

Tips for Remaining Calm through Peaceful & Creative Activities *March 2020*

During times like these, when our daily routines are altered and some of us may begin to feel cooped up, it is natural to have some feelings of anxiety and depression about the situation. Following are some tips to help you reduce stress and cope with restrictions necessitated by the pandemic:

Turn off the news! It is okay to watch newscasts to catch up on the events of the day, though watching it for hours can cause anxiety. Media reports can provoke fear and repeat the same information over and over. Instead, watch a comedy, an interesting movie or listen to music that you enjoy. You can also tune in to channel 972 (for GHA residents) to watch Goodwin House programming.

- Relaxation breathing helps calm anxious feelings. Inhale through the nose for a count of 4-5, hold for 2-3, and exhale through your mouth for 6-7. Do this several times until you feel your body relaxing.
- Guided imagery is a great stress reliever. Sit or lie down in a comfortable position and close your eyes. Engage in relaxation breathing. Visualize a favorite place such as the beach, the mountains or a river. Use all of your senses. What do you see, hear, smell, touch and taste?

Goodwin House social workers recommend Headspace, which is an online service that provides guided imagery and meditation practices. Headspace features a video on its website that explains the “Blue Skies” meditation model and unlocks the keys to guided imagery and meditation. Headspace can be accessed at <https://www.headspace.com/covid-19>

Keep reading for example meditations.



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Example 1: You are sitting alongside a small river. You see the trees, the sunlight coming through the trees. You can feel the warmth of the sun on your body. You hear birds singing, animals moving about or playing amongst the trees. You feel the soft earth beneath you; grass, leaves, pine needles. You smell the fresh fragrances of the earth. You can taste the fresh, clean air.

You might put your feet into the cool water. You see fish swimming about. You might see leaves in the water caught amongst some branches or twigs. You watch them dance around trying to break free. Place a worry you might have on the leaf and watch it break free and float down the river. Place another worry on another leaf and watch it go down with the current. Free your mind by allowing all negative thinking to float away.

Example 2: Visualize yourself on the beach. Feel the warmth of the sun on your body. Feel the grains of sand under your feet and between your toes. Run the sand through your fingers. Hear the sounds of the seagulls and children playing. Smell the air and taste the saltiness as the water sprays toward you. Watch the waves roll up onto the beach and ebb back out. When the water rushes onto the shore, place a worry on it and watch it roll back into the sea. Place another problem on the water and let it go back out to sea.

Example 3: Take a religious or spiritual mini-retreat. Many read their Bible daily, the daily readings for Lent or other spiritual readings according to their own faith. Read a passage and visualize yourself in that place. Again, what do you see, hear, smell, touch, taste? Place yourself in the scene as if you were personally there. What message is being imparted? What do you think life was like during that time? Can you obtain a deeper meaning from what you have read?

If you feel your anxiety level rising, ask yourself whether the anxiety is based on something real or false. Usually, anxiety is caused by thoughts about something that might happen in the future. Focus on what is happening in the moment. If your anxiety is about a situation you can do something about, then do what you need to do to handle that situation. If not, then redirect your thoughts to something positive. What activity might you be doing instead of worrying about a situation you do not have control over? Engage your brain in something else to take your mind off the worry.



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Example 4: Get outside for some fresh air! Go for a walk through your campus or just sit outside for a bit, while maintaining the six-foot social distance as a precaution.

At GHA, residents can enjoy the roof during this time. The vast view can help us feel in touch with the area and nature.

Example 5: With fewer scheduled events, turn off the alarm and let your body wake up naturally. A good night's sleep is crucial to your immune system and can help calm anxiety.

Example 6: This is a good time to catch up on tasks you have put aside such as cleaning out a closet or organizing files. It will keep your mind free from worry and you will have immense satisfaction of having completed that task.

Example 7: If you use a computer, tablet or smart phone, you can Skype or FaceTime with friends and family who are not able to come visit you. You can also play games online such as Scrabble, Words with Friends and others.

We are committed to keeping everyone healthy. Thank you for joining us in our efforts to keep our community infection-free.

