

Eight Stress-Relieving Activities to Give You a Break



Stress can be brought on by everyday hassles, but especially when there are larger issues like the ongoing public health concern of a pandemic. While no one's life is completely stress free, regular negative stress can keep us from feeling and performing our best; therefore, it is important that we learn how to manage it.

While it may seem like the coronavirus news is everywhere, one research-based technique shown to reduce stress, both short- and long-term, is simply to take a break. Taking in information about the pandemic repeatedly can be unsettling. But when you choose to step away, it gives you an opportunity to gain a new perspective or practice techniques to help you feel less stressed. Even just 20 minutes can be beneficial. Consider one of the following activities to help you destress.

1. Yoga – If you are new to yoga, now is the perfect time to take advantage of the many free online classes and reap the benefits of this stress-relieving activity at home.

2. Art – Before you say, “But I’m not an artist,” a recent study shows that engaging in a creative activity for 45 minutes significantly relieves stress in the body, regardless of experience or talent.

3. Exercise – Along with physical benefits, research continues to show exercise can have an immediate stress-relieving effect that can last for hours.

4. Go outside – Spending time outside in nature has been shown to relieve stress. If you can safely practice social distancing and are healthy, head outdoors.

5. Laugh – Many of us tend to hold stress in our face. Since our emotions and facial expressions are interconnected, laughing or smiling can relieve tension.

6. Socialize responsibly – Whether you’re social distancing, self-isolated or quarantined, there are many ways to stay connected with friends and family. Check in with others over video chat, email, text or the old-fashioned ways – by talking on the phone or writing and mailing a letter.

7. Play or listen to music – Music can have an amazing effect on the body and mind. Faster music can make you feel more alert; upbeat music can make you feel more optimistic; slower music can quiet your mind.

8. Meditate – Meditation and mindfulness can help the mind and body relax, gain a new perspective and develop self-compassion. If you're new to meditation or mindfulness, consider starting with deep breaths. Even just one deep breath can relieve tension!

Sources:

Five tips to help manage stress. (n.d.). Retrieved March 17, 2020, from <https://www.apa.org/topics/manage-stress>

Kaimal, G., Ray, K., & Muniz, J.(2016) Reduction of cortisol levels and participants' responses following art making. *Art Therapy*, 33:2,74-80, DOI:10.1080/07421656.2016.1166832

Stress and Coping. (n.d.). Retrieved March 17, 2020, from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety>

By: Emma Parkhurst, Utah State University Extension professional practice assistant professor, 435-919-1334, emma.parkhurst@usu.edu

Five Tips to Help Avoid

Coronavirus Scams



Not surprisingly, scammers are taking advantage of the fears that surround the Coronavirus. In fact, the Federal Trade Commission has already communicated with several scammers who are selling phony Coronavirus “treatments.” Scammers have set up websites to sell bogus products using fake emails, texts and social media posts as a method to get victims’ money and personal information.

The scammers’ emails and posts generally promote awareness, prevention tips and fake information about cases in local neighborhoods. They may also ask for donations to victims, offer advice on unproven treatments or even contain malicious email attachments.

Here are five tips to help keep scammers at bay.

1. [Don't click on links from sources you don't know](#), as it could download a virus to your computer or device. Make sure

the anti-malware and anti-virus [software](#) on your computer is up to date.

2. Watch for emails claiming to be from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) or from “experts” who say they have information about the virus. Fake emails and phishing scams are very common during times like this. Scammers often use familiar company names, colors and logos. For the most up-to-date information about the Coronavirus, use trusted sources like the CDC and the [World Health Organization](#).

3. Ignore online offers for Coronavirus vaccinations or those that tout prevention, treatment or cure claims for it. If there was a [medical breakthrough](#), you would hear about it through a trusted medical source, not through an ad or sales pitch.

4. Do your homework when it comes to donations, whether through [charities](#) or crowdfunding sites. Don't let anyone rush you into donating. If someone wants donations in cash, by gift card or by wiring money, do not do it.

5. Be alert to “investment opportunities.” The [U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission](#) warns people about online and social media promotions that claim the products or services of publicly traded companies can prevent, detect or cure Coronavirus. In addition, they claim that the stock of these companies will dramatically increase in value as a result. Do not fall for these false claims.

For further information on the latest scams reported to the

Federal Trade Commission, you can sign up for [consumer alerts](#) on their website. You can also report suspicious claims to the FTC at www.ftc.gov/complaint.

Source: www.consumer.ftc.gov

By: Amanda Christensen, AFC⁰ Utah State University Extension assistant professor and finance expert, Amanda.christensen@usu.edu, (801) 829-3472

Finding a Cure for the Sheltering-in-Place Blues



Feeling cooped up while spending so much time at home? Consider some of these fun activities to keep restless kids busy and prevent you from pulling your hair out!

1. Give winter one last hoorah by creating your own snow. Add baking soda and shaving cream together in a container for a fantastic moldable snow that is naturally cold. For an added science experiment, add a spritz of vinegar to make snowballs or snow explosions. [Click here for the recipe.](#)
2. Get crafty. Make flower paper chains to decorate the house. Create your own greeting cards using homemade stamps made out of blocks and shaped rubber shoe insoles or carved potatoes. Learn how to make items out of colorful duct tape, or create bubble art. See Pinterest for inexpensive and fun art and craft ideas.
3. Get cooking. Try a new recipe, make edible play dough or create favorite treats. If you have older youth, try a

cooking challenge using certain ingredients.

4. Build a fort, tower or castle out of large plastic cups or blankets. Make it a competition (who can build the longest, tallest, etc.). Play a game, read or sleep in the fort.
5. Have a scavenger or treasure hunt. For example, search for all the supplies necessary for a fun project.
6. Play board games, race each other to complete simple puzzles, or get active by playing games such as Chinese jump rope. [Click here for directions.](#)
7. Put on a puppet show. For extra credit, construct your own puppets out of socks or paper bags to tell a story of your own creation.
8. Take funny pictures or make funny videos together using a smartphone app such as "LOL Movie" or "Magic Mirror."
9. Go hiking. If the weather is cooperating and you can get outside, look for maps of trails in your area and explore a new trail. Have a nature scavenger hunt while hiking, or pack snacks and enjoy a picnic at the end of your hike.
10. Learn to find constellations. Find a star map on a smartphone app, such as "Skyview Lite," or online at: <http://www.stargazing.net/David/constel/skymapindex.html>
11. Have your own Olympics. Make up your own events such as Hula-Hoop, jumping rope, shooting basketballs, Frisbee toss, swimming noodle "javelin" toss or hopping a certain distance. Create silly awards to present to participants.
12. Dream together. Find pictures online, in magazines or draw fun things you want to do in the future together. Paste them on a poster board and display it somewhere that you can see it often.

Sources:

Underwood, C. (2020). Growing a jeweled rose. Retrieved from <http://www.growingajeweledrose.com/2013/01/erupting-snow-recipe.html><http://healthyliving.azcentral.com/rules-chinese-jump-rope-2617.html>) www.pinterest.com

By: Naomi Brower, Utah State University Extension professor

Four Tips for Cultivating an Attitude of Gratitude



Gratitude Journal

Current challenges can encourage us to reflect on what we are most grateful for in life. Cultivating gratitude can lead to amazing benefits not just during times of crisis. Some of these include:

- **Improved relationships with others.** Having an attitude of gratitude makes us nicer, more appreciative, enhances empathy and reduces aggression. As a result, it can help us deepen our friendships, improve our marriage and family connections, and help us develop new, positive relationships with others.
- **Improved mental and physical health.** Gratitude helps us to better cope with stress, increases self-esteem, and helps in boosting our coping skills when challenges arise. It also boosts our immune system. Research has also shown that gratitude can help individuals have more energy and better sleep quality.
- **Career boost.** Gratitude can lead to better decision making, people skills and can help boost productivity and goal achievement.

So how do we better cultivate this attitude of gratitude? Consider these four tips:

1. **Keep a gratitude journal** Write down one or two things every day that you are grateful for. Get creative thinking of small things like having warm water for a shower or a bed to sleep in can help us develop an attitude of gratitude. Reading through past entries can also provide a positive boost when needed.
2. **Share your appreciation.** Let others know that you

appreciate who they are or what they have done. How to best show appreciation will depend on the person (a written note, a small gift, quality time together, etc.), but a sincere thank you can go a long way in making people feel good.

3. Look for the positive. How we interpret the situation can impact our future thoughts and feelings. For example, when facing a challenge, look for the potential benefits such as increasing patience or empathy for others. Ask a friend or family member for help when it seems difficult to see any positives in a situation.
4. Some people need a visual reminder to maintain mindfulness of gratitude. For those individuals, it may be helpful to **create a list of people or things they may often take for granted and place it where it will be seen often.**

If you haven't already, consider giving yourself the gift of gratitude during this challenging time. It is free, always and doesn't take much time. The benefits are long lasting and one of the simplest ways to improve life satisfaction.

Sources:

<http://www.webmd.com/women/features/gratitude-health-boost>

[*The Science of Gratitude: More Benefits Than Expected; 26 Studies and Counting*](#)

By: Naomi Brower, Utah State University Extension professor and relationship expert

6 Hacks to Combat Panic Buying



Have you found yourself out and about “panic buying” lately? Moment of truth: I have. If you’ve tried hitting up the grocery store lately, you’ve seen the chaos! Panic buying is defined as the unplanned purchasing of large quantities of a particular product/commodity due to sudden fears of a shortage or price increase.

The psychology of panic buying is generally summed up as an attempt to take back control in a time when you feel completely out of control (sound familiar?). Panic buying is

connected to our fundamental psychological needs to control our circumstances, relate to those around us (or the “everyone’s doing it” mentality) and feel competent about our abilities as consumers. Empty shelves and rising prices can tempt us to stock up but buying what you do not need or what your family will not use actually gives you a false sense of security that you’re a “smart shopper”.

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As connected as we are online, it’s easy to see just how empty the supermarket shelves are regardless of whether or not you’ve been there in-person lately. Let’s be clear – there is a distinct difference between disaster preparation and panic buying. I am certainly not suggesting you ignore recommendations to purchase what your family needs. However, irrational stockpiling can make shortages worse and bust your budget over and over, so here are six hacks to combat future panic buying (cause we’re not out of the woods yet...cue Taylor Swift).

□1. OWN YOUR ANXIETIES. Panic buying is fueled by anxiety. Anxiety is the trigger, panic buying is the response so...own your anxieties! Don’t dismiss them or try to brush by or suppress them. How? Write them down, say them out loud, dance them out in your living room, scream at the top of your lungs if you have to. Bless our hearts, we are often quick to suggest to ‘focus on the positive’, on things we can control, express gratitude, etc. If you’re finding that hard to do right now, it may be because you haven’t taken the intentional steps to decrease anxiety: move your body, list things you’re grateful for, get enough sleep, take deep breaths, talk to someone, stream a dance party, by yourself, from your living room, via FB Live because...social distancing, etc.

2. MAKE A PLAN. Once you're in the right head space, make a plan. By its very nature, panic buying happens on impulse. Use the same steps you would when planning a 2-week meal plan for your family. Take stock of what you already have. Make a list of what you need and then opt for an online option to order and pick up instead of going into the store. Here's an example of what a plan may look like: 1) inventory items in you fridge, pantry, cold storage, freezer, medicine cabinet, cleaning closet, pet supply storage etc. 2) list what you would normally pick up during your next shopping trip 3) list what you you would need to replenish soon, but not yet 4) add to your list a couple of extra's to have on hand of what your family actually needs and uses and then 5) buy what you need and stick to the list.

3. PURCHASE WHAT YOU NEED. Purchase things you will actually use in a reasonable period of time, and the financial consequences on your pocket book, and the economy, will be less damaging. No need to buy everything off the shelf, just buy what you need now and get one back up of items you use most regularly.

4. HELP SOMEONE. Service is the best medicine and kindness is still possible even when social distancing. Service helps you get out of your own head and put someone else first and often does not require you to spend anything.

5. GET TRUSTED UPDATES. Get your updates from trusted websites and news outlets. Think twice before sharing a social media post with a recommendation that's not from a trusted source, and please, please, please stay alert for requests for donations or emergency supply purchases that come from a source you've never before heard of. There are many phony people who will try to dip into your wallet to take advantage

of an emergency situation.

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6. CONTRIBUTE TO AN EMERGENCY SAVINGS ACCOUNT. Be prepared year-round for possible emergencies by regularly contributing to an emergency savings account. [More on that here.](#)

FOR MORE COVID-19 RESOURCES
VISIT: WWW.EXTENSION.USU.EDU/COVID-19.COM

How to Juggle Parenting and Working at Home During COVID-19



As many of us find ourselves in new territory with the COVID-19 social distancing recommendations, we face major changes to our routines—including having our children out of school or childcare, and working from home. While many parents have had the occasional opportunity to work at home when a child is sick or on a snow day, the current situation may require us to accept this arrangement as standard operating procedure for many weeks to come. If this is a new situation for you, the following strategies may help you get your work done and meet your children's needs.

- It can be difficult for younger children to see you as anything but their parent. They may not understand that even though you are at home, you aren't going to be at their beck and call. You may need to start by explaining to them that you have important things to do while working at home. Tell them more about your job and explain why it is important.

- Create a home office or designated workspace so children understand that when they see you there, it means you are doing work business.
- Give children some uninterrupted time at various points throughout the day. Set up a daily schedule that includes breaks for snacks, brief physical activity and lunch. Go over the schedule for the day during breakfast and make sure they can always see the schedule. Try setting a timer so they know exactly when the next break and their time with you will be.
- Give children a “job.” Provide tasks for them to complete while you work and tell them that you are both “going to work.” Set up a desk for them next to yours and give them work supplies such as markers, paper, scissors and a glue stick. Give younger children crayons and activities books. Try giving them assignments, such as certain items to draw for you. Older children will have their own school work to complete. If they finish assignments and need more to do, have them read a book and give you a review about what they liked and didn’t like, or let them use a language learning app instead of just watching TV or playing video games.
- When you need to have a meeting without interruptions, put a sign on your office door or on your desk that says “In a meeting.” Explain that the sign means not to disturb you unless there is an emergency. The visual cue will help remind them that you are at work.
- If possible, try shifting your work hours to earlier in the morning or later in the evening when the kids are in bed or when another adult can help with childcare.
- When you have younger children who cannot spend any time unsupervised, or children who struggle to entertain themselves, try asking a neighbor or another parent who also needs to work at home to take turns watching the kids. This allows you both to have time to get things done. Chances are that other people you know are in the same boat.

Tips to Help Remote-working K-12 Students

Callie Ward | Assistant Professor Garfield County

Mike Sarles | Rural Online Initiative Program Coordinator

#1 Dedicate a Place for Schoolwork

- Set up a dedicated location for students to complete schoolwork. This could be a desk, kitchen corner or table in a room. This way your students will have their materials organized and can be focused on schoolwork when they are in this area.

#2 Maintain School Schedule and Routine

- Get up, get dressed, and get ready as if it was any other school day.
- Just as schools have a block system, incorporate this as needed.
- If parents/guardians are not available, set a specific time for students to check in with them.
- Remember to have breaks or recesses. Keep these structured: Every hour, have 5-10 minutes for a bathroom, snack or brain break.

#3 Be Flexible and Transparent

- This process is new to teachers, parents/guardians and

students! Everyone is learning and adapting. Let teachers know how it is working for you. Most teachers will be flexible with deadlines and will understand difficult circumstances, so be transparent as everyone adjusts.

#4 Practice Self-distancing, but Don't Disconnect

- Use current technology tools to work with other students, friends or family.
- Since you can't physically sit in a classroom or with a partner, video chat with them while you are working on the same assignment or project. Hang out virtually.

#5 Allow "Me" Time for Your Students

- Give your students an option to have quiet time, listen to soft music or take a break if needed.
- Designate non-screen time for them to unplug, get fresh air and recharge.

By Lisa Schainker, USU Extension assistant professor

Reducing the Spread of

Infection: Hand Washing

Why Wash?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Hand washing is the single most effective way to prevent the spread of infection." Washing hands correctly reduces the chances of spreading germs.

When Should I Wash?

Hands should be washed whenever they become contaminated.

Wash hands after:

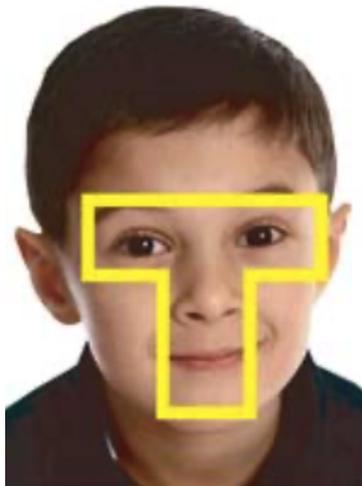
- Coughing or sneezing (Use a clean tissue or clothing sleeve to cough or sneeze into. Do not cough or sneeze into hands.)
- Touching contaminated surfaces
- Using the restroom
- Changing diapers
- Handling garbage
- Handling uncooked foods such as meat
- Touching animals and pets
- Caring for a sick person

Wash hands before:

- Preparing or eating food
- Treating a wound or taking care of someone ill

What is the “T ZONE”?

The “T Zone” refers to the mucus membranes of the eyes, nose and mouth. By touching these areas with a contaminated finger, disease is able to enter the body. Avoid touching eyes, nose



and mouth with fingers.

How Do I Wash My Hands?

Wet your hands with warm, running water.

Add soap and rub your hands together to make a soapy lather.

Do this away from the running water so soap is not washed away. Wash the front and backs of hands, between fingers, nails, and wrists. Scrub for 15 to 20 seconds. Try singing the ABC song twice while washing.

Rinse hands under warm running water. Turn faucet off with a clean paper towel. (Remember the faucet was turned on with



dirty hands.)

Dry hands thoroughly with a clean paper towel.

When leaving a bathroom with a closed door, use a paper towel to open the door. Then throw away the paper towel.

What if Soap and Water Are Not Available?

If soap and clean water are not available, use an alcohol-based product to clean hands. Alcohol-based hand rubs significantly reduce the number of germs on skin and are fast acting.

When using alcohol-based hand sanitizers, apply product to palm of one hand and rub hands together, covering all surfaces

of hands and fingers, until hands are dry. Alcohol-based hand wipes can also be used.

Written by: Darlene Christensen, Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent

COVID-19 and Animals



Dog

Acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) is commonly known as COVID-19. This coronavirus seems to have originated from animal sources. It is theorized that it

originated in bats (*Rhinolophus affinis*) and/or Malayan pangolins (*Manis javanica*)¹. Whatever its origin, this coronavirus mutated to be able to infect humans at a high rate and cause significant illness and death.

Despite the theorized origination from animals, there is little evidence that domestic animals can become infected or be reservoirs for COVID-19. On March 4, 2020, there was a report² from Hong Kong's Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department that a dog had returned a week positive test result. Details were scant and later the dog tested negative. The World Health Organization (WHO) advises that there is no evidence that pets can be infected with COVID-19.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: Can my pet get COVID-19?

A: The WHO, CDC, and American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) indicate that pets do not get COVID-19.

Q: Will the corona respiratory vaccine used in animals work in people?

A: No! Animal vaccines cannot be used in people. They are labeled for animals and lack the proper testing and research to verify efficacy and safety in humans. COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus that has emerged. There is no evidence that human respiratory corona virus vaccines, approved for human use, have any cross protection.

Q: I've likely been exposed to animal corona virus while

raising them. Will this protect me against COVID-19?

A: No. COVID-19 is a novel virus that the human immune system has not seen before.

Q: Does pasteurization kill the virus?

A: Yes—All dairy products are safe. However, raw dairy products have not been pasteurized.

Q: Is it safe to eat ice cream?

A: Yes. Articles stating something contrary are false.

Q: Can the lactoferrin in milk protect you from the virus?

A: No.

Resources:

- [CDC: Animals and Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [AVMA: COVID-19 FAQs for Pet Owners](#)
- [CDC: How to Protect Yourself](#)
- Alltech Information Sheets for dairy workers
 - [English](#)
 - [Spanish](#)

Have another question?

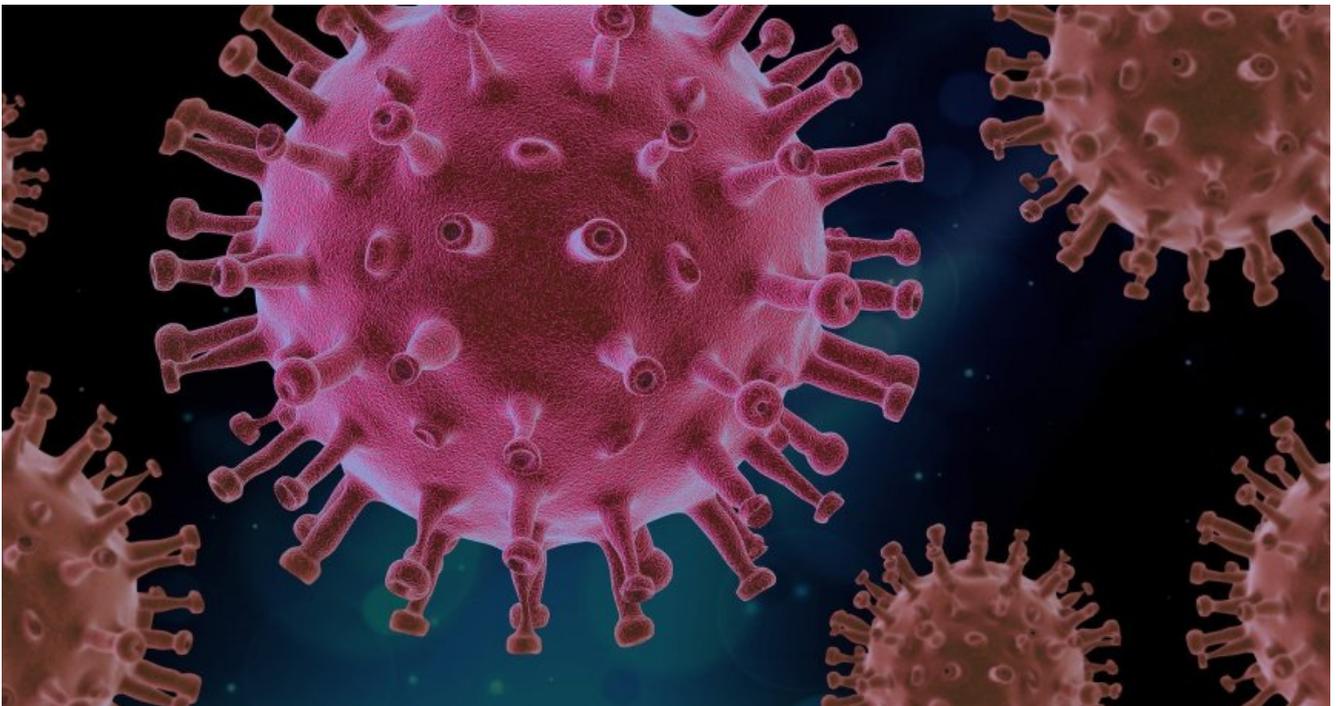
Email Dr. Rood, Extension veterinarian, at kerry.rood@usu.edu.

USU Extension has developed several resources in response to COVID-19. To view those resources, click [here](#).

¹ Andersen, Kristian G., et al. "The proximal origin of SARS-CoV-2." Nature Medicine (2020): 1-3.

² Hong Kong Government. "Low-level of infection with COVID-19 in a Pet Dog." Press Releases. <https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202003/04/P2020030400658.htm> [accessed March 23, 2020]

Remaining Coronavirus Calm



Coronavirus

As the fears associated with the coronavirus swirl around us, it is easy to get swept up. Some of the most common fears are related to our health, the health of those we love, our personal finances, the economic impacts and making sure we feel adequately prepared. Are you feeling some of these fears? That is ok. Try these three suggestions and see if you feel better:

1. An essential step in managing fear and anxiety is giving yourself permission to feel the fear and anxiety. Trying to make yourself not feel this way may cause more anxiety and fear. Instead, allow yourself to experience it. Verbalize it. Write it down. Get it out. Talk to someone about it. Experiencing these emotions, especially with someone else, will be therapeutic and can help you move past the emotions so you can be more logical and rational.
2. Practice deep breathing exercises when you feel overwhelmed. Sit in a comfortable place. Close your eyes. Breathe in through your mouth while counting to five in your mind. Then breathe out through your mouth while counting to five. As you breathe, focus on the counting and on the sensations you feel as you breathe in the good air, and out the bad. As you do this you will bring in increased oxygen, which will help calm your body down. If thoughts enter your mind, just let them pass right through. Refocus on the counting and the breathing sensations. As you focus on counting, you will keep yourself from focusing on the anxiety-provoking thoughts you are feeling.
3. Identify and focus on the things you can control. Clean the house. Play with your kids. Reorganize the closets. Engage in a hobby. Contact a friend. Find things you know you can do successfully and do them.

These three tips can help you manage the fears associated with the coronavirus. Identify which ones work best for you and do them anytime you need. The more you do them, the better you will get at managing your fears.

By: Jonathan Swinton, Utah State University Extension assistant professor and relationship expert