

# Prioritizing Emotional Health amidst a Global Pandemic

by Dr. Natalia Nieves, LCPC, AMFT

As the Rolling Meadows Police Department Social Services Outreach Specialist, I have been involved in assisting many residents during these difficult times. I have provided this assistance in many unique and different ways because of the challenges this pandemic has created. In this document, I have included some specific resources that are currently available to help our community cope with the emotional and psychological impact this crisis has placed on us all. I would also like to take this opportunity and shared some helpful information that we should all keep in mind as we figure out how to live through this pandemic.

- The theme for coping with this pandemic crisis is: **ADAPT!** – Covid 19 has overwhelmed our nation and left us all with a taste of very painful and confusing experiences such as trauma, loss, fear, and anxiety all in one. The last pandemic was in 1918, and we have not endured anything like it ever since, so give yourself some grace and let's figure this out together.
- As a society, we are not accustomed to the ever-present sense of instability. Many of us are missing interactions with others, a sense of safety and security. We're also dealing with constant worry and are not able to seek comfort in many of the ways we're used to. We live in constant fear of contracting the disease or unknowingly spreading it to others, and this can seriously impact our emotional wellbeing. Feelings of anxiety, sadness and despair are to be expected given the situation.
- We are all doing our best to cope with social isolation, but it's truly the perfect storm for family problems and relationship issues to emerge. It seems to me that the disruption in established and predictable daily activities has been very difficult, especially if we are missing in-person contact with supportive persons.

**So...What can you do in order to successfully adapt?**

1. Establish ***ROUTINE*** - Whether you're alone at home, or with children, this is the time to have some structure and predictability to your daily activities. How you spend your time is the one thing you can control in the midst of this chaotic situation. Let's establish a new normal! Here are my favorite apps to help with time management and routine setting:
  - [Loop Habit Tracker](#): For Help Building Good Habits
  - [Todoist](#): To Schedule, Track and Manage your Tasks
2. Practice ***Emotional Regulation*** – in other words, take care of your emotional self and help your children do the same. Being in touch with how we are feeling and taking steps to improve our wellbeing is extremely important. Be purposeful about spending time actively finding pockets of joy and moments of peace during this crisis. Here are some apps that have great tools:
  - [Self-Help for Anxiety Management \(SAM\)](#) - SAM might be perfect for you if you're interested in self-help, but meditation isn't your thing. Users are prompted to build their own 24-hour anxiety toolkit that allows you to track anxious thoughts and behavior over time, and learn 25 different self-help techniques. You can also use SAM's "Social Cloud" feature to confidentially connect with other users in an online community for additional support. (Free; [iOS](#) and [Android](#))
  - [CALM](#) – When used consistently, mindfulness meditation has been associated with feelings of peace, happiness, stress relief, and an escape from anxiety or depression.
  - [Headspace](#) – Another mindfulness app for both beginners and advanced meditation skills
  - [Mood Meter](#) – helps track emotions and gives you ideas for coping skills
3. Connect with appropriate support: You do not have to cope with this on your own. Professional mental health providers are offering telehealth services via various video and phone platforms. Below is a list of local mental health service providers:
  - [Kenneth Young Center](#) (For those that live in Elk Grove Township or Schaumburg Township)
    - Tel. 847-524-8800
    - 1001 Rohlwing Rd.  
Elk Grove Village, IL
  - [AMITA Center for Mental Health](#) – outpatient mental health clinic
    - Tel. 847-952-7460
    - 3436 N. Kennicott Ave.  
Arlington Heights, IL 60004

- [Elk Grove Township's Adult and Family Counseling Department](#) - Free telehealth (video conferencing) therapy for during the months of April and May (for those that live in Elk Grove Township)
  - Tel. 847- 981-0373
  - 600 Landmeier Rd.,  
Elk Grove Village, IL, 60007
- [The Bridge Youth and Family Services](#) (for those that live in Palatine Township)
  - Tel. 847-359-7490
  - 721 S. Quentin Rd.  
Palatine, IL 60067

There are also established support hotlines that are excellent resources:

- [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) - 1-800-273-8255. It provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and there is also a chat option on their website: <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>. It's important to note that if you or anyone you know is currently experiencing suicidal thoughts, please call 9-1-1 right away.
- In addition, Governor J.B. Pritzker's administration announced a new program that will allow Illinois residents to talk to a mental health professional, free of charge, during the COVID-19 crisis. The program, called "Call4Calm," and Illinois residents wanting to speak to a mental health care professional can text the word "TALK" to **552020**, and the service is free to use.

Remember that some days will be easier than others, but know that when our ability to endure challenges is tested, we can only adapt and grow stronger. Take this time to re-assess your priorities, and take charge of your well-being.

Stay well,

Dr. Nieves