



THE OHIO STATE
UNIVERSITY

Safe and Healthy Buckeyes

Faculty & Staff Health and Well-Being Strategies and Resources

Returning to campus – and working from home – may be stressful for faculty and staff. The safety of our Ohio State community is and always will be the university's first priority. This document contains research-based intervention strategies and resources that can help build resiliency and enhance mental, emotional and physical health and well-being.

First and foremost, everyone on all campuses will participate in protective practices. Every individual has a role in keeping the community safe.

Help Prevent the Spread of Infection

- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds frequently, especially after touching common surfaces. If soap and water are not available, 70% alcohol-based hand sanitizer should be used.
- Maintain a distance of at least six feet from other individuals.
- Wear a face mask in all indoor public spaces on campus.
- If you are exposed or have a confirmed case of COVID-19, you will be required to quarantine or isolate until you are healthy.
- Routinely clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

COVID-19 Coping Resources

Resources to help cope with COVID-19 can be found at <https://wellness.osu.edu/covid-19-resources/wellness-tips>

For information about the university's wellness resources, see:

<https://wellness.osu.edu>

<https://hr.osu.edu/coronavirus/keepwell/>

Strategies to Build Resiliency and Reduce Stress

You are not alone if you are experiencing stress and anxiety. There are steps you can take to avoid letting these feelings become overwhelming or interfere with your concentration or functioning.

Resiliency is the ability to bounce back from difficulty and grow through life's challenges. The following practices may help you reduce your stress by building your resiliency and coping skills.

- *Deep abdominal breathing:* Take deep abdominal breaths throughout the day using the 4-7-8 method – breathe in counting to 4, hold for 7 seconds, and breathe out for a total of 8 counts. Visit the [JustBreathe resource center](#) for guided breathing.
- *Mindfulness: Practice paying attention to the present moment in a nonjudgmental and accepting manner. For mindfulness resources, visit*
 - [Mindfulness Practices](#)
 - [Guided Imagery & Mindfulness Exercises](#)
 - Mindfulness Coaching – provided by [Employee Assistance Program](#)
- *Gratitude:* Name or write down three people or things for which you are grateful every morning.
- *Read:* Spend five minutes with a positive book every morning and night.
- *Monitor your thinking:* How we think affects how we feel and how we behave. To learn cognitive-behavioral skills, the first-line evidence-based treatment for mild to moderate stress, anxiety and depression, visit <https://nursing.osu.edu/offices-and-initiatives/mindstrong>
- *Stay connected* to your peers, friends and loved ones.
- *Stay informed:* You can keep up on accurate information related to the pandemic at reliable websites such as:
 - [Centers for Disease Control](#)
 - [Ohio Department of Health](#)
 - [Wexner Medical Center](#)
- *Avoid or limit exposure to news or social media that causes you distress.*
- *Talk to someone:*
 - Contact the Employee Assistance Program at eap@osumc.edu, by phone at (800) 678-6265 or by completing [this request form](#).
 - If you prefer to text, contact TESS, a 24/7 emotional support resource. Start a conversation by texting “Hi” to (415) 360-0023 – use the code “buckeyes” when prompted.
- Assess your resiliency and learn more about how to build your resilience at <https://www.everydayhealth.com/wellness/state-of-resilience/>. Research findings show that people who have high levels of resilience have fewer physical and mental health problems, so taking the time to build and practice resiliency skills can yield many positive health benefits.

Tips to Stay in Optimal Health

Half of the people living in the United States have a chronic disease, yet research suggests that many chronic diseases can be prevented with healthy lifestyle behaviors. Engaging in these behaviors also can boost your immune system and help your body prevent and fight infection.

- Engage in 30 minutes of physical activity five days a week (even 11 minutes of activity a day has positive effects).

- Beware of the chair: Too much sitting increases cardiovascular risk and zaps your energy. Aim to stand and move for at least 10 minutes every hour.
- Eat at least five servings of fruits/vegetables each day.
- Sleep at least seven hours a night; consistency in going to bed and waking up at the same time every day helps, even on the weekends.
- Practice daily stress-reduction activities.

Ohio State has many educational and skills-building opportunities and services that can help you stay physically and emotionally well. Explore these wellness programs for more resources:

- [Ohio State Wellness](#)
- [KeepWell](#)
- [Your Plan for Health](#)
- [Buckeye Wellness](#)
- [The Ohio State Health Plan](#)

Mental Health Support

Anxiety affects people in multiple ways, including:

- subjective feelings of irritability, helplessness, anger, decreased motivation or fear
- cognitive changes such as confusion, difficulty making decisions and/or concentrating
- physiological changes such as increased heart rate, respirations and/or blood pressure, muscle tension, headaches or GI upset
- behaviorally, in such forms as nervous tapping or restlessness

Symptoms of depression include:

- sadness
- fatigue
- withdrawal
- loss of pleasure or interest in activities
- decrease or increase in sleep or appetite
- frequent headaches or body aches
- anger/irritability

If you have been experiencing anxiety or depressive symptoms for a period of two or more weeks, your primary care provider or the Ohio State Employee Assistance Program (EAP) will be able to help. [Explore your EAP benefits](#) and contact the EAP at eap@osumc.edu, by phone (800) 678-6265 or by completing [this request form](#).

If you have thoughts of suicide, **call 911** or contact the national suicide prevention lifeline at **1-800-273-8255**.

Some people deal with depression and anxiety by attempting to self-medicate with alcohol or drugs. If you need help with your use of alcohol or drugs, you can contact the Wexner Medical Center: <https://wexnermedical.osu.edu/mental-behavioral/addiction-drugs>

The cognitive-behavioral and mindfulness skills listed in the above section of this guide can also be helpful resources. Exercise also can be helpful in decreasing depression and anxiety.

Dealing with Grief

It is normal to grieve the loss of what we had or the life we knew before the pandemic. You also may be dealing with the loss of someone as a result of COVID-19. Any type of loss can trigger grief.


Signs of coping with grief as a result of the pandemic might include:

- trouble concentrating
- challenges with completing simple tasks
- fatigue
- anger or irritability
- sleeping too much or less than usual
- engaging in activities such as over-eating, online shopping, or using alcohol or drugs to cope with stress or anxiety
- avoiding thinking or talking about the pandemic

If your symptoms of grief are prolonged and are interfering with your functioning, the [Employee Assistance Program](#) may be able to help.

Financial Wellness

Financial wellness is an important part of your overall health and well-being. Managing your finances well can help you lower your stress, achieve your goals and plan for any unforeseen circumstances. The following resources can help.

- *The [Financial Fitness Center](#)*: Complete a free 10-minute checkup to receive your Financial Fitness SCORE. Use the Financial Fitness Center with 200 interactive tutorials to help you get instant, unbiased answers to all your common questions about money. The Financial Fitness Center is provided by IMPACT solutions, our EAP partner.
- *Talk to someone*: You can schedule a video conference with a [financial consultant](#)  to help guide you through this challenging time. Call 800-678-6265 or [submit an online request](#) to get connected to a financial counselor.

Work-Life Balance as a Parent or Caregiver

Balancing work and life during this time can be especially challenging, especially for those individuals who are continuing to work virtually and have children at home. Try your best to schedule a few “recovery breaks” during the day when you can practice mindfulness or take a brisk walk. Even five- to 10-minute recovery breaks during the day have wonderful benefits.

If you are a parent...

- Ask your children “What do you know about the coronavirus and what is worrying you?” Help them share their feelings.
- Keep information appropriate for the child’s age and development.
- Answer questions honestly and simply.
- Avoid frightening images.
- Provide reassurance that children are safe and that doctors, nurses and leaders are doing everything they can to prevent the spread of the virus and to get people better.
- Watch for signs of anxiety and depression, and reach out to your child’s primary care provider if symptoms are causing distress or interfering with functioning.
- Serve as a role model and teach healthy coping strategies; remember physical activity helps to keep them active and relieve stress.
- Remember that even though you are a parent who is supporting your children, the coronavirus and its wide-ranging effects also impact you. Keep in mind your own needs while supporting your children.

Visit <https://wellness.osu.edu/story/children-covid-19> for more information and a recorded webinar on the topic: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWydt6bsP0U>

#