

FOUR KEY STRATEGIES FOR WELLNESS DURING COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted an unprecedented upswing in mental health issues, from the stress of social distancing to the challenge of dealing with a lack of regular routine and structure. We're all dealing with conflicting emotions and mood swings, from grief to gratitude, and for people who struggle with depression/anxiety or substance use, it can be extra difficult to maintain healthy habits and keep spirits up.

Dr. Sue Varma (clinical assistant professor of psychiatry at the NYU Langone Medical Center) offers some very basic strategies that she calls "**The 4 M's of Mental Health**" that can help all of us with the consequences of isolation. (You can watch a recent news interview with Dr. Varma here - <https://www.cbsnews.com/video/dr-sue-varma-shares-the-four-ms-of-mental-health/>)

Movement – physical movement, especially a brisk walk outside while social distancing, can help reset the body. Sunlight shuts off melatonin during the day and helps with sleep at night.

Mindfulness – five to ten minutes of deep breathing, meditation, or progressive muscle relaxation can help center and calm body and mind. (She recommends apps like Calm and Headspace if you want some guidance.)

Mastery - find something to do that can make you feel accomplished and productive. Doing something creative can foster a state of flow and make you feel competent.

Meaningful engagement with people – whether you call, text, video chat, or meet in person (with proper distancing) try to find opportunities to promote deep conversation and connection. Even the little exchanges we have with others can brighten one's mood, but meaningful connections can create a more lasting sense of wellbeing.

For a list of mental health and social service resources, go to https://www.b-pen.org/uploads/2/9/2/9/2929884/mental_health_resources_during_covid4.15.pdf

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June_Harris@psbma.org Karen_Campbell@psbma.org