



UCS Mental Health Care Package: Coping with COVID-19

Just like you, the University Counseling Service (UCS) is venturing onto a new path, a new reality associated with COVID-19. We are reaching out (virtually, of course! #PhysicalDistancing) and sharing ways to help you take care of yourselves no matter where you are - Iowa City, Iowa, in the US, or across the globe.

This fabulous resource was created by the University of Michigan Counseling and Psychological Services.

do something. connection matters

1. Host a virtual Netflix party. Google chrome has an [application](#) that lets you watch Netflix with friends.
2. Send a virtual hug
3. If you are self-quarantining with loved ones, did you know that a [20 second hug](#) does wonders? Oxytocin (the “cuddle hormone”) is released, a hormone that relaxes us and lowers anxiety. When it's released during these 20-second hugs it can effectively lower **blood pressure** and reduce the **stress** hormone norepinephrine.
4. Have a dance off with friends and have a live virtual dance party
 - a. DJ Mel of Austin, TX will host weekly [Living Room Dance Parties](#) via Facebook Live.
5. Play online games together. [Discord](#) is a platform you can use to play and chat with friends at the same time.
6. Go old school and phone a friend (but maybe text them first and give them a heads up).
7. Pets are benefitting from our increased time at home. Share some of your best furry friend's antics with others online.
8. Host a dinner party or charades/game night with friends over Facetime or Google Hangouts.
9. Start a personal/public blog, website or podcast.
10. Find a penpal or write handwritten letters to friends/loved ones.

do something. arts matter

1. Explore [art museums](#) from around the world virtually
2. Want to flex your sketchbook skills? This is just one example of an [art challenge](#) you can find on social media.
3. [Art-viewing](#) can help with social and psychological support for people caring for those with mental health challenges. Just do it virtually for now, though.
4. [Virtual concerts and Broadway shows](#) to watch during the COVID-19 shutdown.
5. Express your feelings through creative writing, painting, drawing, photography, clay, listening and/or playing music, or experimenting with a new baking recipe.

do something. music matters

1. Free virtual concerts

- a. Rolling Stone: [In My Room concerts](#): (3 concerts a week)
 - b. [John Legend](#)
 - c. NPRs [Tiny Desk concerts](#) for the arts (Harry Styles, Chika, Taimane, Coldplay and more).
 - d. Live virtual [concerts](#) from NPR ranging from Experimental to Jazz and Americana to everything in between.
 - e. Compilation of classical music and opera on demand as well as live streams from the [Guardian](#) and [Classic fM](#)
2. Make a music video
 3. Create a variety of playlists highlighting different moods or activities (e.g., I'm rearranging my living space playlist).

do something. movement matters

1. [Stretching and movement](#) can help with anxiety and sleep.
2. Take a walk, even a short one!
3. Check out a gentle [yoga](#) video.
4. Choose from a variety of [free-trial workout](#) streaming services.
5. Suggestions on ways to [stay active](#) during COVID-19.
6. Free virtual classes through the [YMCA](#), no membership required.

do something. kids' activities matter

For students with children, not having school or the ability to physically go to the library, museums or parks can be especially challenging. Here are some free resources to entertain and engage with your young ones.

1. [Scholastic Lessons](#)
2. [Mystery Science](#)
3. [Storyline](#)
4. [Lunch Doodles with Mo Willems](#)
5. [Cincinnati Zoo](#)
6. [Cosmic Kids Yoga](#)
7. [Gemini](#), free children's concerts

do something. helping others matters

1. Donate to local food banks.
2. Find ways to help young students who depend on school lunches.
3. Buy a gift certificate to a local small business or restaurant.
4. Check-in on your neighbors, friends who may be more vulnerable.
5. Consider donating blood.

6. Practice physical distancing.
7. Share information responsibly and support those who create good information.
8. Practice patience, kindness and understanding.

Adapted from: [PBS Newshour](#) and [U of M Health Blog](#)

do something. nature matters

1. Breathe the fresh air and take in what is around you. Use your 5 senses to connect with nature.
2. Exercise your green thumb by purchasing a low maintenance plant or have someone gift you with a baby plant (succulents are great). Plants are a great way to brighten up your work station and improve [well-being](#).

do something. self-care matters

1. Practicing the "Apple" technique can help decrease anxiety and worries:

Acknowledge: Notice and acknowledge the uncertainty as it comes to mind.

Pause: Don't react as you normally do. Don't react at all. Pause and breathe.

Pull back: Tell yourself this is just the worry talking, and this apparent need for certainty is not helpful and not necessary. It is only a thought or feeling. Don't believe everything you think. Thoughts are not statements or facts.

Let go: Let go of the thought or feeling. It will pass. You don't have to respond to them. You might imagine them floating away in a bubble or cloud.

Explore: Explore the present moment, because right now, in this moment, all is well. Notice your breathing and the sensations of your breathing. Notice the ground beneath you. Look around and notice what you see, what you hear, what you can touch, what

you can smell. Right now. Then shift your focus of attention to something else - on what you need to do, on what you were doing before you noticed the worry, or do something else - mindfully with your full attention.

2. Try 1 or all 52 [free mindfulness exercises](#)

do something. deep breaths matter

1. [CALM](#) app--free meditations, stories, music and yoga.
2. More free mindfulness [meditations](#) and talks by Dr. Tara Brach on a variety of topics from anger to fear to compassion and caregiver resources.

do something. cooking matters

1. How about experimenting with some [new recipes](#)? Share your creations on social media and/or have a live cooking challenge with friends.

do something. sports matters

1. Desperately missing sports? Check out these free passes
 - a. Free [NBA](#) League Pass: games from this season, and classic games
 - b. Free [NFL](#) Game Pass: game replays

do something. laughter matters

1. Take time for some stress relief. [Laughter](#) can be one of these ways and has been associated with psychological health benefits.
2. Watch a funny movie or TV show.