

## COPING WITH COVID-19

### Finding the Silver Linings

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*“Take the first step in faith. You don’t have to see the whole staircase.  
Just take the first step.”*

— Martin Luther King, Jr.

With the current uncertainty about the future and restrictions on regular habits, more people are experiencing mental health issues.<sup>1</sup> Stress, anxiety, and depression may be more common as people are cut off from their coping methods. It is easy to get caught up in the spiral of worrying about the negative aspects of the current situation. Cognitive reframing, or thinking about things from a different perspective, can alleviate some stress.<sup>2</sup> While the following information doesn’t substitute for competent mental health treatment, it can help to consider some of the positive things, or “silver linings,” that may come out of our adjustment to the recent pandemic.

#### **SLOWING IT DOWN**

Appreciation for the little things has definitely grown. Being denied things that we’re used to doing without thinking about it has made us more aware of what we enjoy. A trip to the grocery store may be an exciting break from staying home now.



People have become more thoughtful about what they buy and where they go. We also have more appreciation for contact with the people we love. Not having the ability to visit and reach out whenever we want has increased appreciation for the contact we can have. Technology is keeping us in touch with distant family members and friends

that we may not have thought about in our busy lives. Neighbors that never knew each other are now planning socially-distanced block parties and speaking at a distance as they walk around their neighborhood. Many more people are visiting natural spaces near home. Time spent in nature can improve physical health and reduce stress.<sup>3</sup> Staying at home gives many people an opportunity to save some money on expenses they would have had eating out, filling up their gas tank, vacationing, or shopping. Try to make good use of this opportunity to be more thoughtful about your actions and relationships. Gaining an appreciation for the things you have, rather than focusing on the things you don’t, can improve mental health beyond the COVID crisis.

## HAPPY HOME



We have been spending a lot more time at home since the COVID-19 pandemic started.

While this definitely causes some challenges, it's possible to find positive outcomes as well. For many, this has been a good opportunity to organize, reduce or rediscover long-forgotten possessions. This has also been a time that some people have been able to work on home improvement projects that they've had for years. In others words, some people have used this time to make their homes more home-like.

## QUALITY TIME

Many parents are able to spend more time with their children than ever, especially if they are working from home. Saving on commute time into work, school, and extracurricular activities offers extra time for quality time together. Initial research tells

## FINAL THOUGHTS

Taking care of your mental health is important at any time; but may be more of a challenge during the recent pandemic. Try to reframe your thinking with the ideas above and come up with a list yourself of some positive events in your life. Consult a professional if you need more support to cope with any concerning symptoms.

## REFERENCES

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us that dads especially are spending more time with their children since the pandemic.<sup>4</sup> Animal adoption also surged in the days after people were asked to stay and work at home. Pet ownership has been shown to reduce stress. So, while staying at home can feel restrictive at times, try to look for creative ways to enhance the relationships you have.

## GOING FORWARD

While we have adjusted to change, society won't always have the restrictions we do now. One golden opportunity is the ability to choose how you want to go forward. What of your current life do you want to keep in the future? What do you want to leave behind as things go "back to normal"? Continuing better hygiene practices will help reduce the flu and other illnesses. Schools and employers have expanded ways to accomplish things from home with new technology and creative problem solving. Try to make good use of this opportunity to hold on to any positive change in your life.



For General Health Information: [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)  
TN COVID-19 Information: <https://www.tn.gov/health/cedep/ncov.html>  
TN Mental Health Hotline: 1-855-274-7471  
TN Addiction and Recovery Hotline: 1-800-889-9789

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