**Extract: Coronavirus; Looking after your mental health week 4; Stress Management**

**Occupational Therapy Department, Mental Health Services, SHSCT**

**The Soothing Aspects of Touch**

Your skin is the largest organ in your body and it is very sensitive to external stimulus. This makes it a powerful tool in your ability to relax, unwind, and find relief from the stress that you're feeling.

Water is one of the ways that you can feel instant relief. That can come from soaking in a warm bath or going for a swim. Likewise, you can give your skin a warm touch by simply sitting in the warmth of the sun or changing into your most comfortable clothes. Connecting the rhythms of nature can be soothing.

Among other things, you might try are taking a few minutes to stretch your muscles—possibly through a few simple yoga poses or tai chi movements (check out [YogaGirl](https://www.youtube.com/user/RachelBrathenYoga) via YouTube)—or getting a massage. Even taking a few minutes to play with and pet an animal can be amazingly beneficial to your mood.

**The Tastes That Can Soothe**

While it's best to try not to turn to food for comfort all the time, there is something to be said about its effects on mood. Many of us have learned that hunger can lead to irritability and this can impact stress levels as well.

Rather than turning to junk food to make yourself feel better, try sucking on hard candy or sipping a cup of soothing herbal tea (chamomile tea is great to relax). You may also find ease in a comforting meal (sipping hot soup from a mug can make us feel comfort). Try to include healthy foods so you maintain a healthy body as well as a healthy mind.

**The Refreshing Power of Smell**

A number of research studies have looked into the positive benefits of aromatherapy. It is often one of the recommended natural treatments for people dealing with stress, anxiety, depression, and problems with sleep.

For instance, one study found that intensive care patients with anxiety slept better after inhaling lavender essential oil.﻿ In a meta-analysis of various clinical studies, researchers found that aromas can play a positive role in stress management.

There are many ways you can take advantage of soothing scents. Browsing a flower shop or spending time literally "smelling the roses" in a garden can brighten your mood. Likewise, simply stepping outside and taking a deep breath of fresh air can provide instant stress relief.

Lavender, vanilla, bergamot and a number of other fragrances have proven to reduce stress as well. You can get these through scented candles, aromatherapy diffusers with [essential oils](https://www.verywellmind.com/essential-oils-to-help-ease-stress-89636), or a variety of other products.

**Take Your Mind off It with Sight**

Distractions can be a good thing, particularly when your mind is stuck on your stress triggers. Sometimes it's best to just find something amusing or interesting to look at.

Some of the techniques you might use include reading a good book or simply watching the clouds pass by. You can also entertain yourself by watching a funny movie or television show.

Many people also find it beneficial to reflect on happy times or hopes and dreams. You might want to look through pictures of your loved ones or a past vacation that was filled with fun and joy. Of course, you can also daydream about places you want to visit. Look for things around you that make you smile and it's likely the stress will dissipate.

**Relax With Sound**

Your sense of sound is just as effective as the rest in setting you up for a positive emotional state. [Music therapy](https://www.verywellmind.com/benefits-of-music-therapy-89829) has become a recommended treatment for people with depression, anxiety, and stress. No matter where you are, you can feel these effects by listening to relaxing music or singing to yourself.

You might even try saying positive statements to yourself as a verbal form of self-encouragement. Some people have also found that playing a musical instrument or learning how to play one has helped them reduce their stress.

**Putting These Strategies to Work**

When engaging in these strategies, make sure to focus completely on the task at hand. That is, [be mindful](https://www.verywellmind.com/using-mindfulness-for-ptsd-2797588) of your senses and what you are experiencing. Anytime you are distracted, simply bring your attention back to what you are doing.

Come up with your own self-soothing strategies that you can do when you are upset. Try to list as many as you can below. The more you have at your disposal, the better off you will be in improving your mood when you are experiencing distress.

**My self-soothing strategies;**

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