



# Wellbeing Insights

*Living a Better, More Vibrant Life*



## Building Resilience During COVID-19

The pandemic is impacting people in significant ways, well beyond the direct health effects of the virus itself. For many of us, the impact is anxiety, fear, helplessness or a host of other negative emotions. Cultivating a healthy foundational state of emotional wellbeing takes consistency but is of paramount importance during difficult times. Developing these “coping muscles” can help us build resiliency and the mindset needed to navigate life’s present and future challenges.

Here are several ways to add to your emotional resilience stockpile:

### Face Your Fears

While it’s important not to dwell on the negative aspects of life, there is power in being able to name what you are afraid of

and explore it. Create a journal exercise where you write down the fear, take it to the worst-case scenario at the core of the fear and then evaluate it, asking yourself how often the worst-case scenario was feared but didn’t come true. Take it a step further and create a visioning practice where you counter the fear with the best-case scenario and connect with the sense of gratitude for evading the feared outcome.

### Be Silly

While the situation at hand is serious, it need not overwhelm every aspect of our lives. Connect with your own inner child or your actual child. Enjoy moments with a child-like wonderment, finding opportunities for play, fun and a carefree

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attitude. Finding things that make you laugh, playing with pets, being goofy with children and otherwise keeping things lighthearted can help you build strength to handle the more serious aspects of this time.

## Give to Others

Thinking about others who are less fortunate physically, financially or otherwise and considering how we can help lift them up can be a great practice not only in counting our blessings but also in the effects of the feel-good hormones released with the practice of benevolence. Are you able to pick up groceries for an elderly neighbor, send a card to a loved one or make a coworker's day through a sincere compliment? Try something, see how it feels and repeat.

## Get Outdoors

While physical activity in general is essential to emotional wellbeing, doing so outdoors is especially powerful. Not only does breathing in fresh air, soaking in the sun and connecting with nature help us get outside of our heads, it also helps increase the production of our ultimate feel-good hormone – oxytocin. This hormone plays a huge role in our wellbeing by helping keep us calm, lowering inflammation and countering the stress hormone – cortisol. Soaking in the benefit of Vitamin D production is a huge bonus.

## Practice Mindful Gratitude

The regular practice of mindful gratitude goes beyond the outward expression of thank you, extending to countless observations and feelings of appreciation throughout the day. In essence, it combines the practice of mindfulness with a coinciding sense of gratitude. Here's how that works. When you step into the shower, feel the inviting stream of water on your

body, taking in the sensation of warmth and refreshment. When you take that first sip of coffee, taste the delicious flavor and the delight you feel as you drink it. Watch the first glimpse of sunrise from your window and connect with the feeling of awe and sense of beauty. Take note of these feelings and sensations and then connect them with the deep feelings of appreciation for those experiences and the person, place or thing that evoked them.

## Get Some Sleep

Lack of adequate sleep can impact our emotional state and make us feel less capable of handling day-to-day stressors. In turn, stress can impact our ability to have restful, restorative sleep. Some helpful practices include waking up and going to bed at the same times each day, turning off all technology 1 to 2 hours before bed, avoiding naps and getting physical activity during the day.

*If you have concerns about your mental health, please contact your mental health professional or use SAMHSA's National Helpline by calling 800-662-HELP (4357).*



## Mindful Minute



Research shows that connecting with a deep sense of gratitude for what is going well in our lives can protect our brains from negative emotions and the rumination that often accompanies them. By incorporating a regular gratitude practice, we can train our brains to actually feel more grateful, content, happy and hopeful. Here is an exercise to help you **take note of things for which you are grateful.**

- At the end of the day, find some paper and a pen and a comfortable, peaceful place to relax.
- Clear your head by taking 2 to 3 deep, slow breaths, pausing between the inhale and exhale.
- Take a mental inventory of the day from beginning to end, pondering moments where you felt ease, joy or thankfulness. Try to be specific, even if it's something very simple like an extended pleasantry from a friend or neighbor, a funny joke you read, a glimpse of an animal outside or a meal you enjoyed.
- If a negative thought pops up, acknowledge it, and see if you can find a way to view it as an opportunity. Or, consider how you might let go of that negative moment.
- On your paper, jot down 2 to 3 things for your gratitude inventory. As you write your list, connect with the feelings of appreciation for each item noted.
- Repeat this practice daily.

# Ask the Experts

We asked our Engagement and Wellbeing Consulting team for their insights on coping, finding silver linings and tending to self-care during the pandemic.

## What are you doing to create silver linings and brighten up your routine?

**Abby Carter:** I'm doing my best to practice being extremely present, including with media consumption. It's easy to get overwhelmed, so I make sure I don't have the news on in the background. Taking play breaks with my 5 month old is a great reminder to keep things light and laugh.

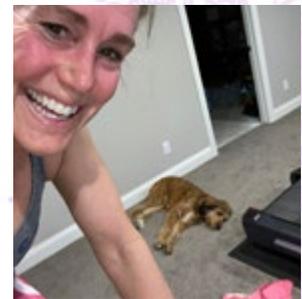
**Anna Panzarella:** Enjoying time outside has been a true lifesaver for my family! Every evening, after we've powered down our computers for the day, we hop on our bikes and head to our nearest public park where we find an empty corner (far away from others) to kick around a soccer ball or play tag.

**Sue Trogu:** My youngest child and I start every day with "morning movement" – sometimes a bike ride, a run or a walk. We both have come to absolutely love and look forward

to this start to our days. I've also promised myself to dig out my inner creativity – playing with bullet journaling, sketchbooks, paints, landscaping and, my favorite, fussing around the house. They're things I don't generally have as much time for but keep me grounded.

**Anna Rudolph:** The biggest game changer for me was setting up a designated workspace away from any triggers. The first couple of days working from home I was set up at my kitchen table and I found that I was never really disconnected from work after hours. Setting up a designated workspace and a "normal" schedule helped get me into a routine and establish a healthy balance.

**Angie Kennedy:** Some simple workstation additions have brightened up my routine. I have a great smelling eucalyptus mint candle that I light first thing each morning. I also added a bowl of dark chocolates on my desk, just like I have on the desk in my CBIZ office. Having extra white noise relaxes me, so I plug in my fan, turn it on medium, and I'm all set for the day.



Angie Kennedy and her less-ambitious home workout buddy Rose

## How have you adapted your own self-care and mental/emotional hygiene to cope during the pandemic?

**Kelley Elliott:** Each day I set intentions for how I want to spend my free time. It's based on how I feel that day and where I need the most support. That could be socially, physically or with extra self-care time. Setting the intentions makes them my "non-negotiables" and gives me something to look forward to each evening.

**Tammie McCoy:** I have made it a point to stay connected with family and friends through text and video calls. I have also found a good crossword puzzle app on my phone, which is a great way for me to unwind. Getting daily exercise is probably the biggest adaptation of self-care for me. Before the pandemic, I would allow life's activities to get in the way of my exercise routine.

**Christine Maurer:** The practices of [The Miracle Morning](#) by Hal Elrod have been extremely helpful to me. I take a little time before my kids wake up each morning to meditate, exercise, read, set my intention for the day and journal. This puts me in the right mindset for my day and allows me to focus on my kids and help ensure I'm not projecting my stress onto them.



Christine Maurer tackling WFH with a smile

**Lacey McCourt:** I used to be a pretty regular gym goer prior to the quarantining guidelines. Since then, I've realized that committing to an equivalent 60-minute virtual workout on most days is not what my mind and body needs right now. I'm trying to be gentle with myself and just committing to getting outside and walking most days. It's a relief to leave the house and get some fresh air. I try to plan my walks around the sunset.

**LaTonia McGinnis:** I like to start and end my day with something positive, so I avoid watching the news first thing in the morning or before going to bed. I've gone back to my love of reading and have lost myself in some really wonderful books. Journaling has been essential to my mental wellbeing during this time. Taking the time to express gratitude has kept things in perspective for me.

Technology is playing a huge role in keeping people connected to each other, as well as to the resources they need. Have you discovered any online platforms or apps that are helping you maintain your wellbeing?

**Anna Panzarella:** I find myself connecting even more than before with virtual apps like [Zoom](#) and [Marco Polo](#). Our extended family that is spread across the country had a giant Zoom chat to celebrate an uncle's 70th birthday; we called it "My Big Fat Italian Zoom Chat."

In addition to using technology to stay socially connected, I've been loving the [ClassPass Go](#) app for guided fitness

training and meditation. I've never been much of a runner, but with my normal gyms closed the app is helping me train for a 5k. I've also been using the [MindBody](#) app to look for live-streamed classes from fitness studios in my area. This is a great way to support local studios during this trying time.

**Trisa Nickoley:** My friends and I are enjoying staying connected with virtual gaming using [Jackbox](#). The games can have up to 8 to 10 players with an unlimited amount of people that can be in the audience. This allows us to see everyone's beautiful faces, play games and laugh together while forgetting about what's happening in the world.

Helping others is challenging when the #1 thing we need to do is stay at home and take necessary safety precautions. How have you been able to help others?

**Abby Carter:** I'm making an effort to support small businesses instead of purchasing everything from Amazon. Good Morning America has a "steals and deals" page for supporting small businesses. It's also fun to hear their stories. I purchased compression socks I had been needing and herb jars that I really love! I'm also sending cards to family members who live alone to brighten their day.

**Michelle Kruse:** We are so fortunate to have our jobs and incomes during this time and are not taking that for granted. We've donated school supplies for those kids at home without basic necessities. We've also signed up to fill food pantry boxes for our local school district. My daughter is involved with her high school's broadcast media program and is working with our priest to live-stream mass for our church.

**Christine Maurer:** My family and I have been sending cards to relatives. It is especially tough for grandparents right now, so we've been sending cards and pictures and getting on Facetime to help them feel connected.

Any words of encouragement or advice for our readers?

**Kelley Elliott:** One of the best quotes/sayings I've heard is "This too belongs." Your feelings, emotions, actions, etc. all belong. There is no need to feel guilt or shame over what we are doing, aren't doing, saying or feeling. However you process this time is more than okay; it's just right, for you. That should be encouraged and celebrated.

**Angie Kennedy:** Make a plan each night for the next day. Pick a project that you're going to focus on or write down a few bullet points of priorities that you need to accomplish the following day. You'll find that if you prepare each night, you'll have a better night's sleep and wake up with purpose. Take a shower, make your bed, drink 12 ounces of water and rock your day!

**LaTonia McGinnis:** During this slow down, take advantage of the time to do what your soul craves – whether that be rest, connecting with family and friends (or yourself), or starting a new project. Find happiness in every day and hold on to that.



*Kelley Elliott finding balance during a socially distanced walk*



*LaTonia McGinnis enjoying some fresh air with her quarantine partner Nadia*



# How to Stretch Your Food

Through this pandemic, we've all had to get a little creative with food prep. Whether it's due to food shortages, budget constraints or just trying to avoid extra trips to the store, chances are you're feeling some sort of pressure in the kitchen. It doesn't help that social media might make you feel like you should have turned into a gourmet chef in a matter of weeks. To help you make the best of the constantly changing circumstances, here are some tips on how to make your food stretch with a few fun recipes you can whip up with inexpensive pantry staples. With a few tricks, you just might deserve that chef status after all!

## Store Food Properly

Proper food storage is key to keeping fresh food around when you aren't visiting the grocery store often. For dry goods, make sure they are tightly sealed after opening and transfer to smaller, re-sealable containers, if needed. For meat and seafood, freeze whatever will not be eaten within 2 to 3 days. For fruits and veggies, make sure there is little to no moisture in the container and that the bags have holes for fresh air. Refrigerate bell peppers, grapes, all citrus fruits and berries.

## Stock Up on Low-Cost Food Staples

To make the most of your budget, consider low-cost food options like whole grains (oats, rice, quinoa, millet, buckwheat, etc.) and beans/legumes (chickpeas, lentils, black-eyed peas, kidney beans, black beans, etc.) that can be packed with protein and very inexpensive. You can make your other meats stretch by adding these staples to your normal recipes (for example, using a ½ pound of ground beef with a can of black beans for tacos instead of a full pound of beef).

## Consider Frozen Fruits & Vegetables

Frozen produce can be quite cost efficient. Broccoli, corn, spinach, edamame, peas, peaches, pineapple and berries are considered to be the best frozen produce options with the same nutritional value as their fresh counterparts.

## Make Leftovers Fun

Leftovers get a bad rap for being boring, but they are a great way to save time and money. Consider throwing a leftover "party" at home, complete with DIY party hats, streamers and upbeat music. You and your family will have so much fun making memories that no one will think twice to say, "But I've already had this once this week." It's a win-win!

## Use Expiring Foods First

Be sure to keep tabs on foods that tend to expire quickly. If you are on the brink of an expiration date, consider sautéing or roasting items to create a side dish, stir-fry or even a soup. Otherwise, be sure to freeze these foods before they go bad.

## Make a Plan

We're all trying to spend as little time in the grocery store as possible these days, so be sure to make a full grocery plan before you head out. Make sure to check your pantry and freezer prior to making your menu. By using what you have on hand and trying to make your list as small as possible, you will be able to get in and out of the store in a jiffy.

If you feel recharged and ready to tackle this week's meal plan, check out these [12 Family Meals Using Your Pantry Staples](#) from registered dietitians that can keep you and your family fueled, on track and on budget.



# Immune-Boosting Foods

**1 CITRUS** Most people know to turn to Vitamin C for preventing colds and flu. This is due to the vitamin's ability to build up immunity by increasing production of white blood cells, which is key to fighting off infections. Citrus fruits like grapefruit, oranges, lemons, limes and tangerines are a great way to get in a healthy dose of Vitamin C.



**2 TURMERIC** This bright yellow, earthy spice has been used for centuries to treat inflammation in the body. Add a sprinkle to curries or try it in a tropical smoothie with pineapple and coconut milk.



**3 GARLIC** Garlic was used by early civilizations to help fight off infections. It contains high levels of sulphur-containing compounds, like allicin, that help boost immunity.



**4 YOGURT** Yogurt is chock-full of live and active cultures called probiotics, which can help stimulate the immune system to fight off disease. Other foods that contain similar benefits include fermented foods like kimchi, sauerkraut, kefir and miso paste (like in miso soup). Some fortified yogurts also contain healthy doses of Vitamin D, which can help to raise the body's natural defenses against infection. Look for plain yogurt, if possible, and one that contains the least amount of sweeteners. Try sweetening yogurt yourself by adding berries or a drizzle of raw honey, which are two additional immune-boosting foods loaded with antioxidants.



**5 GINGER** Ginger is another food known for decreasing inflammation, which can help with sore throats and digestive issues. Fresh ginger teas, tonics or even ginger chews are a great way to get a little bit of this immune-boosting food.



## Immune-Boosting Ginger Juice

1. Add to a blender:
  - A palm-full of ginger root, cut into slices. Skin can be left on, but wash well.
  - ¾ cup water
2. Blend for 1 minute.
3. Use mesh strainer and discard pulp.
4. Store juice in refrigerator in an airtight container.
5. Add 1 - 3 tablespoons of juice along with a few lemon slices and a bit of honey to 8 ounces of cold or hot water.



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