



Pandemic Plan

When there is no real handbook on navigating a pandemic, make your own!

Three Pandemic Pals

Connection is one of our core values at Safe Haven Trauma Services because we know the important role it plays in healing. Reflect on the safe people in your life who you might connect with during this time, particularly when you are feeling isolated or anxious. Pay attention to your feelings following your conversations with them. Do you feel drained or renewed? Invalidated or supported? It's okay to modify this list as you gain awareness of who in your life is able to help you navigate the stress you may be feeling during this time. One good way to start a conversation with these people is to ask, "Are you in a good place right now for us to talk about how scared I am/stressed out I am/bored I am etc.?" This communicates to your safe people that you respect their limits for being able to talk about the virus or other stressful topics and might make it feel easier for you to communicate to them when you have reached your own healthy limit for the day. This mutual respect for each others' self care needs helps preserve connection. Stephen Porges has discussed the importance of connecting via phone and video calls, where we can hear someone's voice and/or see their facial expression. This helps to activate our social engagement system, which leads to a more calm, regulated nervous system when we feel the warmth of another.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Three Boredom Busters

Boredom can be a sneaky and unexpected trigger for many people. It is normal to experience an increase in rumination, anxiety, and depression when the things that you usually turn to for distraction or self-care are no longer available, such as eating



out, going to the gym, or hanging out with friends. Spend some time thinking back on an activity, new skill, or topic you have always wanted to dive into but didn't have the time to pursue. Spend some time exploring Pinterest for projects, looking through your bookshelf, or revisiting websites you may have bookmarked in the past. There are several major universities and organizations offering free classes online right now as a response to social distancing.

List three ideas for things to try when you get a bad case of boredom:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Three Self Limits

To some degree, we all are experiencing a disruption in our everyday routines. Whether you are suddenly at home significantly more than usual or are finding yourself working additional hours as a first responder or essential employee, setting new limits and healthy boundaries for yourself in response to life's new demands may be helpful. For example, some people find themselves going to the fridge 8 or 9 times in an hour out of boredom or stress rather than out of hunger. For them, creating a healthy daily meal plan as if it were a normal work week would be a way of setting some limits for themselves. Many people are finding the need to set limits for themselves around how much exposure they have to news in order to regulate anxiety and depression. Other people are finding a need to set limits for themselves around time spent on social media due to feeling triggered by opinions of their friends or being inundated with bad news. Others may need to set limits around their workspace. All of a sudden, your home is your work, and your work is your home. Contain your workspace behind a closed door, setting the intention to turn off work mode when you close the door.



List three healthy limits or boundaries you might set for yourself that might benefit your overall well-being:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Three Boundaries for Others

The increase in amount of time at home may mean that you are spending many more hours around your partner, kids, or roommate. Creating healthy boundaries with those individuals is one way of taking care of both your relationships and yourself. Some ways to do this is to schedule time together and apart, find a balance of activities that are done together and alone, and keep communication lines open for everyone to ask for space or for social time when they need it. It is very normal to take out stress or frustration on the people around you who feel safe to direct it at, to become increasingly annoyed by the habits and decisions of people we love who are suddenly around all of the time, or to reach our limits of how supportive we can be to others when we ourselves are experiencing anxiety. However, if some healthy boundaries are put into place, it can help us avoid those tough moments. For example, some people are creating a private space to work or relax within their home with a sign-up sheet for people to reserve the space as needed. Other people are creating boundaries around household responsibilities and renegotiating limits around how much time is healthy for them to talk with people in their lives whose way of coping with the situation is triggering to them. Others who are working from home or still going into work may need to create healthy boundaries regarding how much time is spent working or what their professional limits are.

Write down three boundaries you'd like to set for the people in your life:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



Get Physical

There is no shame right now in binge watching your favorite show, taking some much-needed relaxation time, or getting in a good nap, but it is also important to give your body a chance to move. The current limits of social distancing may mean that you can no longer go to the gym or participate in some of your usual physical activities, but there are some creative and fun ways to burn some energy. Here is a list of some ideas as well as some space to list your own thoughts!

- Make a playlist of all the songs you know that you just can't help but dance to, then host a solo or family dance party. Maybe you want the freedom to bust your wildest moves in privacy or maybe you could create a Zoom/FaceTime/Skype dance party and invite your friends/family.
- Find a safe and fun new workout routine online. YouTube, Pinterest, and other sites are full of 30-day fitness challenges, Zumba videos, dance workouts, or yoga routines that you can do at home.
- Walk your dog.
- If you are sitting a lot while at home, set an alarm for every 50 minutes to give yourself a ten minute break to get up, stretch, get some water, and walk around. Find some favorite yoga poses that help you stretch your body out. If your back hurts, try child's pose or do a few rounds of cat pose to camel pose.
- One coping skill for physically releasing some of the energy that anxiety or anger builds up is to do a "wall push." Here is link to a 30 second video showing how this can be done.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_u1synW3c8
- Go for a hike, bike ride, or even just for a quick walk out to the porch or back yard for some fresh air.
- Make your own short dance video or physical activity video and do a fun challenge with friends or family members to memorize yours and then add their own dance move or physical movement (like a jumping jack) to it and



send it back to you. Eventually you have a cool new dance routine or workout routine created by your group!

Write down three ways to get physical:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Coping with COVID

For some of you, it may seem strange to see other people feeling the same level of hyper vigilance, anxiety, and fear that you have lived with for a long time due to your experience with trauma. The world may have seemed unsafe prior this and now suddenly everyone else feels the same way. In the past you may have felt like the only one scared to leave your home or having nightmares, but now there are many people experiencing this as well as other symptoms associated with stress. For others, you may be feeling an increase in symptoms connected to the current state of the world. These symptoms may include wondering when this will be over, increased contact or time spent with family members who may be triggering, grief over even the little things such as missed birthday parties or holidays, adjusting to rapid changes, overlap between your past trauma and what you are currently experiencing, or an increase in the roles you play for those of you who are now both parents and teachers. You could also be feeling completely numb, and maybe even wondering if you are in denial. We are in strange times where there is an invisible threat, yet the threat is real to our health and well-being. This may be a sign that your nervous system is completely overwhelmed and is in a place of hypo arousal or shutdown. Here is a list of some resources and coping skills!



The Corona Container

Think of a container that feels big enough and strong enough to hold all of your fears, sadness, grief, helplessness, hopelessness, anger, etc. With those feelings, notice any distressing sensations, thoughts, images, or past experiences that are being stirred up by the coronavirus. Place all of it inside your container for safe keeping. While it's very important to acknowledge and process your feelings around the coronavirus pandemic, it's also vital not to become consumed by your feelings. Think about sitting with your feelings to the extent that it feels manageable, then move to containment and take a break from your feelings.

Safe Haven Imagery

Think of a place where you can rest. A place that feels calm, peaceful, restorative. A place where you can be at ease, where you can be with your people. Think about a place you can go to be away from the coronavirus. A place you can escape to, where you and your loved ones can go to be completely protected from the coronavirus. A space for respite from all that feels overwhelming. Yes, it's true, we can't really escape this virus completely right now. We can, however, take breaks and feel what it feels like to be with all those we love, in a favorite place, savoring what it feels like to be in our favorite place with the people we love and care about.

Grounding

Feel your feet on the ground. Even better, if you can go outside and feel grass or dirt under your bare feet, do that. Feel how you are supported by the ground. If you're outside, notice the beauty around you. Do you see flowers blooming? New leaves on trees? What does it smell like? Can you smell the blooming flowers? Fresh cut grass? All the smells of spring? What does the fresh air taste like? Notice the difference between what the air tastes like inside – maybe stale, still. Notice the taste of the air outside. Fresh, clean. Place your hands in the dirt, in the grass, feel the bark of a tree. What do you hear? Birds chirping? The breeze in the trees? Bees humming? Take it all in, every last bit. Savor the feeling, savor the moment of being



outside. This can also be done inside, but you would be noticing other things through your five senses.

Somatic Resourcing

Try placing a hand over your heart in a compassionate, loving way. If sitting, push your knees into the ground, while feeling your feet on the ground. Feel your body meet contact with your chair or couch, notice how it supports your body. Try a mindful walk, feel your feet and legs move, feel them make contact with the ground as you walk. Cross your hands and rub up and down your upper arms. This increases delta waves, helping to soothe your nervous system. Be creative, find ways to use your body to self-soothe. Find calming yoga poses: child's pose, happy baby, what's your favorite calming yoga pose?

Curiosity and Non-Judgment

You may be feeling all the feels. Remember, your thoughts aren't facts! If you tend to be anxious or have suffered past trauma, you may be planning for worst case scenarios. Try to use reality checking, based off of facts. Reading unreliable, sensationalized news stories about COVID-19 can put us in a state of panic. While thoughts aren't facts, try to remain curious and nonjudgmental about what you might be feeling or thinking. One of Safe Haven's core values is curiosity. Lack of curiosity can lead to minimization, rationalization, and often times shame. Allow yourself to feel your feels, while remaining curious and nonjudgmental. You might notice thoughts floating by on clouds. Step outside of your thoughts and feelings and observe them curiously and nonjudgmentally. Whatever you are feeling is okay. It's a strange and overwhelming time. Check out our podcast, *The Resilient Mind*, to hear more about normal responses and reactions to the Coronavirus Pandemic.



Appreciate Small Moments

In such an uncertain, chaotic time, it's difficult to find moments of peace, joy, and connection. Really savor small moments of connection with the ones you love. Feel the love of your pets. Really notice how much they love you unconditionally. Do you enjoy tending to your plants, gardens, or lawn? Pay close attention to the growth and beauty of the plants you are raising. Do you enjoy cooking? Notice the smell and savor each bite. Just spend time admiring the beauty of nature. Is it a nice day? Can you feel the breeze, the sun on your skin? Practice gratitude for the small moments. Note: this does not mean you have to be grateful for the time we are in and the struggle we are facing.

Breathing Exercises

With both breaths below: breathe in deeply, down into your belly, then breathe out more slowly, in through your nose, out through your mouth)

- Imagine standing on the ground, in the soil, sand, grass – as you breathe in, breathe in all the healing energy you can from the earth. As you breathe out, send your breath back down into the earth, letting it absorb any toxins, negative energy, worries/fears, grief and sadness, anger and rage, helplessness and hopelessness. The earth can take it all. Let the earth absorb all that you are holding.
- Breathe into your heart, hold your breath there, send your breath out with love to all those whom you care about, those you can't physically be with. Do you have a sick loved one that you can't be physically present with? Send them loving breath. Send that breath with the intention of love and compassion.

The above come from Comprehensive Resource Model's Earth and Heart Breathing created by Lisa Schwarz



Journaling

Journaling can also be used as a form of containment. Give yourself a limited amount of time to journal streams of consciousness. Maybe start with 10-15 minutes. When you close that journal and put it in a drawer or up on a shelf, use that as a form of containment for your thoughts and feelings. The act of closing and putting away is a way to put away distressing thoughts and feelings.

- Bullet Journaling - <https://mindaya.com/mental-health-bullet-journal-ideas/>
- Mood tracking through journaling- <https://www.sweetplanit.com/home/2018/3/10/bullet-journal-mood-mandalas>
- Goal setting- <https://www.sweetplanit.com/home/bullet-journal-goals-page-ideas>
- Self care- <https://www.ourmindfullife.com/self-care-bullet-journal-ideas/>

One of our core values is creativity. If none of these coping skills work for you, be creative! Find what works for you. Customize your Pandemic Plan to fit what you need.