



# Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands  
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## Wellbeing During COVID-19

- **Stay well-informed.** Find credible sources, such as our government and healthcare officials, WHO and CDC, to stay well-informed. In times of calamity, the best thing to do is to follow official guidance to protect yourself and your loved ones; stay home, practice 6 feet social distancing, avoid large crowds, wash your hands frequently with soap for at least 20 seconds or sanitize, and disinfect surfaces. Let's all join together to protect ourselves, our man'amko, children, family and friends, and the entire CNMI from COVID-19.
- **Stay calm.** Panic will make it difficult for you to make sound decisions.
- **Strengthen your immune system.** Tackle the problem directly by eating healthy and sleeping well to build a strong immune system to fight off disease. Increase your intake of fruits and vegetables, stay hydrated, and get a good night's rest.
- **Exercise.** Exercise and keep active for a healthy mind and body. Exercise has been shown to increase "feel good" chemicals in the body called endorphins that can help reduce stress.
- **Think positive.** While it is not easy to always stay positive, try to find the positive in a difficult situation. Remove negative thinking by identifying positive things in your life. Having gratitude is one way of thinking positive.
- **Talk to your children.** Children need to feel secure in times of disaster. Allow them to talk about their feelings and let them know you understand. Bring comfort by letting them know you love them and you will do everything you can to keep them safe. Remind them that not all information is true, so fact-checking is important. Educate them about how to protect themselves from getting sick and find enjoyable family activities, such as playing games, working on a project together, watching a good movie, and story-telling. Finally, keep a routine and model self-care.
- **Patience and accepting you cannot control everything.** Sometimes you just have to step back and realize you cannot control everything. Some things are out of your hands however you can control your response to the situation. Now is the time to follow the safety recommendations, practice patience, and have hope.

- **Finding your strength.** Use your faith to overcome and get through these fast-changing, difficult times of uncertainty. Finding strength in your faith through prayer, meditation, or reflection, is one way to stay calm and find inner peace.
- **Avoid drugs and excessive alcohol.** During times of stress, one may have the urge to deal with the situation by using drugs and/or alcohol, smoking, and/or overeating. Stressful events, such COVID-19, and having a hard time coping increases the risk of turning to unhealthy behaviors. Managing your stress is key to avoiding unhealthy ways of coping.

## EMOTIONS AND STRESSFUL SITUATIONS

Emotions can be affected by stress, such as feeling more anxious/worried, having low mood or feeling sad, irritable, restless, dazed, and angry. Every person responds differently to different types of stressors. If you find that you are feeling distressed, it is important to find ways to feel better. Think about how you lifted your mood in the past or distracted yourself from something that was troubling you.

Here are some ideas: cooking, baking, praying, meditation, arts and craft, reading, playing an instrument, singing, dancing, walking, watching a good movie, crossword puzzles, sudoku, puzzles, board games, cleaning, gardening, and many more. Remember social distancing is important when going in public areas.

## STRESS MANAGEMENT AND CHANNELING YOUR STRESS

### Breathing Technique

The **4-7-8 breathing** technique involves breathing in for 4 seconds, holding the breath for 7 seconds, and exhaling for 8 seconds. This breathing pattern aims to reduce anxiety or help people get to sleep. Instructions:

To use the 4-7-8 technique, focus on the following breathing pattern:

- empty the lungs of air
- breathe in quietly through the nose for 4 seconds
- hold the breath for a count of 7 seconds
- exhale forcefully through the mouth, pursing the lips and making a “whoosh” sound, for 8 seconds. Have them imagine blowing out through a straw.
- repeat the cycle up to 4 times

### Social/Family Support

Social distancing does not mean social isolation. We can find support from others without leaving home. Try online group chats, call friends and family, facetime, etc. Reach out and stay connected.

## Listen to Music

Research has shown that listening to music can lower blood pressure, heart rate, and anxiety. Not just any music, but music you enjoy and soothes you. Listening to upbeat music can also help by making you feel energized. Try it!

## Humor

While there is nothing funny about a disaster, laughter is one way to lighten your mood and feel good. Watch a funny show, call someone you know who makes you laugh, or think about funny moments.

## Exercise and Physical Activity

Exercise and staying physically active has been shown to increase “feel good” chemicals in the brain called endorphins that make you feel good naturally. This is one way to stay physically healthy and get a good night’s rest. Do avoid exercising in the evening or close to bedtime as this may result in having sleep difficulties.

## Strategies to Improve Sleep

It is common to experience sleep problems when feeling stressed. It is important to follow the sleep strategies from National Center on Sleep Disorders Research at the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute to help you sleep well at night.

- **Establish a regular bedtime and stick to it.** Going to bed and getting up at roughly the same time, all the time, will program your body to sleep better and will reinforce your biological clock. This makes it easier to fall asleep quickly, and awake feeling fully rested and alert.
- **Eliminate distractions in your room.** If there is a television or a computer in your bedroom, try to find another place for it. A bedroom should only be used as a place for rest and relaxation.
- **Avoid eating a big meal too close to bedtime.** A heavy meal close to bedtime can keep you awake at night.
- **Avoid sodas and other beverages with caffeine.** Consuming anything with caffeine less than six hours before bedtime can interfere with a good night’s sleep. Drink a hot, milky drink or herbal tea instead.
- **Build in quiet time before bedtime.** Allow enough time to relax before bedtime, build in some relaxing after-dinner time. Too much activity close to bedtime can keep you awake. Avoid exercising or activities that increase your heart rate
- **Establish a relaxing bedtime routine.** Try to relax before going to bed. You can take a warm bath, listen to some quiet music, or read a book. All these activities help relax both the mind and body. Try different routines. When you find out which one works best, stick to it.
- **Make sure the room is dark and quiet.**
- **Make sure your bed is comfortable.** It is difficult to get restful sleep on a bed that is too

soft, too hard, too small or too old.

- **Maintain a comfortable room temperature.** Create a restful sleeping environment. The bedroom should be for rest and sleep, and it should be neither too hot, nor too cold, and as quiet and dark as possible.

## RESOURCES

### **CHCC Mental Health Support Line:**

For mental health support and helpful tips, please call:

Phone: (670) 285-1856

(670) 285-1857

Monday to Friday 7:30 AM – 4:00 PM

### **SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)**

#### **24 Hour Distress Help**

Phone: 1-800-985-5990

Text: 'TalkWithUs' to 66746

Visit: <http://disasterdistress.samhsa.gov>

Facebook: <http://facebook.com/distresshelpline>

Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation (CHCC) <https://chcc.gov.mp/>

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) <https://www.cdc.gov/>

World Health Organization (WHO) <https://www.who.int/>