It's no secret that these are uncertain and trying times. Now, more than ever, it is critical that those of us in essential jobs manage our stress in healthy ways. Stress is toxic to overall health and wellness and, if left untreated, can contribute to health problems including high cholesterol, hypertension, asthma, erratic blood sugars and diabetes, ulcers, GI issues, headaches, lowered immunity, depression, anxiety, and trauma reactions.

Conversely, simple adjustments to daily routine can promote lasting health and wellness. These changes can have far-reaching, positive ramifications to our mental and physical health, job performance, relationships, and general satisfaction.

Reaching out for help is a sign of strength, not weakness. If you or one of your family members are in need of mental health or substance abuse treatment, contact your Peer Support Counselor or call 235-7120 for a confidential consultation. We are available 24 hours a day/7 days a week.

Peer support counselors are specially trained police officers and emergency responders who provide support and assistance to colleagues during personal and professional crisis.

Take a moment to examine your daily routine. Ask yourself some basic questions:

- How often do I smile?
- How much do I “vent” or complain?
- Do I take a moment to breathe, or listen to a favorite song, to get through a tough day?
- How do I deal with stress?
- What do I do when I’m upset? Angry? Frustrated?
- How am I nourishing my body?

Often, times of crisis throw into sharp relief the need to make changes and start anew. Here are some fast and easy ways to bring wellness practices into your daily life:

- Find guided meditations online
- Practice Qigong (alternatively: Qi gong, Chi Kung, or Chi Gung) – an ancient Buddhist meditative martial art. Videos are widely available on YouTube.
- Listen to classical music.
- Drink black tea. Limit coffee to 1-2 cups per day.
- Play a game. Try Tetris, Solitaire, Sudoku, or other brain puzzles.
- Get outside and take a walk. Even with “social distancing” in place, nature is a place of respite and relief that’s always open.

Eat healthy

- Incorporate eggs, salmon, nuts, berries, bananas, oats, and olive oil
- To maximize fruit and vegetable intake, try making a smoothie
- A healthy breakfast should be heavy on protein to fuel your day.
- Drink lots of water
- Reduce “automatic negative thoughts” by rechanneling negative mental energy into positive self-talk.
- Breathe deeply and mindfully
- Breathe in through your nose, deep into your belly, for a count of 4 – hold – and take a long, slow, deep exhale out through your mouth for a count of 6.
- Release tension. Bring your shoulders up to your ears and drop them down to let go of any stress held in your body.
When the world feels out of control, we may find ourselves focusing narrowly on what we can’t fix or change.

Then, we might feel lost, overwhelmed, and afraid.

But remember: there are always things we can control, and that’s where we can redirect our focus and attention.

Say to yourself,

- I can make daily choices to promote health and wellness.
- I can spend time talking with family and loved ones, even if by phone.
- I can re-engage in forgotten hobbies and interests to improve our quality of life.

take a breath!