for each one of us.

You might experience **physical reactions**, such as:

- Gastrointestinal problems
- Headaches, aches, pains
- Weight change
- Sweating or chills
- Tremors or muscle twitching
- Clumsiness, increased accidents
- Being easily startled
- Chronic fatigue or sleep disturbances

You might experience **emotional reactions**, such as:

- Anxiety or fear
- Depression
- Guilt
- Apathy
- Grief
- Denial

You might experience **cognitive reactions**, such as:

- Disorientation and confusion
- Poor concentration
- Difficulty setting priorities or making decisions
- Recurring dreams, nightmares, or flashbacks
- Preoccupation with disaster

You might experience **behavioral reactions**, such as:

- Change in activity level
- Avoidance of certain places or activities
- Alcohol and drug use or abuse

***Show Me Hope is here to help you cope with disaster distress.***

***You can call the Disaster Distress Helpline 24/7 at 1-800-985-5990.***

## Coping Facts for

# GRIEF AND LOSS

*Grief is a natural response to a life-changing loss. Grieving is a healthy and natural healing process. It is not a sign of weakness. For most people, grieving follows a predictable pattern of coping stages. The ultimate goal of the grief process is to gain acceptance of the changes that have occurred as a result of the loss.*

*The best way to cope with loss is to recognize it, understand that the feelings you experience are normal, and to reach out for support during the grieving process.*

### Tips for Coping With Grief

- Take your time. Don't judge or measure your reactions by those of others.
- Talk, share your feelings and the meaning this loss has for you.
- Pay attention to your body's needs. Exercise (according to your doctor's recommendations) and eat a balanced diet.
- Surround yourself with friends and family who love and support you. Avoid isolating.
- Tears may come unexpectedly and at times when you thought you were finished grieving. Be patient with yourself. The intensity of your grief should diminish with time.
- Allow yourself time to grieve and give yourself permission to take periodic breaks from the grieving process.
- If you follow a religious faith, this can be a time for prayer and quiet meditation. Seek out your faith or spiritual advisors.
- Avoid alcohol and other mind-altering substances.
- Learn to be sensitive and flexible with your new needs and lifestyle.
- Grieving can be physically and emotionally exhausting. Make time for extra rest and adequate sleep.
- Seek professional help if you feel that you are not making progress, your grief restricts you from performing your daily tasks, or if you experience painful flashbacks.

### Stages of the Grieving Process

Denial  
Disbelief  
Numbness  
Shock

Anger and Guilt  
Anger, sometimes misdirected  
Guilt, sometimes misdirected  
Blame, sometimes misdirected

Sadness and Despair  
Sadness  
Loneliness  
Tearfulness  
Depression  
Reminders that bring new waves of grief

Acceptance and Hope  
Acceptance of your loss  
Adjustment to change  
Expectation of positive future

Aftermath  
The intensity of grief decreases

When there are large numbers of victims the overwhelming nature of the circumstances may require the use of support groups, hotlines and other resources to provide more structure to address the needs of responder teams, family, and friends.

For more information,  
contact the  
Missouri Department of  
Mental Health  
Office of  
Disaster Readiness  
1706 East Elm  
P.O. Box 687  
Jefferson City, MO 65102  
573-751-4122  
www.dmh.mo.gov



# Supporting Someone with Depression

**Recognize that depression is an illness.** Just like a cold or flu, a person cannot simply choose to “get over” depression. Also like other illnesses, depression can affect anyone. A person can develop depression even if they seem to have a good life, with little to be upset about.

**Make a point to reach out.** Many people with depression will isolate themselves, often falling out of touch with friends and family. You can't make someone accept help, but you can provide the option. Check in regularly, invite them to talk, and reemphasize your support.

**Just listening can help.** You don't have to fix your loved one's problems or convince them that their negative feelings are wrong. Even if you disagree with some of their thoughts or feelings, respect and acknowledge that these experiences are real to them.

**Be supportive of healthy habits.** Exercise, healthy sleep habits, and socializing all contribute to mental health, and help combat depression. Support these activities by giving encouragement, offering to accompany your loved one, or providing positive feedback.

**Encourage professional help.** Mental health counseling and medication are effective in treating depression. If your loved one is unsure where to start, offer to help them find the right provider, such as a physician, mental health counselor, psychologist, or psychiatrist.

**Connect your loved one with social support.** In addition to professional help, your loved one may benefit from other sources of support. These could include community organizations, religious groups, or mental health support groups.

**Take any mention of suicide seriously.** Symptoms of depression include intense sadness, despair, and thoughts of suicide. If you feel that someone is in danger, don't hesitate to call 911, take them to an emergency room, or call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 for free and confidential support available 24/7.

**Make time for self-care.** Supporting someone with depression can be frustrating, tiring, and emotionally draining. It's okay to take a break just for you. Make sure you are getting adequate sleep, eating properly, exercising, and taking time to relax.

**You are not responsible for curing your loved one.** Your love and support are valuable, but ultimately, you cannot make them better. It is unfair to yourself to take responsibility for another person's depression, or their recovery.

# Gratitude Exercises

## Journal About Gratitude

Take a few minutes every evening to write down five good things about your day. The entries don't have to be major events—they might be as simple as a good meal, talking to a friend, or getting through a difficult challenge.



## Write a Letter

Think about someone who has had a major impact on your life, someone who you would like to thank, or someone who you appreciate having in your life. Write a letter with specific details about what it is you appreciate about them, and send it.

## Visit Someone who you Appreciate

Write a letter to someone you appreciate as described above, but instead of mailing it, deliver the letter in person. Don't tell them why you're visiting! Read them the letter, and then allow them to keep it as a memento.



## Say "Thank You"

Keep your eyes open throughout the day for reasons to say "thanks". Try to recognize the small actions people do every day that might be overlooked such as a colleague who always goes the extra mile, or a friend who always seems willing to listen.

## Take a Gratitude Walk

Go for a walk and make a special effort to appreciate your surroundings. You might notice the smell of flowers, a pretty building, or a soothing breeze. Spend a few minutes focusing on each of your senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch) to find new things you may not have noticed.





# Healthy vs. Unhealthy Coping Strategies

**Coping strategies** are actions we take—consciously or unconsciously—to deal with stress, problems, or uncomfortable emotions. Unhealthy coping strategies tend to feel good in the moment, but have long-term negative consequences. Healthy coping strategies may not provide instant gratification, but they lead to long-lasting positive outcomes.

Examples of <b>unhealthy</b> coping strategies:	Examples of <b>healthy</b> coping strategies:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Drug or alcohol use</li><li>• Overeating</li><li>• Procrastination</li><li>• Sleeping too much or too little</li><li>• Social withdrawal</li><li>• Self-harm</li><li>• Aggression</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exercise</li><li>• Talking about your problem</li><li>• Healthy eating</li><li>• Seeking professional help</li><li>• Relaxation techniques (e.g. deep breathing)</li><li>• Using social support</li><li>• Problem-solving techniques</li></ul>

## Example Scenarios

Noelle has a research paper due in one of her classes. Because the paper will require so much work, Noelle feels anxious every time she thinks about it. When Noelle distracts herself with other activities, she feels better. Noelle uses the coping strategy of procrastination to avoid her feelings of anxiety. This helps her feel better now, but will cause problems in the long run.

Juan feels jealous whenever his wife spends time with her friends. To control the situation, Juan uses insults to put down his wife's friends, and he demands that his wife stay home. When Juan's wife caves to his demands, he feels a sense of relief. Juan uses the coping strategy of aggression to avoid the discomfort of jealousy.

Rebecca is angry about being passed over for a promotion at work. Rather than discussing the situation with her boss and trying to improve her work performance, she holds onto her anger. Rebecca has learned to manage her anger by drinking alcohol. Drinking numbs Rebecca's anger temporarily, but the problems at work remain unresolved.

## Scenario Discussion Questions

- What consequences might result from this individual's unhealthy coping strategy?
- What healthy coping strategies could be helpful for the individual?
- What barriers might be preventing the individual from using healthy coping strategies?

## Healthy vs. Unhealthy Coping Strategies

<b>Describe a problem you are currently dealing with:</b>

<b>My unhealthy coping strategies:</b>	<b>Consequences of unhealthy coping strategies:</b>
1	
2	

<b>Healthy coping strategies I use, or could use:</b>	<b>Expected outcomes of healthy coping strategies:</b>	<b>Barriers to using healthy coping strategies:</b>
1		
2		
3		

# Positive Steps to Wellbeing

## Be kind to yourself



Our culture, genes, religion, upbringing, education, gender, sexuality, beliefs, and life experiences make us who we are. We all have bad days.

Be kind to yourself. Encourage rather than criticise yourself. Treat yourself the way you would treat a friend in the same situation.

## Exercise regularly



Being active helps lift our mood, reduces stress and anxiety, improves physical health, and gives us more energy.

Get outside, preferably in a green space or near water.

Find an activity you enjoy doing, and just do it.

## Take up a hobby and/or learn a new skill

Increase your confidence and interest, meet others, or prepare for finding work.



## Have some fun and/or be creative

Having fun or being creative helps us feel better and increases our confidence.

Enjoy yourself!



## Help others



Get involved with a community project, charity work, or simply help out someone you know.

As well as benefiting others, you'll be doing something worthwhile which will help you feel better about yourself.

## Relax



Make time for yourself. Allow yourself to chill out and relax. Find something that suits you – different things work for different people.

Breathe... (imagine a balloon in your belly, inflating and deflating as you breathe in and out)

## Eat healthily

Eat regularly, eat breakfast, eat healthily, eat fruit and vegetables, drink water.



## Balance sleep

Get into a healthy sleep routine – including going to bed and getting up at the same time each day.



## Connect with others



Stay in touch with family and friends - make regular and frequent contact with them.

## Beware drink and drugs



Avoid using alcohol (or non-prescribed drugs) to help you cope – it will only add to your problems.

## See the bigger picture

We all give different meanings to situations and see things from our point of view. Broaden out your perspective and consider the bigger picture ('the helicopter view')



What meaning am I giving this? Is this fact or opinion? How would others see it? Is there another way of looking at this? How important is it, or will it be in a year's time? What can I do right now that will help most?

## Accepting: 'It is as it is'

We tend to fight against distressing thoughts and feelings, but we can learn to just notice them and give up that struggle.



Some situations we just can't change. We can surf those waves rather than try to stop them.

Allow those thoughts and sensations just to be – they will pass.



# Grounding Techniques

After a trauma, it's normal to experience flashbacks, anxiety, and other uncomfortable symptoms. **Grounding techniques** help control these symptoms by turning attention away from thoughts, memories, or worries, and refocusing on the present moment.

## 5-4-3-2-1 Technique

Using the 5-4-3-2-1 technique, you will purposefully take in the details of your surroundings using each of your senses. Strive to notice small details that your mind would usually tune out, such as distant sounds, or the texture of an ordinary object.



**What are 5 things you can see?** Look for small details such as a pattern on the ceiling, the way light reflects off a surface, or an object you never noticed.



**What are 4 things you can feel?** Notice the sensation of clothing on your body, the sun on your skin, or the feeling of the chair you are sitting in. Pick up an object and examine its weight, texture, and other physical qualities.



**What are 3 things you can hear?** Pay special attention to the sounds your mind has tuned out, such as a ticking clock, distant traffic, or trees blowing in the wind.



**What are 2 things you can smell?** Try to notice smells in the air around you, like an air freshener or freshly mowed grass. You may also look around for something that has a scent, such as a flower or an unlit candle.



**What is 1 thing you can taste?** Carry gum, candy, or small snacks for this step. Pop one in your mouth and focus your attention closely on the flavors.

## Categories

Choose at least three of the categories below and name as many items as you can in each one. Spend a few minutes on each category to come up with as many items as possible.

Movies	Countries	Books	Cereals
Sports Teams	Colors	Cars	Fruits & Vegetables
Animals	Cities	TV Shows	Famous People

*For a variation on this activity, try naming items in a category alphabetically. For example, for the fruits & vegetables category, say "apple, banana, carrot," and so on.*

# Grounding Techniques

## Body Awareness

The body awareness technique will bring you into the here-and-now by directing your focus to sensations in the body. Pay special attention to the physical sensations created by each step.

1. Take 5 long, deep breaths through your nose, and exhale through puckered lips.
2. Place both feet flat on the floor. Wiggle your toes. Curl and uncurl your toes several times. Spend a moment noticing the sensations in your feet.
3. Stomp your feet on the ground several times. Pay attention to the sensations in your feet and legs as you make contact with the ground.
4. Clench your hands into fists, then release the tension. Repeat this 10 times.
5. Press your palms together. Press them harder and hold this pose for 15 seconds. Pay attention to the feeling of tension in your hands and arms.
6. Rub your palms together briskly. Notice and sound and the feeling of warmth.
7. Reach your hands over your head like you're trying to reach the sky. Stretch like this for 5 seconds. Bring your arms down and let them relax at your sides.
8. Take 5 more deep breaths and notice the feeling of calm in your body.

## Mental Exercises

Use mental exercises to take your mind off uncomfortable thoughts and feelings. They are discreet and easy to use at nearly any time or place. Experiment to see which work best for you.

- Name all the objects you see.
- Describe the steps in performing an activity you know how to do well. For example, how to shoot a basketball, prepare your favorite meal, or tie a knot.
- Count backwards from 100 by 7.
- Pick up an object and describe it in detail. Describe its color, texture, size, weight, scent, and any other qualities you notice.
- Spell your full name, and the names of three other people, backwards.
- Name all your family members, their ages, and one of their favorite activities.
- Read something backwards, letter-by-letter. Practice for at least a few minutes.
- Think of an object and "draw" it in your mind, or in the air with your finger. Try drawing your home, a vehicle, or an animal.

# Relaxation Techniques

When a person is confronted with anxiety, their body undergoes several changes and enters a special state called the *fight-or-flight response*. The body prepares to either fight or flee the perceived danger.

During the fight-or-flight response it's common to experience a "blank" mind, increased heart rate, sweating, tense muscles, and more. Unfortunately, these bodily responses do little good when it comes to protecting us from modern sources of anxiety.

Using a variety of skills, you can end the fight-or-flight response before the symptoms become too extreme. These skills *will* require practice to work effectively, so don't wait until the last minute to try them out!

## **Deep Breathing**

It's natural to take long, deep breaths, when relaxed. However, during the fight-or-flight response, breathing becomes rapid and shallow. Deep breathing reverses that, and sends messages to the brain to begin calming the body. Practice will make your body respond more efficiently to deep breathing in the future.

Breathe in slowly. Count in your head and make sure the inward breath lasts at least 5 seconds. Pay attention to the feeling of the air filling your lungs.

Hold your breath for 5 to 10 seconds (again, keep count). You don't want to feel uncomfortable, but it should last quite a bit longer than an ordinary breath.

Breathe out very slowly for 5 to 10 seconds (count!). Pretend like you're breathing through a straw to slow yourself down. Try using a real straw to practice.

Repeat the breathing process until you feel calm.

## **Imagery**

Think about some of your favorite and least favorite places. If you think about the place hard enough—if you really try to think about what it's like—you may begin to have feelings you associate with that location. Our brain has the ability to create emotional reactions based entirely off of our thoughts. The imagery technique uses this to its advantage.

Make sure you're somewhere quiet without too much noise or distraction. You'll need a few minutes to just spend quietly, in your mind.

Think of a place that's calming for you. Some examples are the beach, hiking on a mountain, relaxing at home with a friend, or playing with a pet.

# Relaxation Techniques

Paint a picture of the calming place in your mind. Don't just think of the place briefly—imagine every little detail. Go through each of your senses and imagine what you would experience in your relaxing place. Here's an example using a beach:

- a. Sight: The sun is high in the sky and you're surrounded by white sand. There's no one else around. The water is a greenish-blue and waves are calmly rolling in from the ocean.
- b. Sound: You can hear the deep pounding and splashing of the waves. There are seagulls somewhere in the background.
- c. Touch: The sun is warm on your back, but a breeze cools you down just enough. You can feel sand moving between your toes.
- d. Taste: You have a glass of lemonade that's sweet, tart, and refreshing.
- e. Smell: You can smell the fresh ocean air, full of salt and calming aromas.

## Progressive Muscle Relaxation

During the fight-or-flight response, the tension in our muscles increases. This can lead to a feeling of stiffness, or even back and neck pain. Progressive muscle relaxation teaches us to become more aware of this tension so we can better identify and address stress.

Find a private and quiet location. You should sit or lie down somewhere comfortable.

The idea of this technique is to intentionally tense each muscle, and then to release the tension. Let's practice with your feet.

- a. Tense the muscles in your toes by curling them into your foot. Notice how it feels when your foot is tense. Hold the tension for 5 seconds.
- b. Release the tension from your toes. Let them relax. Notice how your toes feel differently after you release the tension.
- c. Tense the muscles all throughout your calf. Hold it for 5 seconds. Notice how the feeling of tension in your leg feels.
- d. Release the tension from your calf, and notice how the feeling of relaxation differs.

Follow this pattern of tensing and releasing tension all throughout your body. After you finish with your feet and legs, move up through your torso, arms, hands, neck, and head.



# Progressive Muscle Relaxation Script

Progressive muscle relaxation is an exercise that reduces stress and anxiety in your body by having you slowly tense and then relax each muscle. This exercise can provide an immediate feeling of relaxation, but it's best to practice frequently. With experience, you will become more aware of when you are experiencing tension and you will have the skills to help you relax. During this exercise, each muscle should be tensed, but not to the point of strain. If you have any injuries or pain, you can skip the affected areas. Pay special attention to the feeling of releasing tension in each muscle and the resulting feeling of relaxation. Let's begin.

Sit back or lie down in a comfortable position. Shut your eyes if you're comfortable doing so.

Begin by taking a deep breath and noticing the feeling of air filling your lungs. Hold your breath for a few seconds.

*(brief pause)*

Release the breath slowly and let the tension leave your body.

Take in another deep breath and hold it.

*(brief pause)*

Again, slowly release the air.

Even slower now, take another breath. Fill your lungs and hold the air.

*(brief pause)*

Slowly release the breath and imagine the feeling of tension leaving your body.

Now, move your attention to your feet. Begin to tense your feet by curling your toes and the arch of your foot. Hold onto the tension and notice what it feels like.

*(5 second pause)*

Release the tension in your foot. Notice the new feeling of relaxation.

Next, begin to focus on your lower leg. Tense the muscles in your calves. Hold them tightly and pay attention to the feeling of tension.

*(5 second pause)*

Release the tension from your lower legs. Again, notice the feeling of relaxation. Remember to continue taking deep breaths.

Next, tense the muscles of your upper leg and pelvis. You can do this by tightly squeezing your thighs together. Make sure you feel tenseness without going to the point of strain.

*(5 second pause)*

# Progressive Muscle Relaxation Script

And release. Feel the tension leave your muscles.

Begin to tense your stomach and chest. You can do this by sucking your stomach in. Squeeze harder and hold the tension. A little bit longer.

*(5 second pause)*

Release the tension. Allow your body to go limp. Let yourself notice the feeling of relaxation.

Continue taking deep breaths. Breathe in slowly, noticing the air fill your lungs, and hold it.

*(brief pause)*

Release the air slowly. Feel it leaving your lungs.

Next, tense the muscles in your back by bringing your shoulders together behind you. Hold them tightly. Tense them as hard as you can without straining and keep holding.

*(5 second pause)*

Release the tension from your back. Feel the tension slowly leaving your body, and the new feeling of relaxation. Notice how different your body feels when you allow it to relax.

Tense your arms all the way from your hands to your shoulders. Make a fist and squeeze all the way up your arm. Hold it.

*(5 second pause)*

Release the tension from your arms and shoulders. Notice the feeling of relaxation in your fingers, hands, arms, and shoulders. Notice how your arms feel limp and at ease.

Move up to your neck and your head. Tense your face and your neck by distorting the muscles around your eyes and mouth.

*(5 second pause)*

Release the tension. Again, notice the new feeling of relaxation.

Finally, tense your entire body. Tense your feet, legs, stomach, chest, arms, head, and neck. Tense harder, without straining. Hold the tension.

*(5 second pause)*

Now release. Allow your whole body to go limp. Pay attention to the feeling of relaxation, and how different it is from the feeling of tension.

Begin to wake your body up by slowly moving your muscles. Adjust your arms and legs.

Stretch your muscles and open your eyes when you're ready.