



When life feels heavy, there's help.

If you're having trouble coping, you're not alone. Each year in the US, one in five adults and one in six youth go through some type of mental health challenge. No matter what you're dealing with — stress, depression, anxiety, drug and alcohol use, or the impact of COVID-19 — it's okay to not feel okay. There are tools to help you cope.

Everyone's mental health challenges are different. Here are some common things that might mean it's time to get support:

**ARE YOU FEELING:**

- Stressed all the time?
- Tired or low energy all the time?
- Sad or low most of the time?
- Lonely or alone?
- Filled with worry?
- Irritable or angry all the time?
- Pain in your body all the time?
- Changes in your sex drive?

**ARE YOU HAVING TROUBLE:**

- Sleeping or sleeping too much?
- Relaxing?
- Concentrating or remembering things?
- Getting work done?
- Making decisions?
- Knowing what's real?

**DO YOU FIND YOURSELF:**

Staying away from friends and family?

Suddenly eating too much or too little?

Using alcohol or drugs to cope?

Struggling to do daily jobs or activities?

Very worried about gaining weight or other parts of how you look?

Having trouble doing things you usually do, like cleaning or paying rent?

**The Oregon Department of Education is committed to supporting students, teachers, staff, families and communities during this time of uncertainty.** While it is natural to experience fear and anxiety, children and adults may be particularly worried about themselves, friends and family getting ill with the Coronavirus. It is important to support each other in managing our feelings and anxiety in healthy ways to reduce the effects of stress on our health.

**We all play an important role in helping each other in the days ahead.**

<https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Documents/1.%20Five%20key%20ways.docx>

**How to Cope With Stress During an Infectious Disease Outbreak**

<https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Documents/10.%20How%20to%20Cope%20With%20Stress%20During%20an%20Infectious%20Disease%20Outbreak.docx>

**Grief and mental health support resources**

We also want to acknowledge the immense grief that this milestone carries. If you are experiencing loss, know that you aren't alone.

Local mental and emotional health resources for support can be found on our Safe + Strong website, <https://www.safestrongoregon.org/mental-emotional-health>. including peer support, community-based resources and crisis lines. You can also call the Safe + Strong Helpline at 1-800-923-HELP (4357). Callers can get free, 24-7 emotional support and resource referral to anyone who needs it.

If you are grieving, or supporting someone who is, these resources may bring you some comfort: 19 crisis as well as a resource page for family and friends.

The COVID Grief Network provides connection for young adults grieving the illness or death of someone close.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offer suggestions on grief and loss during the pandemic.

“Refuge in Grief” author Megan Devine has pages devoted to grievors and their helpers, as well as the video below about how to help a grieving friend: [How do you help a grieving friend? - YouTube](#)

<https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Documents/1.%20Five%20key%20ways.docx>

ALSO PLEASE READ IVAN’S ARTICLE ON THE IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL HEALTH AND ACTIVITY. Thanks Ivan.

## **How Physical Exercise and Outdoor Activities Can Help Us Reduce the Stress**

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**By Ivan Anastasov**

We have been experiencing tough times lately. From the Covid-19 pandemic with its impacts on our personal health, lifestyle, and the economy, through the political challenges we face, to the uncertain future, our lives have been changed in many ways. Many people lost their jobs and businesses hence lost their incomes. They started experiencing an enormous mental stress due to financial uncertainty. In many cases people began taking stress relief medications, including antidepressants. But is this the way to reduce our overwhelming worries?

Let us first discuss the negative effects of mental stress on our health. Usually the mental stress is a negative emotion that produces negative energy in our body. It increases our blood pressure, often introduces headache, insomnia, anxiety and depression. We can easily get upset, angry, and nervous. All of this can lead to mental issues, increased food consumption, drug and alcohol abuse, obesity, and so on. Stress also can lead to emotional drama that can affect our relationship with others – our family members, relatives, friends, co-workers etc. Here are some of my ideas how to reduce the mental stress and its negative consequences with physical activities.

Being active is a well know way to stay healthy and maintain good physical shape. Regular attendance at gyms, recreational centers, fitness centers and other workout facilities is a good way to reduce our mental stress and improve our mood. I usually work out about 3 days a week and I recommend working out 3 to 5 days a week for 1 – 1.5 hours a day. It is important to exercise all muscle groups – neck, biceps, triceps, fingers, wrists, shoulders, chest, back, and legs. You need to find a balanced workout system that trains each muscle group in a proper way. For instance, most of the gym trainers start with training your leg muscles and gradually introduce the rest. My suggestion here is to find advice from a professional trainer to develop a unique program for your body.

It is always a good idea to combine gym work out with other type of exercises. A great combination is a workout and swimming. Swimming is an excellent activity that keeps you in great shape. The uniqueness of swimming is that it trains all of your muscles in a balanced way. It is a great addition to your regular workouts. My suggestion is to work out in the gym 3 days a week and to go swimming 2 days a week. Also, running (jogging) is another good addition to your daily activities. Try to run outside in a park away from a major road. If you are out of shape, it is a good idea to start just walking for a period of time and then gradually increase the speed and distance. It is critically important to gradually improve your physical shape. Many people still make the mistake to rush into extreme exercise programs that can have negative effects, such as injuries. Try to do everything in moderation, in small steps so that your body has enough time to adapt.

Biking is another great way to stay in shape. Bicycles are a little less tough on your knees and heart compared to running. Riding a bike on a trail allows you to cover greater distance. My recommendation is to ride a bike about 1 hour a day, 1-2 times a week. If you do not have a bike, try to buy a better quality bike. Yes, they are more expensive, but they last longer than the cheap bikes. Electric-assisted bikes are getting popular and they offer less stress on your knees and greater distance. One drawback about bikes is the pressure their seats have on the prostate. My advice is to buy an ergonomic seat that eliminates the pressure.

Outdoor activities are one of the best ways to reduce the daily stress and anxiety. Nature always provides us with peace and tranquility, so needed in times of a pandemic. It offers a positive energy that charges our bodies and improves our overall mood. Day hikes and multiday trips are a great way to escape from our homes, especially after a long quarantine. I recommend day hikes in a near park once a week on a nice day. I will include some of the parks in the Portland – Salem area at the link section. I also recommend a multiday hiking trip once a year in a remote mountain location. The experience is amazing since you will be disconnected from the civilized world and connected to nature. I will also include some places that I have visited in the link section. Other great outdoor activities are kayaking, fishing, and camping.

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the way we live. It had a significant, often negative impact on our lives. I hope things will get back to normal soon and we all recover from the economic, political and social drama. Staying physically active is one of the ways to ease these difficult times. Let's try to pull away from our computers, television sets, and smartphones for a moment. Let's have a routine schedule that involves physical activities and social contacts, so that we will be able to mitigate our daily stress.

## Links

### Nearby Parks:

- Multnomah Falls - <https://www.fs.usda.gov/recrea/crgnsa/recrea/?recid=30026>
- Latourell Falls - [https://www.oregonhikers.org/field\\_guide/Latourell\\_Falls\\_Loop\\_Hike](https://www.oregonhikers.org/field_guide/Latourell_Falls_Loop_Hike)
- Mirror Lake Trail - [https://www.oregonhikers.org/field\\_guide/Mirror\\_Lake\\_Hike](https://www.oregonhikers.org/field_guide/Mirror_Lake_Hike)
- Silver Falls - <https://stateparks.oregon.gov/index.cfm?do=park.profile&parkId=151>
- Forest Park, Portland - <https://www.portland.gov/parks/forest-park>

### Camping and Hiking Parks:

- Wallowa Lake State Park - <https://stateparks.oregon.gov/index.cfm?do=park.profile&parkId=20>
- Mount Rainier National Park - <https://www.nps.gov/mora/index.htm>
- Crater Lake National Park - <https://www.nps.gov/crla/index.htm>

### Lakes

- Scoggins Valley Park - [https://www.co.washington.or.us/Support\\_Services/Facilities/Parks/Hagglake/](https://www.co.washington.or.us/Support_Services/Facilities/Parks/Hagglake/)

### Cycling and Kayaking Equipment

- <https://www.dickssportinggoods.com/f/bikes?filterFacets=facetStore%3AISA%2CSHIP>
- <https://www.dickssportinggoods.com/search/SearchDisplay?searchTerm=kayak&storeId=15108&catalogId=12301&langId=-1&sType=SimpleSearch&resultCatEntryType=2&showResultsPage=true&fromPage=Search&searchSource=Q&pageView=&beginIndex=0&DSGsearchType=Keyword&pageSize=48&filterFacets=facetStore%3AISA%2CSHIP>
- <https://www.academy.com/shop/browse/outdoors/fishing/paddle--sports/kayaks/inflatable-kayaks>

### Home Treatment Products

- <https://www.homedics.com/>