

# THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

## TRUTH AND MYTHS ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS



## Tips for Managing Stress and Mental Health during COVID-19

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### ALLOW TIME TO GRIEVE

Everyone is experiencing some type of loss during this crisis...loss of job, loss of financial stability, loss of a friend or loved one, loss of social contact, loss of routine. With loss comes grief, and it will take some time to work through all the thoughts and feelings that come along with grief. It's ok to allow yourself to spend a little more time in bed one day, stay in your pj's, skip a workout, have a brownie, cry, whatever you need to do!

### CREATE A ROUTINE AND MAINTAIN A SCHEDULE

Once you've allowed yourself time to grieve, it's time to work on creating a daily routine. And then do your best to maintain the schedule you've established. What time will you get up every day during the week? Will you shower in the morning or before bed? Make coffee or tea. Get dressed every day. Find time for a little extra self-care (exercise, meditate, sit outside.)

### INCORPORATE HOBBIES INTO THE DAILY ROUTINE

Don't forget to add something you enjoy into your daily routine! An episode of Tiger King? Gardening? Reading? Family game? Virtual tour of a national park? Learn a new language? Play an instrument? And maybe switch it up every so often. Our family is creating a weekly theme for activities...one week was crafts, this week is spa week, next week is game week! We try to hold each other accountable for doing something related to the theme every day.

### REDUCE OVERLOAD OF COVID INFORMATION

Try to pick just one source of reliable information regarding the COVID pandemic and limit your

exposure to once a day. I'm a data person, so I go to the Department of Public Health every day around 4pm and review the numbers and charts to stay informed. Some people listen to Governor Pritzker's daily briefing every day at 2:30pm. If you are a social media person, follow a trusted source and review their updated information for no more than 30 minutes a day.

### MAINTAIN SOCIAL CONTACT

Not so easy these days...but it can be done! This is especially important if you are alone. But even if you've got a household of people, extend your social contact outside your home. Call or text a family or friend every day. Video chat. Play an online game with other people.

### CONTINUE ENGAGING IN PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

It seems like everything is on hold right now. It's easy to think it's ok to take a break from therapy or treatment services and start back up when this is all over. But it's important to maintain as much contact with support services as possible to prevent deterioration in mental health, to prevent an increase in symptoms, or to prevent a substance use relapse. Most therapists are providing services virtually.

### ASK FOR HELP

And finally please don't hesitate to ask for help when you need it. There are many supports available and essential workers out there providing services. Please see the Illinois Department of Human Services webpage for call and text support lines. [www.dhs.state.il.us/helpishere](http://www.dhs.state.il.us/helpishere).



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