Managing the Stress of Social Distancing and Working Remotely
What follows are important steps to take to protect your health and well-being as you work remotely during the COVID-19 outbreak.
Ritual and Routine

Develop a morning routine:

- Structure your day like you would in the office. Maintain regular hours.
- Utilize organizational tools such as calendars.
- Develop post-work routine.

A morning routine that involves contemplation and self-care will empower you to start your day with more presence and positivity.
Consider Your Home Office Space

Create a separate, physical workspace at home:

- Set boundaries with those who you share your living space with.
- Minimize distractions.
- Consider ways to make it physically comfortable.
- Make your workspace emotionally pleasant.
  - Aromatherapy
  - Relaxation music
  - De-cluttering
Communication

- Stress and anxiety are commonly experienced during times of uncertainty. Be mindful of how you communicate.
- Avoid expressing unnecessary emotion by re-reading messages before prior to sending them.
Schedule Times for Informal Chats and Collaborations

- Make time to have discussions with colleagues by phone or video chats.
- Helps maintain interpersonal connection and increase work productivity.
Create a Ritual to Transition from Work to Home

Differentiate work time from personal time.

- Set a time to stop working.
- Let your colleagues know.
- Turn off computer and/or phone.

Create an after-work routine focused on self-care.
Develop Meditation and Relaxation Rituals

Mindful breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, reading, coloring, knitting, baking, gardening

Helpful apps for meditation/relaxation:
- Calm
- Headspace
- Meditation Studio
- Insight timer
- Happify
Prioritize and Develop a Regular Sleep Schedule

Establish a healthy sleep routine:

- Take a hot bath
- Read a book
- Drink water
- Play guided meditation

Helpful websites:

- Sleepfoundation.org
- Sleep.org

Consult your PCP or the UAlbany EAP as needed.
Work Towards Eating Healthy Foods
Focus on Your Pets

- Pets are great companions and can provide comfort and emotional support.
- Spend time with your pets by sitting down and petting them, playing with them or taking them for a walk.
Keep a Journal

- Writing can serve as a stress reliever and may improve your mood.
- Incorporate a gratitude journal or simply focus on three things that you are grateful for daily.
Remember to Engage in Non-Work Hobbies

Benefits of participating in a hobby include:

- Enjoyment and satisfaction
- Distraction
- Stress reduction
- Sense of accomplishment
Use This Time to Learn a New Skill

- Personal growth
- Professional development
- A hobby
Limit the Time You Spend Reading the News and Social Media

- Staying informed vs. oversaturation
- Take breaks from the news and social media.
- Rely on credible sources.
Engage Via Phone and Video Chats with Friends and Family

- Stay socially connected with those who are supportive of you and make positive contributions to your life.
- Family and friends can help you keep things in perspective.
- Social connectedness can reduce feelings of loneliness and contributes to sense of wellbeing.
Examine Your Thoughts

- Notice what you are focusing on.
- Catastrophizing? Redirect your thoughts to things you have control over.
- Accept uncertainty.
- Identify experiences in which you coped well in the past. What was helpful?
- Nurture a positive view of yourself and maintain a hopeful outlook.
- Focus on the altruistic reasons for social distancing.
When feeling stressed, ask yourself…

What **CAN** I control?

What **CAN’T** I control?

What is called for **NOW**?
Exercise Regularly

Create an exercise routine:

- Aerobics
- Dance
- Yoga
- Taking a walk

Find online fitness and movement options like the YMCA’s YouTube video fitness classes.
Give yourself permission to take time to address your stress.

Self care is the gift that keeps on giving!

“When we commit to action, to actually doing something rather than feeling trapped by events, the stress in our life becomes manageable.”

~ Greg Anderson
During this time of working remotely, the UAlbany EAP confidential information and referral service is available by contacting EAP Coordinator Brenda Seckerson by phone or email.

bseckerson@albany.edu

518-442-5483
References

- Material adapted from “Managing the Stress of Social Distancing and Working Remotely” by the Employee Assistance Program at University of Texas, Austin and the Florida International University Office of Employee Assistance.

- UAlbany EAP thanks these two EA Programs for their generous sharing of their resources.