

# COVID-19 COPING ELEMENTS

## SOCIAL SUPPORT

While we are asked to physically distance from friends and family, staying connected virtually is even more important to combat depression. Call your friends and family, send text messages, or video chat. Use these conversations to share your experiences.



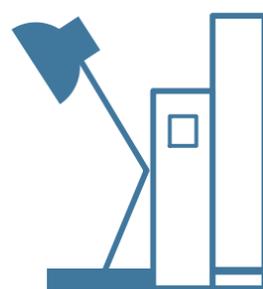
## OMEGA 3 FATTY ACIDS



These fatty acids have been shown to have antidepressant and anti-inflammatory properties, and may help serotonin and dopamine circuits in our brains function more efficiently. You can buy Omega-3 fatty acid supplements online or at local drug stores. We recommend brands that give you 1000 mg of EPA and 500 mg of DHA per day, as this ratio is associated with an antidepressant effect.\*

## ANTI-RUMINATION STRATEGIES

Isolation can lead to increased rumination or dwelling on negative thoughts and experiences. It is important to recognize rumination for what it is and put a stop to it immediately. Rumination only makes people's moods worse. When you find yourself doing it, do one of these things: call a friend, exercise, play with your pet, write down the negative thoughts in a journal, or do some other pleasant activity (like knitting, reading, or another hobby).



## EXERCISE



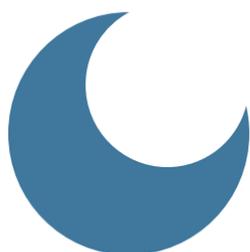
Low energy makes exercise difficult. Initially, it takes a lot of energy to exercise, but once you begin, you'll find that you have increased energy, and subsequently, increased mood! Exercise may be as effective, if not more effective, than most antidepressant medications. We recommend 35-40 min of moderate physical aerobic activity, at least three times per week.\* Aerobic exercise is anything like running, walking fast, or biking, which gets your heart rate elevated to about 120-160 beats per min. Bonus: You can engage in these activities outdoors or from your home!

## LIGHT EXPOSURE

Lack of sun exposure can increase depressive symptoms and make your mood worse. We recommend that people get at least 30 min. of bright light exposure per day. You can actually go outside in the sun (take off the sunglasses, but leave on the sunscreen!) or get light exposure from a special light box that emits the same amount of light (10,000 lux). You should try to get light exposure at the same time every day. Try to be consistent--this is something that will only work for you cumulatively if you are consistent!



## SLEEP HYGIENE



One of the biggest risk factors for depression is sleep deprivation. Your daily routine has likely changed and you may be working from home, and so it is especially important to maintain a regular sleep schedule. To create a healthy sleep pattern, try to go to sleep and wake up at the same time each day. Prepare yourself for bed by having a "bedtime ritual". Dim the lights, turn off the TV and computer, put on your PJs, and do a quiet activity, like reading. Avoid caffeine and alcohol for several hours before you plan to go to bed.

**\*WE RECOMMEND THAT YOU CONSULT YOUR DOCTOR BEFORE PARTICIPATING IN EXERCISE OR DECIDING TO TAKE SUPPLEMENTS**