

WELLNESS CONNECTION

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INSPIRE TO MOVE - Using Movement to Cope in Times of Change and Uncertainty



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The past five-plus months have been an unprecedented time of change and uncertainty. No area of our lives has gone undisrupted during this time. While we may have settled into some sense of routine and become accustomed to not knowing what comes next, there may be days, weeks, or months where we feel a greater need to lean into our coping strategies.

Daily movement or exercise is one of the most frequently physician-recommended strategies for [managing symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression](#). In fact, some studies have shown exercise to be as effective as medication in reducing anxiety and depression symptoms. Benefits from an exercise session, which could be as quick as

a 10-minute walk, can alleviate symptoms for up to several hours. Exercises that require repetitive movements (walking, running, cycling, swimming) can be especially effective as these types of movements have a meditative effect on the mind.

It's easy to combine the benefits of exercise with other coping strategies to experience enhanced stress relief. For example, use the time you devote to exercise to also connect with a friend or family member. You can talk on the phone while walking, or meet outdoors for a socially distant hike or bike ride. If you prefer a group setting, consider joining a virtual

group fitness class or set up a zoom call and stream a workout that you and your friends can enjoy together. Moving your body while socializing with others is likely to leave you feeling energized and renewed.

Connecting with nature is another great coping strategy that can be experienced through an almost endless list of activities that also get your body moving. Whether you thrive on more vigorous activities such as kayaking and rock climbing, or you prefer a leisurely stroll through a flowering garden, the benefits of fresh air, sunlight, increased heartrate and respiration will help you approach the rest of your day with greater ease and focus.

Those who consistently include movement into their daily routine may note reduced fatigue, increased alertness and concentration, and improved overall cognitive function, in addition to the physical benefits of exercise. If you are someone who is new to prioritizing movement in your daily routine, it is important that you approach this coping strategy with patience and grace. Small daily movement goals can help build consistency and endurance. Remember that movement is cumulative – a few minutes several times per day can be enough to leave you feeling refreshed and able to manage challenges with a clear mind. Eventually, you may find your body and mind craving the relief that exercise provides.

